



Białowieża Forest

feel the natural rhythm!

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A few words about the place you are in

The Bialowieza Forest Region is truly extraordinary – like a land from One Thousand and One Nights, but in a Podlasie version. It is full of mysteries and hidden treasures – legendary, historical, and natural – all interwoven into a rich, multi-layered story with a royal touch.

The history of the region unfolds like a captivating novel on the border between legend and fact, filled with remarkable events, a rich multicultural heritage, daring twists, and extraordinary natural landscapes.

What can we say, it's a sure-fire bestseller! We love it, and we are sure you will too.

Let's go!



Hajnowka – the gateway to the Forest (and Podlasie culture as well!)

The city of **Hajnowka** is the perfect base for planning trips and tourist routes. Many **cycling trails** start or pass through the town, including:

- **Green Velo – the Eastern Cycling Trail** (Czeremcha – Kuzawa – Kleszczele – Jelonka – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Stary Kornin – Hajnowka – Budy – Pogorzelce – Bialowieza – Narewka – Siemianowka – Nowa Luka – Eliaszuki);
- **Hajnowka – Topilo – Hajnowka loop (blue trail, 42 km)** – starting right next to the **European bison monument** in the city square. Before you hop on your bike, a selfie with the bison monument is a must!;
- **Hajnowka – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Czeremcha – Piaski (red trail, 85 km, partially marked)**
Note: route change – in Wolka Terechowska turn towards the village of Policzna, then head to Wojnowka and continue towards Piaski.

- **Bialowieza Forest Biodiversity Trail (yellow trail, 26.2 km)**: Hajnowka (Celna Street) – Budy – Teremiski – Stara Bialowieza – Bialowieza – Grudki – state border;
- cycling path along the main road from Hajnowka to Jelonka (and on the way you will pass the ‘Judzianka’ nature and educational trail).

Hiking trails:

- **‘Partisan Battle Trail’ Hajnowka – Narewka (red, 22 km)**;
- **‘In the Footsteps of the January Uprising’ Hajnowka – Orzeszkowo – Hajnowka (blue, 22 km)**.

In the town of Hajnowka – more precisely, at the **Water Park** – there are also **Nordic walking trails**, which connect with other trails marked out in the forest as part of the **‘Nordic Walking Park Kraina Puszczy i Żubra’** (Nordic Walking Park Land of Forest and Bison). That’s nearly 100 km of activity!

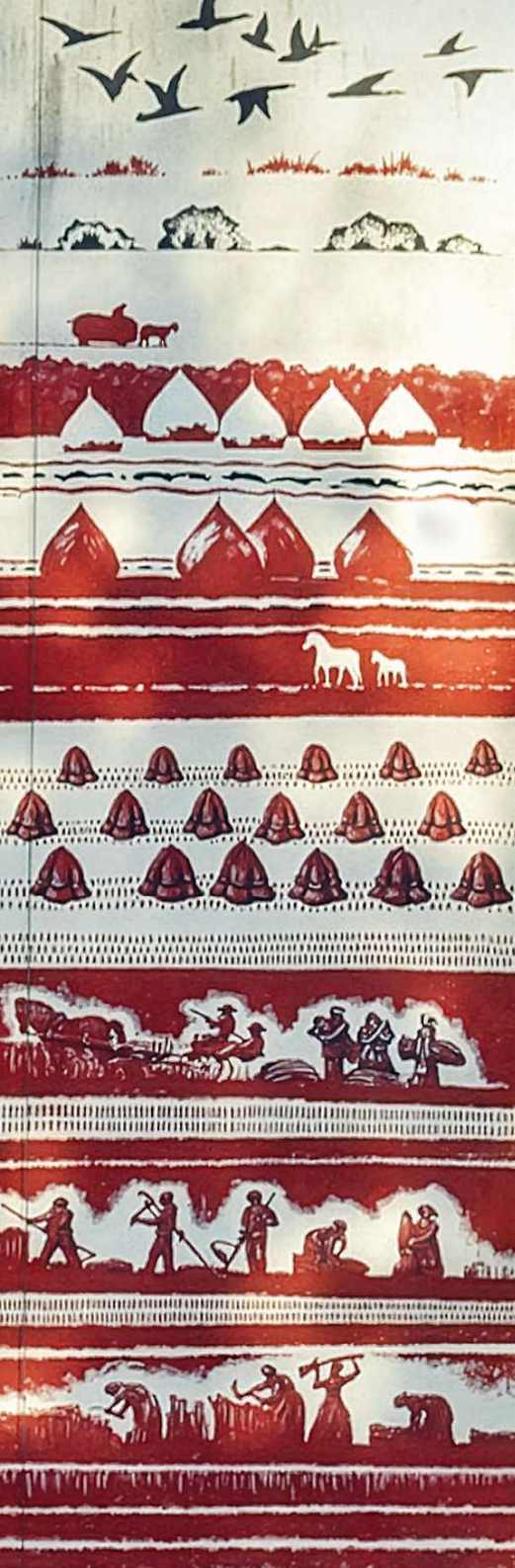
Hajnowka is a place of both active and “spiritual vitality”. The town buzzes with life thanks to numer-



ous dance events, concerts, and themed outdoor festivals. One of the oldest streets in the town – Wierobieja Street – has its own special day in August! This retro-style event takes visitors back to the atmosphere of historic Hajnowka, as the town proudly remembers and celebrates the heritage of the region. During a leisurely walk, you will discover cultural gems – both culinary (the town boasts its own “**Hajnowka fudge**”, the **local cake Marcinek**, cheesemaking traditions, and beer) and architectural.

In the **Cathedral of the Holy Trinity**, the largest two-level Orthodox church in Poland, the **International Festival of Hajnowka Days of Orthodox Church Music** is held every May. At that time, the town is wrapped in echoes of music that touch the deepest corners of its soul – with choirs performing from Moldova, Romania, and even Africa! Meanwhile, the **Catholic Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross** houses unique 28-stop organs, which can be heard during summer organ concerts. Architectural gems of the region – both sacred monuments and traditional wooden architecture – can be admired at the **Podlasie Monuments Miniature Park**. A visit here is a great way to get acquainted with the region!





What to do in Hajnowka?

- Narrow-gauge Forest Railway,
- Hajnowka bicycle draisines,
- Podlasie Miniature Park,
- Zubr Pompik Zone in the Municipal Park,
- Sports Complex and Water Park,
- Quests and outdoor games,
- Museum and Centre of Belarusian Culture,
- Blacksmithing Museum,
- in the area: Baba Yaga's Hut in Orzeszkowo, sensory park, bio-pool, rope park in Enkwa Bialowieska,
- Gliniane B.B. – ceramics workshops,
- hiking, Nordic walking and cycling trails,
- Holy Trinity Cathedral,
- Hajnowka Centralna – exhibitions, theatre, workshops,
- shelters and campfire sites for rent in the Hajnowka Forest District.



