Geography

- Poland’s territory accounts for 1.4% of Europe’s total surface area and 0.2% of world’s total territory.
- Poland is the 9th largest country in Europe (after Russia, Ukraine, France, Spain, Sweden, Germany, Finland & Norway) and 63rd in the world.
- Poland is 120 times bigger than Luxemburg and 10 times bigger than Belgium.
- The voivodeship of Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) is exactly the size of Belgium.
- Today’s territory of Poland was determined after the II World War at peace conference in Yalta and Potsdam. Poland lost ca. 20% of its prewar territory.
- Borders of Poland:
  - 467km with Germany
  - 790 km with Czech Republic
  - 541 km with Slovakia
  - 535 km with Ukraine
  - 418 km with Belarus
  - 104 km with Lithuania
  - 210 km with Russia
- Length of coast – 788 km
On 1 Jan 1999 a new three-tier administrative division of the country was introduced, the entities of which are: voivodeships, powiats and gminas.

There are: 16 voivodeships, 314 powiats, 65 cities with powiat status, 2478 gminas.

Major Polish cities are: Warsaw, Lodz, Cracow, Wroclaw, Poznan, Gdansk, Szczecin, Bydgosz, Katowice and Lublin.
Topographical features

- Poland is a relatively low-lying country. 91% lies below 300 m above sea level.
- The highest point is Mt. Rysy (2499m) in Tatras.
- There are 3 main mountain ranges in Poland:
  - The Carpathians
  - The Sudetan Mountains
  - The Holy Cross Mountains (Gory Swietokrzyskie)
- The main rivers are:
  - Vistula (1047km)
  - Oder (854 km)
  - Warta (808 km)
  - Bug (772 km)
- Poland has ca. 9300 lakes with surface areas over 1 ha. They make up 1% of the country territory.
  - The largest is Sniardwy (11,383 ha)
  - The deepest is Hancza (108.5m)
Pomerania – The Baltic Coast

• The capital of Eastern Pomerania is Gdansk, one of the major Polish seaports. Together with Gdynia and Sopot it makes up a vast metropolis known as Tripecity. More to the east there is Hel Peninsula dotted with quite and pleasant seaside resorts.

• Western Pomerania encompasses the islands of Uznam and Wolin plus the Szczecin and Koszalin costlands. There are popular resorts recognized as spas (Miedzyzdroje, Kamien Pomorski, etc.)

• Diversified coast line.

• All the beaches are sandy, strewn with sea-washed shells and pieces of amber.

• The shore has alternating high and flat streches: cliffs and dunes.

• There are 3 nationals parks: Wolinski, Slowinski and Bory Tucholskie.

• Amber was known and appreciated in antiquity; it was transported from Baltic to ancient Rome (The Amber Road). It is crafted into sculptures and jewellery. It emits anions which are beneficial for human body.
Masuria
- “The land of thousands lakes”

- Most lakes are linked by rivers and canals, of which the main attractions are the Augustow and Elblag canals.
- One-fourth of all the lake water in Poland
- Paradise for yachting enthusiasts, canoeists, hikers and walkers.
- Extensive woods, including The Pisz forest and the Augustow forest, provide a network of ramblers’ trails ideal for hiking, biking and horse-riding.
- More attractions come with numerous Gothic castles and churches built by the Teutonic Knights.
The Tatras

- The highest range in the whole Carpathians.
- At the foot of Tatras lies Zakopane – “Poland’s winter capital” with an exceptionally rich folk culture: customs, music, costumes, dialect and distinctive architecture.
- It abounds in waterfalls. The two best-known are: Wodogrzmoty Mickiewicza and Siklawa.
- 43 glacial tarns / lakes with total area of 160ha. The biggest, most beautiful and most accessible is Morskie Oko (1393 m above sea level).
- The flora and fauna are protected by the Tatra National park. A remarkably rich flora – over a thousand vascular plants have been found. Many different types of animals, of which the most eminent are: brown bear, golden eagle, mountain goat, marmot.
Warsaw

- Razed to the ground during the II War, it was rebuilt with devotion, but rather chaotically. It resembles a gigantic patchwork of bright colours (restored palaces, churches, monuments) mixed with grey mass of blocks of flats. But it does not stop this city to grow further.
- Life in Warsaw is visibly faster than in other parts of the country. Streets are jammed with traffic, modern steel-and-glass offices and vast shopping malls appear virtually overnight.
- The Warsaw’s landmark – Palace of Culture and Science was designed by a Soviet architect and built between 1952 and 1955 as a “gift of the Soviet nation for Poland”.
- In 1980 the Old Town was listed by UNESCO as an example of perfect reconstruction work making use of what had survived from the original buildings.
A city with a thousand years of tradition. Unlike Warsaw, it was not devastated during the II War.

