

**Polska**



Keanu Reeves invites you to Kujawy

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The Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship is situated in the central part of Poland, on both banks of the Vistula.

Surrounded by the Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Mazowieckie, Łódzkie, Wielkopolskie and Pomorskie Voivodeships, it is one of the five Polish regions which do not border with other countries. It covers an area of 18 thousand square kilometres and is inhabited by 2.1 million people. It ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the country both in terms of the area and population number.

The Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship has originated by combining the former Bydgoskie, Toruńskie and Włocławskie Voivodeships, which had existed since mid-1975, and by excluding small parts of the first two voivodeships mentioned. It has two capital cities - Bydgoszcz and Toruń. Bydgoszcz, with 359 thousand inhabitants, is home to the local government administration, including the voivod, whereas Toruń, inhabited by 203 thousand people, is the seat of regional government authorities, i.e. the assembly and the voivodeship administrative board. Apart from these two cities, the major urban centres include Włocławek (114 thousand inhabitants), Grudziądz (97.5 thousand) and Inowrocław (78 thousand). Over 60 percent of the voivodeship population reside in rural areas. The Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship comprises nineteen districts, four cities with district rights (Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Włocławek and Grudziądz), and one hundred and four communes.

## Gothic with the aroma of gingerbread

The region has recently been promoted by Keanu Reeves, one of the most renowned film stars worldwide. The Canadian actor has appeared in five promotional spots procured by the Marshal Office. The Kujawy and Pomerania Regions provide diverse tourist opportunities, both to history, architecture and art lovers, and to those who seek open-air relaxation.

Bydgoszcz is a music centre that has earned national fame. It houses the Pomeranian Concert Hall and Opera Nova. The city hosts a wide array of music events that attract musicians and music lovers from all over Europe, including the Bydgoszcz Opera Festival, the Music Festival, the Bydgoszcz Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis Festival, and the Paderewski International Piano Competition. The Feliks Nowowiejski Academy of Music is a real incubator for young talents. This was where Rafał Blechacz, the prize-winner of the 15<sup>th</sup> Chopin Competition, pursued his studies.

Bydgoszcz is also a significant military centre. The NATO Joint Forces Training Centre was launched there in 2004, and the NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence was established in the late 2013. Moreover, the National Service Centre for the F-16 helicopters was established within Military Aviation Works No. 2 in Bydgoszcz.

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century Bydgoszcz Canal is one of the most fascinating Bydgoszcz monuments. In its glory days, steam ships used to carry as many as 500 thousand tonnes of cargo per year. Currently, along with the surrounding park, it stands a great chance of being included in the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. The canal is 27 kilometres long. By connecting the Brda to the Noteć, it integrates the inland water transport systems of Western and Eastern Europe. Bydgoszcz is also known for its well-preserved secessionist architecture. Tourists can also admire the complexes of huge granaries, dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of which is located on Młyńska Island.

Gingerbread and the monumental Gothic architecture are the distinguishing features of Toruń. Among the twelve Gothic or Gothic-like tenement houses located in the city, the one where Nicolaus Copernicus was born in 1473 and spent the first seven years of his life is undoubtedly the most famous. The centre of the Old Town features a guildhall built in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century. This structure is considered one of the most impressive examples of the bourgeois Gothic architecture in Central Europe. The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist rises above the roofs of other Old Town buildings. The chapel of the Dormition of the Holy Virgin Mary

still houses the Gothic font which was used to baptise Nicolaus Copernicus. In 1500 a colossal Tuba Dei bell was placed at the church tower. The legend has it that touching the place which the bell hammer hits will bring you luck. The Toruń Old Town has been included in the UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites.

Built by the Prussian army at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Toruń Stronghold is also not to be missed. In the past it consisted of fifteen forts, over eighty shelters and forty artillery batteries, all connected by a roads system, and a telegraphic and telephone network. In the 4<sup>th</sup> fort you can find a guide that will show you around. You can also rest in a chalet or grab some food in a restaurant. Visiting Toruń, you might wish to see ruins of the Teutonic castle, remnants of the Teutonic Order rule in Pomerania. Its construction began in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and continued for the next two hundred years.

A Teutonic stronghold, built at the turn of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, can also be admired in Golub-Dobrzyń. At the outset of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the stronghold walls, following the liberation by King Sigismund III, underwent major modifications, inspired by princess Anna Vasa of Sweden, who ordered the fortress to be converted into a Renaissance manor house. She has guarded her estate ever since, reappearing as a white spectre in the gallery. The stronghold was surrounded with Italian gardens that featured the first raising of tobacco which back then was considered a decorative plant.