Cultural Hajnowka

In July, visit Hajnowka for the **Bison Fair**. It is a regional market full of patterns, motifs, aromas and flavours. There are concerts and workshops, and craftsmen and local food producers from all over Podlasie come to Hajnowka. You can also visit an old Podlasie farmstead (at the **Museum and Centre of Belarusian Culture**) and forge your own horseshoe (at the **Museum of Blacksmithing and Locksmithing**)! In addition, you can spend your time creatively – at ceramics workshops and art workshops at the **Centre of Culture in Hajnowka**. Autumn, on the other hand, is marked by rock music and stand-up comedy – just right for the pre-winter blues!

Hajnowka is the gate to cultural heritage of Podlasie, but it is also the 'gate to the forest' – literally! Passing the city gates towards Białowieża, you will be welcomed by... the Białowieża Forest. The history of the town has been connected with the forest since its very beginning. You will spend your time actively and... discover a treasure! Another one – on the route of the **quest 'Świetlista Krynoczka'**.

Magical Hajnowka

This mysterious place, surrounded by legends and forest wilderness, is located a few kilometres from Hajnowka – perfect for a walk, bike ride or Nordic walking training (the yellow NW trail runs towards Krynoczka). The area



exudes peace and... magic – our own Podlasie magic! The essence of Krynoczkka is its spring – considered miraculous in local beliefs, with stories about its healing properties dating back to the 13th century. In the 1820s, the miraculous spring took the form of a well – and so it remains to this day. Since 1894, a service has been held in the historic Orthodox church of the Machabean Brothers on the second and third days of the Holy Trinity according to the Orthodox Church calendar.

Krynoczkka is one of many **‘miraculous’ places in the Land of the European Bison** – but you can read more about the chapel in Lady, the icon of St. Demetrius of Solun in Saki, and the miracles on the Narew River here!

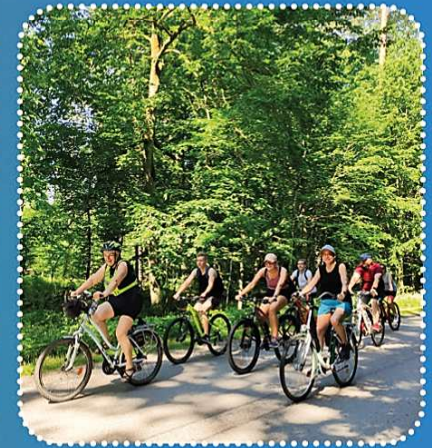
Turistic Hajnowka

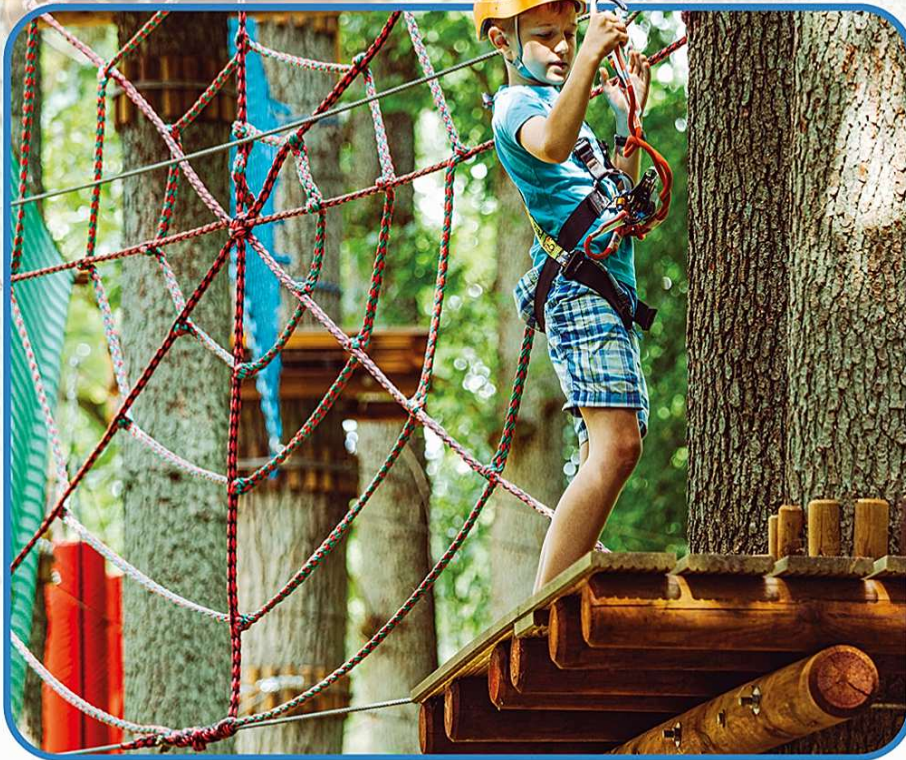
Meanwhile, we return to Hajnowka, because we will miss our train! But not a fast train or rail bus, but a **narrow-gauge railway**. The narrow-gauge railway route starts at the station in the Hajnowka Forest District (tickets can be purchased online or on site at the Forest District ticket office) and ends in the forest settlement of Topilo. The place exudes peace and quiet, disturbed only by the melodious singing of birds or the radio of insects – perfect for a rest! Near the ponds in Topilo, there is a mini open-air museum of forest railways, with shelters and a bonfire site, managed by the Hajnowka Forest District – if you feel like having a party in an idyllic atmosphere, this is the place to be!



There are two **educational trails** around the two ponds: 'Forest Trees' and 'In the Footsteps of the Eagle'. Topilo is also crossed by hiking and cycling trails running through the forest.

Remember to behave yourself during your forest hikes! In the village Orzeszkowo (on the blue trail), 9 km from Hajnowka, you will meet the heroine of the most popular fairy tales – in **Baba Yaga's Hut**. In a world dominated by computers, smartphones and artificial intelligence, a return to the magical world of fairy tales, somewhere in a natural forest, is a time 'out of this world' – literally! There are many surprises waiting for you in the fairy-tale gingerbread house!





‘Sporty’ Hajnowka

Thrill seekers are also welcome to visit the **Rope Park** in the Bialowieza Enclave, take part in **traditional archery** workshops or go on a trip on **Hajnowka bicycle drisine**; nature lovers can take a walk along the **‘Górniańskie Łąki’** educational trail. The atmosphere of Hajnowka is also about sport!

At the **Sports and Recreation Centre**, you can organise a beach football tournament, get in shape at the athletics stadium, play tennis on the new courts (free online booking) and cool off at the outdoor swimming pool on hot days.



The city's sporting calendar is also bursting at the seams. Cyclists are invited to **ULTRA Duch Puszczy**, walkers to the **Polish Nordic Walking Championships**, and runners to participate in the **Hajnowka Half Marathon** or **Hajnowka Twelve**. Thanks to its extensive catering and hotel facilities, the town of Hajnowka is a good starting point, a place for active rest and spiritual renewal on the edge of the oldest forest in Europe.



