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An Overview of Poland for Travelers

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The official name of the country is the Republic of Poland. It covers an area of roughly 120,000 square miles, about the same size as the State of New Mexico in the United States. The capital of the country is Warsaw, which is also the biggest city by population with nearly 1.7 million residents calling it home. Other cities of significance include Lodz with a population of just fewer than 800,000, Krakow with 760,000 residents and Gdansk with 460,000 people. The terrain of Poland is primarily flat although mountains can be found in the region along the southern border of the country.

Citizens of the Republic of Poland are known as Polish. The most recent census found there 36.8 million people living in the country, though some are undocumented aliens. The annual growth rate for the population is stagnant, neither growing nor declining sufficiently to be considered to be changing from a statistical point of view. Unlike many European countries, Poland is primarily populated by its own people with Polish people making up 98 percent of the ethnicity. A smattering of German, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian people also live in the country.

Poland is a predominantly uniform religious country. Over 90 percent of Poles subscribe to the Roman Catholic faith. Followers of Eastern Orthodox, Uniate, Protestant and Judaism can also be found.

The literacy rate in Poland is over 98 percent, on par with rates throughout much of Europe. The official language is Polish, which is also the dominant language actually used by the citizens of Poland. Life expectancy for Polish men is 70 years of age, while women live an extra nine years on average, a marked difference.

Poland is often overshadowed by Hungary and Czech as a travel destination in the former bloc countries of the Soviet Union. This gives you an opportunity to experience it before the fast food joints of the west start taking over the quaint country.

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