Ciechocinek, commonly referred to as a gem of the Polish health resorts, is one of the most popular health-resort towns in Poland. What makes it truly unique is the abundance of thermal brine resources with extraordinary healing properties. The complex of three wooden brine graduation towers, each almost 16 metres high, is a real showcase of this town. The air around these natural inhalators is filled with iodine. The health resort area also comprises a picturesque Health Resort Park and four complexes of historic spa baths. This all creates an inimitable atmosphere of a garden-town. Ciechocinek provides an array of accommodation, spa, rehabilitation and treatment opportunities, coupled with diversified catering and cultural services. Each July the town hosts the Romany Songs and Culture Festival.

Chełmno is an ideal place for lovers. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary Gothic church, dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and being one of the oldest churches in Pomerania, is where the relics of St. Valentine are kept. Each year, a number of special events are organised on Valentine's Day, and the visitors have an opportunity to taste traditional Valentine rolls with lovage and a large variety of heart-shaped sweets. Those who get tired can rest on the lovers' bench in the Nowe Planty park.

The archaeological reserve in Biskupin is one of the most recognised monuments in the Kujawy and Pomerania Region, known all over the world. This is where remnants of a Lusatian settlement were discovered in the 1930s. Numbers of researchers and tourists are attracted by well-preserved traces of the 2700-years-old stronghold located on a marshy island on Lake Biskupińskie, which used to be inhabited by around thousand people. Along with the reconstructed settlement, the local museum displays include tools, ornaments, weaver mills, and dish and weapon parts found by archaeologists. Each year, in the third week of September, an archaeological festival is organised here.

## The land of a hundred lakes

The untouched natural beauty is what captures the visitors of the Kujawy and Pomerania Region. Located in the north-west of the voivodeship, the Tuchola Forest forms the second largest forest complex in Poland, following the Białowieża Forest. They comprise nine hundred lakes, forty of which cover an area of over one kilometre square. Larger lakes, including especially Wdzydze and Charzykowskie, are perfect for sailors, whereas the numerous meanders of the Wda and the Bdra rivers attract kayaking lovers. Certain parts of the forest have been protected as the Tuchola Forest National Park.

The Brodnickie Lake District spreads across the north-eastern part of the voivodeship. It features over a hundred lakes, forests, picturesque hills and clear air. It is crossed by the Drwęca, which is home to trout and salmon. The Drwęca gorge in the section between Nowe Miasto Lubawskie and the Brynica estuary is especially eye-catching as the river flows through a deep valley. Its upper section, in turn, is a sanctuary of wild birds.

You can cycle across the voivodeship, following the Wiślana Cycling Path that is 238 kilometres long on the left Vistula bank, and 212 kilometres long on the right one. As it runs through the area of the Natura 2000 programme, you may encounter several dozen species of animals and plants. The largest cities of the region, namely Bydgoszcz, Toruń, Włocławek and Grudziądz, as well as Chełmno and Świecie, are also located along the path. The Wiślana Cycling Path is connected to other cycling routes and it borders with railway stations. A dedicated website has been launched from which cyclists can download a guide and a special mobile application.

The "Menu Kulturalne" on-line portal, run by the voivodeship authorities, provides up-to-date information on the current and planned cultural events in the region, including a list of periodic events organised in Kujawy and Pomerania, such as the "Kontakt" International Theatre Festival, the Bydgoszcz Musical Festival, the Bydgoszcz Opera Festival and the International Paderewski Piano Competition in Bydgoszcz.

## The most renowned figures

Many famous people come from the Kujawy and Pomerania Region. The most renowned former Toruń resident is the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus who revolutionised the human knowledge of the universe. This is also the place of birth of Elżbieta Zawacka, alias "Zo", the Home Army courier, the only woman serving in the Silent Unseen paratroops of the Polish Army, and the second Polish woman ever to be promoted to the position of brigade general. Toruń is the home town of Bogusław Linda and Olga Boładź, two Polish actors, and Janusz Leon Wiśniewski, the author of a best-selling book entitled "Samotność w sieci". Bydgoszcz, in turn, is the place of birth of Jeremi Przybora, the co-founder of Kabaret Starszych Panów, the former Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, and the actresses Grażyna Szapołowska and Adrianna Biedrzyńska.



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