Royal Bialowieza

The kingdom of nature

Bialowieza National Park (BNP) is a pioneer in many respects – it is the FIRST Polish National Park (its history dates back to 1921) and the FIRST natural site in Polish history to be included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Bialowieza Forest – like the Himalayas or Easter Islands – is recognised as a treasure of humanity! The entire population of European bison in the world originates from the Bialowieza Forest.

The most valuable natural site in the BNP is the strictly protected area. Tourists can access the 'To Jagiello's Oak' trail (4 km), which can only be visited with a guide. The northern part of the Park, surrounding the Narewka River, is open to individual tourists without a guide (except for organised groups of more than 20 people, which must have a guide licensed by the BNP).





The Bialowieza Forest is characterised by great biodiversity – so great and so unique that some species can only be found here! The forest's fauna and flora are a world of many curiosities, such as slime moulds – organisms on the borderline between the animal and fungal worlds, which have the ability to 'walk'. Imagine – walking fungi! Fungi called 'Dead man's fingers' (i.e. polypores) grow out of rotten trees, and the forest is adorned with the 'Bialowieza coral reef' (branched polypore).

Bialowieza Forest is home to all species of woodpeckers in Europe and the world's largest population of free-roaming bison. For your own safety (more on this on the website 26), visit the **European Bison Show Reserve** to see the bison. It is part of the Bialowieza National Park, and in its spacious enclosures you will also see other forest dwellers (including a lynx – rarely seen in the wild, here sweetly lounging on its bed).



In the neighbouring Education Pavilion, both younger and older visitors will find plenty to keep them entertained! The main attraction is the interactive education room. The absolute hit is the multimedia station, which allows you to ‘feel like a bison’ – by moving, you set the bison on the screen in motion, stepping into its skin. An amazing experience! The educational zone in the Pavilion is free of charge.

The European Bison Show Reserve and Educational Pavilion are located 3 km before Białowieża, driving from Hajnowka. You can get here by car, but for the active, we recommend a bike ride – through the forest! Start from Hajnowka on Celna Street, then follow

the yellow trail of the Białowieża Forest Biodiversity (you will pass through the Krynoczka area), then follow the Zwierzyniec route towards the villages of Budy, Teremiski and Pogorzelce. Behind Pogorzelce, there is an entrance to the **‘Żebra Żubra’ educational trail**, which will take you to the European Bison Show Reserve (on the way, you will pass an observation tower with a view of the clearing). The trail is one of the oldest nature trails in Poland! Please note that you must walk along the trail, so get off your bike and you will see more! Due to the beauty of nature, we definitely recommend returning to Białowieża along the same route. And on site, in the heart of the charming Palace Park, there is the **BNP Nature and Forest Museum**.



The museum is adapted to the needs of people with special needs.

Do you know that over 130 years ago, a magnificent wooden palace of Tsars stood on the site of the museum? In 1894, on the orders of Tsar Alexander III, the famous palace was built – destroyed during World War II, it was finally demolished in 1961.

The Tsarist era in the forest is remembered in the paths of the Palace Park, historic red brick buildings and the wooden **Governor of Grodno's Manor** from 1845, located by the ponds (today, educational activities for children and young people are organised there).



The manor house is the starting point for a **quest** – an outdoor game that will introduce you to the Tsarist era in Białowieża. But the royal history of Białowieża Forest and Białowieża goes back many centuries, to when Poland (then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) was a royal power!

Royal Białowieża Forest – the extraordinary history of an extraordinary forest

For centuries, the Białowieża Forest has welcomed exceptional people – Polish kings, tsars, scientists, cultural figures and politicians who shaped the fate of the world. Today, it will welcome you – and tell you its extraordinary story. About the hunts of King



Wladyslaw Jagiello, who visited Bialowieza over 40 times – including just before the battle with the Teutonic Knights in 1410! A mountain named after Stefan Batory (the highest peak in the forest) commemorates his stay, while Bialowieza still remembers the hunts of King Sigismund III Vasa. In the Palace Park, there is an **obelisk commemorating a great hunt** from almost three centuries ago (1752, to be precise). It is one of the oldest monuments in Bialowieza. The former importance of Bialowieza is also commemorated by a **small bell in the Orthodox church of St. Cyril and Methodius in Bialowieza**, with the inscription Anno Domini 1661 and... roads. When travelling to Bialowieza for a May Day holiday, vacation or weekend via the Narewkowska, Sinicka or Browska roads, we follow the trails of royal processions that traversed the Bialowieza Forest 500-600 years before us! **Browska Avenue** in Bialowieza has the status of a historical monument – it is a former communication route that once connected Krakow and Vilnius. The winding nature of the road connecting Hajnowka with Bialowieza, and the successive bends (our Podlasie serpentine), are said to be the work of Napoleon's armies marching towards Russia. The French were supposed to hide behind the bends from the enemy army, continuing their march eastwards.

The Bialowieza Forest region owe its development to King Sigismund the Old, who founded two towns: Narew and Kleszczele. Sigismund I the Old was also supposed to be the founder of the legendary castle with the even more famous 'white tower', later known as Bialowieza. The truth about the castle and the tower has been lost somewhere in the pages of history, but fragments of it have survived in **legends – such as the one about the Zamczysko and Stara Bialowieza** wilderness areas. It was somewhere in this area that the royal hunting lodge was supposed to be located. The legends about Zamczysko and the royal court are as old as the forest itself... And the facts? The location of Bialowieza, as we know it from today's maps, dates back to the 16th century – when the royal court was moved from the area of Stara Bialowieza and Zamczysko. Today, Stara Bialowieza has an **educational trail called 'Szlak Dębów Królewskich'** (The Royal Oak Trail), dedicated to the kings who visited the forest. Furthermore, graves from the Slavic period have been discovered in Zamczysko. You can learn about the "Traces of ancient settlements in the Bialowieza Forest" by following the clues of the **quest** in Bialowieza. The oldest forest in Europe hides many secrets... Are you willing to take up the challenge?



What to do in Bialowieza and the nearby area?

- Bialowieza National Park,
- Palace Park,
- European Bison Show Reserve and Educational Centre,
- bicycles, hiking trails, Nordic walking trails,
- quests,
- educational activities at the Jagiellonian Forest Education Centre and BNP,
- Bialowieza Bicycle Draisines,
- Sacred monuments,
- Open-air Museum of Wooden Architecture of the Podlasie Region,
- maze in Bialowieza,
- catamaran cruise.



Bialowieza for Your Summer Vacation!


There is plenty to do and see in Bialowieza and the surrounding area. You already know about the Bialowieza National Park, the Żebra Żubra educational trail and the historical treasures. You won't get lost in the maze of attractions! Or, to be precise, in **two hornbeam mazes** – and you'll also learn about the magical world of Slavic mythology.

How about relaxing on a **catamaran on the Narewka River**? If you feel tired from all the excitement, you can recharge your batteries in the mysterious **Place of Power** – a former Slavic cult site where you can still feel a mysterious energy today. It's the perfect place to recharge your batteries for further adventures!

A visit to the **Orthodox church of St. Nicholas** and the **Open-Air Museum of Wooden Architecture of the Podlasie Russians in Bialowieza** will be a treat for architecture lovers.

There is also the Bialowieza Palace Station, which refers to the tsarist times. The launch of the railway line in 1897 is also commemorated by the **Bialowieza Towarowa Station** – today, its restored interiors house the Tsars' Restaurant, and you can spend the night in the carriages and the historic water tower. Next to the restaurant, you can catch the **Bialowieza Draisine** – an interesting option for a trip into the Bialowieza Forest (and working off some calories :)).



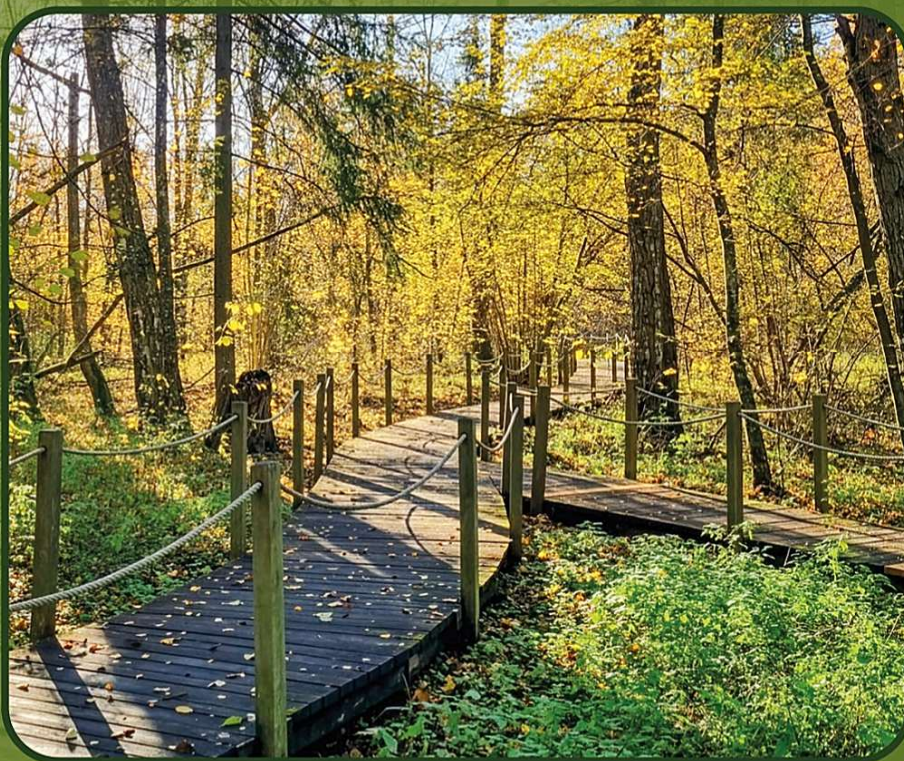


Bialowieza has a wide range of accommodation and restaurants offering traditional (delicious!) Podlasie cuisine. Don't worry about the extra calories – the close proximity of the forest and an extensive network of trails, paths and forest roads are perfect for recreation! You can explore Bialowieza and its picturesque surroundings with quizzes and outdoor games, by bike (there is a bike rental in Bialowieza) along the following trails:

- Green Velo Eastern Cycle Route;
- **Around Bialowieza (black, 13.5 km);**
- **Biodiversity of the Bialowieza Forest – cycling trail, yellow (26.2 km);**
- **Dubicze Cerkiewne – Topilo – Bialowieza (green, 41 km);**
- **Podlasie Stork Trail (red, 412 km, 62 km in the District of Hajnowka** – the section in our region starts in Bialowieza, runs through Pogorzelce, Narewka, Lewkowo Stare towards Narew and further).

Practice Nordic walking on the trails of the Bialowieza Nordic Walking Park. There are five routes of varying lengths to choose from, all in the form of loops:





- **Bialowieza Expedition (black) 10.6 km;**
- **Bialowieza Reconnaissance (red) 9.4 km;**
- **Dziedzinka (green) 8.8 km;**
- **Wysokie Bagno (yellow) 4 km;**
- **To Stara Bialowieza (black) 21 km.**

You can choose from the following educational trails of the Bialowieza Forest District: 'Żebra żubra' (2.7 km), the 'Trail of Royal Oaks' (1 km), 'Winged Hunter' (2.8 km), 'Forest Trees' (yellow, 2.5 km), 'Place of Power' (unmarked, 0.9 km), 'Forest Landscape' (red/unmarked, 5.6 km), or walking trails:

- **'Places of National Memory' (red, 14 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Czerlonka – Osada Zwierzyniec (blue, 41 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Topilo (yellow, 19 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Siemianowka (blue, 41 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Narewka (yellow, 21 km).**



Want more? Follow the walking/cycling trails to Narewka!

Narewka

Embrace nature!

Due to its location between the Białowieża Forest, Białowieża National Park and Lake Siemianówka, the municipality of Narewka is a tourist hit! When you are there, you will experience 'everything tourist-related' – from a network of trails to water tourism, forest biodiversity, an impressive calendar of events, and sports facilities. In addition, the municipality has a well-developed culinary base offering Polish, regional and Georgian cuisine, as well as accommodation facilities – cosy agritourism lodgings, guest-houses and campsites.

The municipality of Narewka is a haven for those who want to get in touch with nature and relax away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life – at least that is how it is today. The establishment of Narewka was not so much related to tourism as to industry. It all began in the 17th century, when an iron smelting plant was built on the Narewka River, followed by a village of the same name. At the turn of the century, the inhabitants of Narewka developed its industrial potential with varying degrees of success until the outbreak of World War II. At that time, the turpentine factory, glassworks and water mill disappeared, as did their owners and employees – Jews, Poles, simply 'the locals'. The only reminder of the large Jewish community is the **Jewish ceme-**

tery with matzevot (the oldest dating back to 1851), preserved in Narewka. The quest '**Jewish history of Narewka**' tells the story of the former inhabitants of Narewka. The leaflet can be downloaded from bialowieza.travel or in the app.

You can learn about interesting facts and souvenirs of local culture at the **Tamara Sołowieicz Gallery**, while the **Mural Triptych** at Bojarski Gościniec will be the perfect place for a holiday selfie! At the **Bee-keeping Museum** in Dwor Bartnika, you can taste (literally!) traditions dating back to the days of bee-keeping, and in the **sensory garden** surrounding the building, you can relax and recharge your batteries.

The centre of Narewka is crossed by the river of the same name, on which a **relaxation and recreation area** has been created. Active visitors can rent traditional or water bikes, Nordic walking poles and kayaking equipment on site. The municipality of Narewka will be part of the Pisa – Narew **kayaking trail**.

Fitness enthusiasts will not be disappointed by the offer of the **Sports and Education Centre in Narewka**. You can ask for details at the **Kayak Station**, which also serves as a **tourist information centre** and **accommodation base with a tent field and campsite**.





What to do in Narewka and the surrounding area?

- Bialowieza National Park,
- bicycles, kayaks, quests,
- educational and walking trails,
- educational and artistic workshops,
- Siemianowka reservoir and the Tourist, Recreation and Cultural Centre in Stary Dwor,
- Beekeeping Museum and sensory garden,
- Sports and Education Centre in Narewka,
- Recreation area in Narewka,
- regional chambers.





Nearby, there is a retention reservoir with benches and a small pier, where you will often meet fishing enthusiasts. And if you feel that these and other water attractions are not enough, head straight to **Lake Siemianowka!** The available options include windsurfing, sailing and canoeing. An interesting attraction are tourist boat trips and the recreation and leisure complex at Stary Dwor. The offer includes a beach, fire pits (you can barbecue regardless of the weather!), a climbing wall, tennis courts, sports fields, and seasonally – also a small catering facility. The area has convenient parking and social and sanitary facilities, designed with campers and campsites in mind. In the amphitheatre, right by the water, concerts and dance parties are held ‘under the clouds’.

The municipality of Narewka is bustling with life! During the season, there are numerous festivals, dances and sports tournaments. Among them are the Kresowe Marathons, the Zubr Cup Regatta, the Communal Harvest Festival and the mysterious Midsummer Night. Does the legendary fern flower grow on the waters of Narewka? The municipality of Narewka hides many secrets. Walking along the paths in the Bialowieza Forest, we will reach the **Lanczyno Forest District (near the village of Nowe Masiewo)**. In the thick forest, look for a hollow



in the ground – locals say that it is a remnant of an Orthodox church, which, together with its parishioners, disappeared under the ground!

Other **sacred monuments** have been retained in the municipality, along with the old traditions of the Podlasie countryside **in open-air museums** and regional chambers (e.g. 'Na Kupinie' in Siemianowka, in Suszczy Bork, Bora Zdroj in Lewkow Nowy). The landscape of old forest villages is still dominated by **traditional wooden architecture** with characteristic diminutives, and here and there, well cranes still tower over the farms...

The unquestionable asset of these areas is nature. The municipality of Narewka is surrounded by the Bialowieza Forest with the north-western part of the Bialowieza National Park. You can enjoy active recreation – hiking and cycling, and in winter – skiing. Over **25 km of hiking trails and 14 km of cycling** trails run through the most interesting parts of this section of the park.

Hiking trails in the Bialowieza National Park, in the Narewka municipality:

- **'Trail Around the Uroczysko Głuszczyca' (red, length 5.5 km);**
- **Wolf Trail: Zamosze – 'Kosy Most' (the longest tourist trail in the Bialowieza National Park, green, 11.5 km);**
- **'Carska Tropina' (black, length 4 km);**
- **'Tropem Żubra' (yellow, length 20 km, through the Bialowieza National Park for approx. 3.5 km).**

Cycling trails:

- **green** (longer: 7 km from Narewka to BNP, 12 km through the Park, 17 km back to Narewka);
- **black** (shorter: 7 km from Narewka to BNP, 2 km through the Park, 9 km back to Narewka).

The routes feature wooden platforms, viewing points, information boards and bison hides.



You can also explore the municipality of Narewka and its picturesque surroundings thanks to other cycle routes (you don't need to pack your own bike – you can rent one on site):

- Green Velo Eastern Cycle Route (section in the municipality of Narewka: Narewka Siemianowka – Nowa Luka – Eliazuki);
- **'To the Ladzka Forest' connecting Narew and Narewka (blue 36.6 km);**
- **Biodiversity Trail of the Bialowieza Forest region and Narew Valley (blue 50.7 km)** starts in the forest at the intersection of Tryb Zwierzyniecki and Droga Gorzysta, runs through the villages of Narewka and Narew);

- **Connecting trail: Michnowka – Nowa Luka – Stary Dwor – Tarnopol – Siemianowka (black, 11 km);**
- **The green Narew trail in the form of three loops (small – 18 km, medium – 36 km, large – 45 km);**
- **Podlasie Stork Trail (red, 412 km, 62 km in the District of Hajnowka).**

Hiking trails running through the municipality:

- **'In the footsteps of partisan battles' Hajnowka – Narewka (red, 22 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Siemianowka (blue, 41 km);**
- **Bialowieza – Narewka (yellow, 21 km).**

Nordic walking trails have also been marked out in the municipality of Narewka as part of the Nordic



Walking Park – Land of Good Winds:

- **Lesny elementarz – 4.2 km;**
- **Puszczanska petla – 7.9 km;**
- **Siemieniakowszczyzna – 8.2 km;**
- **Narewowska Road – 7.7 km;**
- **Chapel of St. Eustace – 12.7 km.**

And during your trip, be sure to visit the **Browsk Forest District** in the village of Gruszki. There, you can take part in educational activities, learn interesting facts about nature and the role of humans in forest conservation thanks to the **Nature and Forest Education Park**. The park consists of interesting educational facilities available to tourists: a **herbarium and educational trails, with a campfire site available for hire.**

You can learn about nature by walking along the paths in the reserves: Siemianowka, Dolina Waliczowki, Gnilec, and the Natural Forests of Bialowieza Forest. And around the lake runs the **route of the quest ‘Nature walks along the banks of the Siemianowka’.**

During forest walks, meetings with forest inhabitants are nothing unusual. And if you visit **Podlaskie Animal Planet – Mini ZOO** in the village of Zablotczyzna, you will also see alpacas and other animals.

In the municipality of Narewka, the paths of humans and nature naturally cross. Do you know how to behave when you encounter a wild animal?

An audience with the king of the forest, **or face to face with a bison** – **safety rule**

Although selfies with bison flood social media, causing widespread enthusiasm, you must remember that the bison – no matter how cute it may look – is first and foremost a wild animal, guided by instinct. And it has a head on its shoulders – literally! The head of an adult bison can weigh up to 50 kg!

Here are a few rules to keep in mind when following the tracks of this proud mammal or encountering it by chance:

- **Keep your distance!** At least 50 m. Do not try to shorten the distance or follow the bison.
- **Stay calm!** Do not make any sudden movements (we do not mention such obvious things as not throwing anything at the animal, trusting the reader's prudence). Just walk away, preferably without looking back.
- **Observation!** If not provoked, the bison will mind its own business, but if you notice nervous tail swishing, pawing at the ground or grunting, it is better to heed the bison's warning and calmly walk away.

- **Responsibility!** If you are walking your dog in the forest, by law, your pet must be kept on a leash.
- **Cleanliness!** Are you camping or walking in the forest? Do not leave food scraps behind! Do not throw them away near your home either.
- If you are travelling by car, slow down!

Bison can be seen from a safe distance at the **Bison Show Reserve** near Białowieża or in their natural habitat, in refuges. Viewing points are located in the Białowieża National Park, in its northern part, in the Czolo (behind the village of Stare Masiewo) and Kosy Most wilderness areas. **Observation towers** are also a good base for observing animals – in Narew, Siemianówka, Pogorzelce, Stare Masiewo, Siemieniakowszczyzna (right next to Lake Siemianówka). We invite the youngest visitors to Hajnowka – there is a **Żubr Pompik zone** in the Municipal Park – the most famous and friendly bison! The author of the series of books about Żubr Pompik is Tomasz Samojlik from Hajnowka – you can find these books in the local bookshop.

In autumn and winter, you can see European Bisons grazing in the fields by the road and along the cycle path from Hajnowka towards the municipality of Narew and the Land of Open Shutters. Prepare well for this trip – because there will be no shortage of excitement!





What to do in Narew and the nearby area?

- The Dunin Oak,
- The Land of Open Shutters,
- kayaking, cycling trails and quests,
- open-air museums and regional chambers in Soce, Skaryszewo and Narew,
- the Orthodox Hermitage in Odrynki.

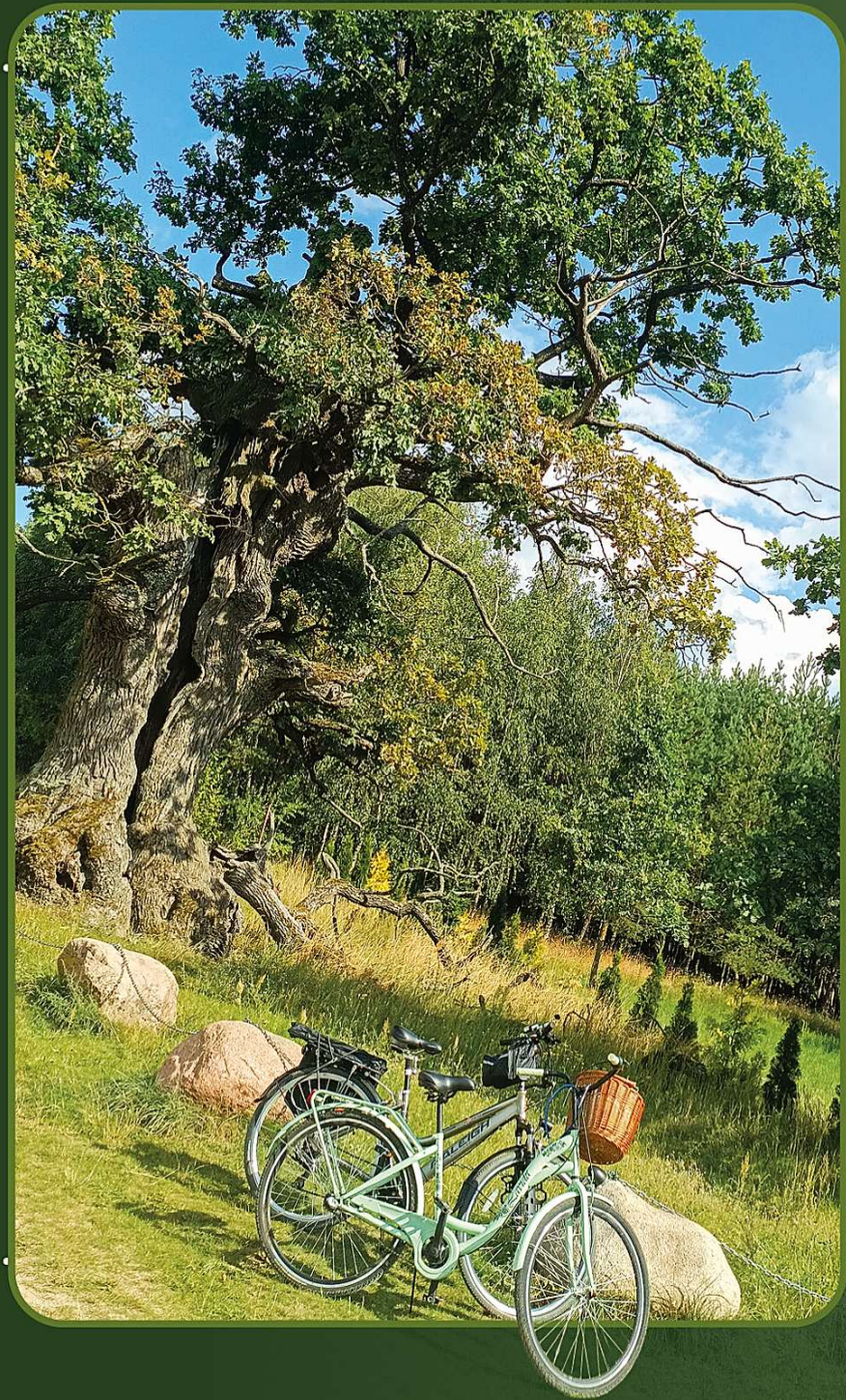


Following in the footsteps of wood-carving masters

– on the way to the Land of Open Shutters

It begins like a fairy tale – beyond the forests and the Narew River lies the historic land of the Narew Valley. It is guarded by the mighty **Dunin Oak** – European Tree of the Year 2021. Turn off the cycle path towards the village of Przybudki, and among the fields you will see a mighty 400-year-old oak tree – this is Dunin. It is 700 cm in circumference and has broken branches from a lightning strike – and it is still alive!

Your adventure with the Narew Commune – a land of legends, understatements and cultural treasures – is just beginning! On the way to the Land of Open Shutters, you will pass the village of **Narew**. Walking around its main square, near the historic **Orthodox church**





of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross from 1885, will you believe that Narew was once a thriving harbour town? Narew, like Kleszczele, owes its development to the Queen Bona. The ambitious queen pushed Narew onto an economic path, giving rise to the town's prosperity long before the establishment of Hajnowka!

The village hides many legends and secrets. Like the one about **Kuraszewska Gora**, where Queen Bona's castle was supposedly located. The castle was to be connected by a mysterious underground passage to the **Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr**. It is one of the oldest and best-preserved monuments of sacred architecture in Podlasie. Situated on a hill, it still towers over the Narew River. The church dates back to 1748 and has survived the most difficult moments in Polish history, protecting the history of the region – today partly shrouded in legends. It is said that under the church door there is the grave of a sinner who was buried here on purpose – people entering the temple were to trample on him forever so that he could atone for his sins. We will never know the truth about this mysterious burial or the identity of the Narew sinner – nevertheless, a tombstone, probably from the 16th century, has been preserved in the church and... it bears traces of being trampled on!



You will discover the royal history of the Narew River (and a treasure, too!) by following the clues in the **quest ‘In the Footsteps of Queen Bona’**. The Narew River, known as the Amazon of Podlasie, attracts **canoeing enthusiasts** today. In the valley, behind the church, there is a canoeing marina with an observation tower and a bonfire site (in summer, dances are held here). When planning your trip, you can start your adventure in Narewka – you can rent canoes on site, and then... Relax actively in the NATURA buffer zone. Paddle down the Narewka River towards the village of Gramotne (take a break here for a ride around the area in a traditional horse-drawn carriage), the village of Rybaki and further on towards the Narew River. A good option is to take part in kayaking trips organised by local travel agencies and tourist agencies – ask about them at the office of the Local Tourist Organization of the Bialowieza Forest region. Soon, Narew will be a stop on the inter-regional **Pisa-Narew kayaking trail**.

Between the floodplains of the Narew River, in the village of Odrynki, there is the **Skete of St. Anthony and St. Theodosius of Kiev-Pechersk in Odrynki**. A skete is an Orthodox hermitage. It is the only such place in Poland. A wooden footbridge leads to the church, located on an island – a bridge between the sacred and the profane... And above your head, the dome of the sky... The Skete in Odrynki was recognised as a Polish miracle of 2024 by National Geographic.

And the local wonder of Podlasie wooden architecture is the **Land of Open Shutters** – the villages of Puchly,

Soce and Trzescianka. Forest design is a treasure trove of patterns! Shutters, corners, windbreaks – their ornamentation, painted in a colour contrasting with the surface of the house, is delightful. Formerly a symbol of luxury (the richness of the patterns testified to the degree of wealth), today it is an expression of attachment to native tradition. This is also evident in the buildings – when driving through old forest villages such as Puchly, Trzescianka and Soce (as well as the village of Czyze, where you will also find architectural gems), you will notice that most of the houses face the road with their gables, while the farm buildings stand deep in the yard. Imagine that this terraced housing is a remnant of the great agrarian reform of the 16th century, carried out on the orders of Queen Bona! The inhabitants of the region remember their roots – thanks to the ‘Dziedzictwo Podlasia’ (Heritage of Podlasie) Association in Puchly, **artistic and traditional woodworking workshops** are held here. When visiting the Narew commune, be sure to visit the regional chambers and open-air museums in Skaryszew, Narew and Soce villages.

The cultural landscape of the “Land of Open Shutters” is co-created by **monuments of sacred architecture** from the intersection of the sacred and the legendary world. The village of Trzescianka is crowned by the domes of the Orthodox church of Archangel Michael from 1866. In addition, the historic Orthodox church in Puchly (the first mentions of the parish date back to the 16th century) houses a miraculous icon of the Mother of God. The walls of the parish are steeped in stories of miraculous healings.



You can discover the cultural wonders and attractions of the Narew commune on the following cycle routes:

- Land of Open Shutters: Narew – Ancuty – Trzescianka – Soce – Puchly (green, 16.2 km);
- To the villages in the Narew Valley: Doratynka – Klejniki – Lady – Kuraszewo (blue, 23.5 km), option for further travel – connecting trail – Lady – Leniewo – Czyze – Szostakowo – Nowe Berezowo (black, 13 km);
- ‘To the Ladzka Forest’: Narew – Makowka- Hajdukowszczyzna – Rybaki – Eliaszuki – Michnowka – Lewkowo Stare – Podlewkowie – Suszczy Borek – Minkowka – Zablotczyzna – Narewka – Swinoroje – Budy (blue, 36.6 km);
- Biodiversity Trail of Bialowieza Forest and the Narew Valley (yellow, 26.2 km).

You can also start from Hajnowka, ‘jumping’ onto the cycle path that runs along the regional road towards the capital of Podlasie – Bialystok. On the way, stop by the village of Borysowka for some ‘drewniak cookies’! The workshops are organised by Borysówka – Wieś Drewniana, one of the regional theme villages. And if you can't get enough of ‘otherworldly’ stories and want to have some fun to the beat of Podlasie music, pack your bags and head towards the municipality of Dubicze Cerkiewne!

The blue village Dubicze Cerkiewne

Heavenly blue

Dubicze is an old village in the forest – its history is lost in the passage of time and... the depths of legend. There is a story about an Orthodox church that disappeared underground as punishment for sins. Apparently, on the night of 12 July – the feast day of St. Peter and St. Paul according to the Julian calendar – the bells of the old temple can be heard from underground. Another version of the legend says that the church burned down – only the icon of the Mother of God survived, which the wind carried to the site of the present temple. The confusing fate of the Dubicze parish is reflected in the second part of the village's name – 'cerkiewne' (church).

The legendary treasure of Napoleon ignites the imagination of the youngest (and slightly older) treasure hunters. Following in the footsteps of Napoleon's army, we are sure to discover the natural and cultural beauty of Dubicze. The traditional architecture of the houses has been preserved, with characteristic decorations and terraced buildings (just like in the municipality of Narew, remember?). Here, you will come across a **thatched house from the early 20th century**, and in the **Chamber of Tradition** (the building is over 100 years old and used to serve as a school), you will learn about the old Podlasie design. And the village itself is **blue**! In the **histor-**

ic Orthodox cemetery, blue crosses rise towards the sky, resembling three-leaf clovers in shape. Because of this, the Dubicze cemetery is compared to the 'happy cemetery' in Săpânta, Romania. Nearby stands the Orthodox church of Our Lady of Protection – blue, of course! The 'Blue Trail in Dubicze' leads to a treasure hunt at the end of the route – but not Napoleon's!

The municipality of Dubicze Cerkiewne also hides many cultural gems: Dutch windmills in Koryciska and Grabowiec, the 18th-century Orthodox church of St. Anne in Stary Korowin with a **chapel with miraculous water**, which is said to have healing properties. The good reputation of Korninska water dates back to the 18th century! In turn, Werstok is home to one of the oldest Orthodox churches in the region, dedicated to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

The following cycle routes run through Dubicze Cerkiewne:

- Green Velo Eastern Cycle Route;
- Dubicze Cerkiewne – Topilo – Białowieża (41 km),
- Hajnowka – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Czeremcha – Piaski (85 km).

Hajnowka and Dubicze Cerkiewne are connected by a **cycle path** running along the provincial road. On the way, you will pass a turn towards the **Bachmaty artificial lake**. Thanks to revitalisation, there is tourist infrastructure here. Just right for fun during the Midsummer Night's celebrations called **Na Iwana na Kupala!**



In the Bialowieza Forest region, Kupala Night is celebrated in Czyże (always in June, around the summer solstice, always at the Leniewo reservoir), in Bialowieza, in Narewka (end of June, beginning of July), but the one at **Lake Bachmaty** is the most famous – it takes place on the first Saturday after 12 July. Kupala at Bachmaty is all about having fun with a touch of Podlasie folklore, with a craft fair and an elaborate ritual of floating wreaths on the water. Stay in the region for longer! A little later, in Czeremcha – a town about a 15-minute drive or an hour's bike ride from Dubicze Cerkiewne – one of the **largest folk festivals in Poland takes place – the Ethno Festival Czeremcha!** There are concerts by bands from Poland and abroad (not only from Europe), a handicraft fair, a food zone with regional cuisine from around the world, workshops, lectures and relaxation classes.

On your way to Czeremcha, you will pass the municipality of Kleszczele and the town of the same name. You will bring back many beautiful memories and... a souvenir 'horczok'!

What to do in Dubicze Cerkiewne and the nearby area?

- Bachmaty Lake,
- 'Na Iwana na Kupala' event, in the nearby area: Ethno Festival in Czeremcha,
- bicycles, quests,
- historic temples, wooden architecture.



“Pottery-loving” Kleszczele a royal town on the edge of the forest!

Kleszczele was once famous for its pottery. Particularly popular were the so-called ‘hładysзки’, clay vessels without handles, formerly used for collecting cream. The tradition has survived! In its name – because the **Municipal Centre for Culture, Sport and Recreation in Kleszczele** is called ‘Hładzzyka’ – and in its culture – because the Centre offers, among other things, **pottery workshops** using a potter’s wheel. And once you have made your own souvenir from the region, head for the **‘Kleszczele – the royal town’ walking trail**. You will learn about the topography of the town and its history, dating back to royal times. Kleszczele has had town rights for over 500 years!

The royal connections of Kleszczele are commemorated by the monument to Sigismund the Old in the town park, while the multi-ethnic character of the town is reflected in its **historic temples**, including the small Orthodox church of St. Nicholas from 1709. A multicultural, multinational, multi-lingual mosaic is the landscape of old and modern Kleszczele. And there was a moment in the town’s history when... the Dutch lived here. The **quest ‘Multinational in Kleszczele’** reminds us of the town’s former inhabitants. The former glory of Kleszczele is represented by the **historic wooden railway station** from around 1900. Although today the station

stands deserted, you can take the modern railway to the **Repczyce Reservoir**. There is an **educational walking and cycling path** around the reservoir, as well as tourist infrastructure. An observation tower towers over the reservoir – to reach the viewing terrace, you have to climb 133 steps! But it’s worth it!

In summer, Repczyce offers dances, open-air cinema and concerts. There is also a lot going on in the town and municipality. As part of the **ethnographic trail of the Kleszczele commune**, in early spring you can take part in **workshops on baking ‘bustowa łąpa’** in Saki village (yeast bread in the shape of a stork’s foot), and in Dobrowoda and Dasze villages there are **workshops on baking ‘korowaj’** – a traditional ceremonial wedding cake. In July, visit Toporeki village, where harvest rituals are re-enacted, including the so-called **‘Perepylica’**. Also if you are looking for food experiences, visit Wojnowka village. **Cheese-making workshops** are organised there by the **OFI farmstead**. You will have lot’s of fun!

The municipality of Kleszczele also hides local wonders. In the village of Saki, there is a historic parish church with a 19th-century belfry and an icon with the image of a saint, thanks to which extraordinary healings are said to have taken place here.





You can explore Kleszczele and its surroundings by bike, following these trails:

- Green Velo Eastern Cycle Route;
- **Hajnowka – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Czeremcha – Piaski (red, 85 km);**
- **Nurca Valley (blue, 58.1 km):** Repczyce reservoir – Kleszczele – Bocki – Bransk – Hodyszewo;
- From Hajnowka towards Kleszczele, there is a cycle path along the regional road. From here, you can enjoy a view of the forests of the **'Jelonka' landscape reserve.**

Nordic walking routes in the municipality of Kleszczele:

- **Dobrowoda 'Wynoczok' (red) 4 km;**
- **Dobrowoda "Kariery" (blue) 7.5 km;**
- **'Trubianka' (green) 8 km.**

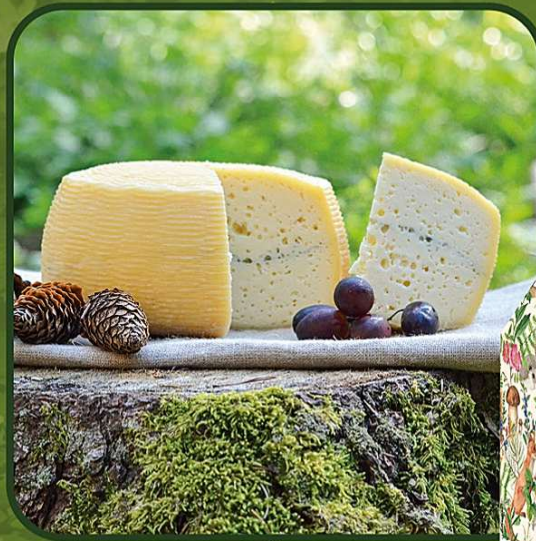
What to do in Kleszczele and the nearby area?

- Repczyce and water tourism,
- workshops in Hładyszka cultural center,
- the 'Kamionka' ceramics workshop in Policzna,
- cycling trails, quests, Nordic walking,
- historic temples.



As a Postscript Local Products, Meaning Tourism on a Plate

The Bialowieza Forest region is not only beautiful nature, a network of trails promoting active tourism and a unique culture... Bialowieza Forest is BEAUTIFUL – also thanks to its preserved traditions of pottery, wood carving, wickerwork, and rich designs preserved on towels, tapestries, crocheted tablecloths... It is also DELICIOUS! The Bialowieza Forest region is a real mix of flavours and aromas. The local cuisine is as diverse and multicultural as Podlasie itself – fragrant with herbs and forest, shaped by tradition and history – both of our friends and those with whom our homeland did not see eye to eye at the turn of the century; passed down from generation to generation along with a dowry hidden in a *sunduk* (i.e. a wooden dowry chest), with a rich tradition, drawing heavily on rituals and the gifts of nature.





Only here can you taste Marcinek cake, tsar's cheese, goat's cheese or Morbier cheese – prepared according to a 17th-century recipe! The menus of local pubs and cosy restaurants feature pelmeni, solyanka, potato cake, kołduny, pierogi, game and Old Polish dishes – but seasoned 'our way', with the gifts of the Bialowieza forest and aromatic herbs from the forest from local producers of spices and teas. The Bialowieza Forest region also has its own cider, beer, fudge, butter, jams, freeze-dried products, honey and marinades.

Products 'made in the Bialowieza Forest' are also the work of generations of craftsmen. From the Land of the European Bison, you will take away not only unique memories, but also those enclosed in jars of homemade products, embroidered, woven, carved or whittled in wood, formed on a potter's wheel...

The rich design emphasises the multicultural tradition, tolerance and hospitality, respect and attachment to nature and culture that regulate the rhythm of time. Because time flows differently here. See for yourself – come and relax surrounded by nature.



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