Cracow attracts tourists thanks with countless monuments, splendid museums, lively bars and cafes.

The two biggest sights are the Royal Castle on Wawel Hill and the Main Market Square, surrounded by finely restored old town houses.

In 1978 the Old Town was entered on UNESCO’s first World Heritage List, a prestigious distinction awarded then only to 12 most valuable sites in the world.
Lifestyle – The Polish way of doing things

- First names ...
  - The socially accepted habit of preceding first name with “Pan / Pani” (Mr / Ms) is the most prevalent custom. Dropping Mr / Ms is taken as impolite behaviour.
  - “Bruderszaft” is something like a fraternal toast. The relations between people who take part in this ceremony turn from official to personal and from then on the first names can be used.
  - Bruderszaft has its consequences – you must remember about name-days. This anniversary is important for Poles and celebrated in a special way.

- All for the ladies
  - The custom of kissing a woman’s hand on meeting is still prevalent, but slowly going out of fashion in some section of society.
  - No well brought up Polish men will walk through a door before a woman.

- Family above all
  - Public opinion poll results show that finding a successful family life is the most important value for Polish.
  - Poland has one of the lowest divorce rates in Europe, partly due to the significance of religion.
  - The most popular family model is “2+2” and according to the precise statistics it is “2+1.5”.
  - There is a correlation between the fall in population and the growth in the number of pets. It’s difficult to find a home without a pet.
Lifestyle – The Polish way of doing things, cont.

- **Free time**
  - Walking the dog is the most popular form of spending free time for many Poles.
  - Recently in fashion: cycling, going to fitness centres, roller skating and bowling.
  - Only watching TV enjoys greater popularity – Poles watch an average 4 hours a day.

- **To the guests’ health**
  - Alcohol consumption is systematically falling and beer is enjoying greater popularity than vodka these days.
  - The first toast is usually raised by the host “to the guests’ health”. It can be easily imagined that the next toast will be raised by the guest to the hosts’ health. And afterwards – you can raise a toast to anything you fancy…
  - Surprisingly Polish national drinks are non-alcoholic: tea or coffee. Many traditionalists maintain the custom of drinking so-called Turkish coffee.

- **Guest in the home, God in the home**
  - Traditionally a guest had to be offered all the best things available. When the best was not forthcoming, Poles would resort to the following expression: “get into debt, but do it in style”.
  - The desire to please the guests is still prevalent in Poland today.

- **Polish discussions**
  - Anyone not wanting to risk an argument should not start a discussions about politics. It is almost always finished with searching for those responsible for the fact that the glorious past has turned into the dismal present-day.
**Religion**

- Dominance of Catholic Church
- The characteristic feature of Polish religious movements is a fondness for traditional practices and Christian ceremonies such as pilgrimages to holy places, liturgical processions (e.g. for the feast of Corpus Christi), etc. Special significance is attached to the cult of Virgin Mary, revered especially in Czestochowa, in Lichen.
- A religion in Poland gained a new dimension in 1978, after election of Karol Wojtyla for the pope. Within Poland, the person of John Paul II was viewed in a special light, and his activities were regarded as linked to the enormous socio-political changes of the 1980's.
Lifestyle – The Polish way of doing things, cont.

- The great improvisations
  - Poles have always managed better in exceptional circumstances, when it was necessary to make a concerted effort, than in normal situations.
  - They improvised during the uprisings, wars and the Round Table of 1989. They find the actual building harder, since it demands long-term effort.
  - If a Pole really wants something, nothing is impossible. But the problem is for the Pole to “want to want”

- Work and pay
  - The combination of Polish ability to improvise and Western management methods has brought some interesting results. Ambitious young people, hungry for success, have turned into affective managers, working very intensively.
  - Blue-collar and office workers respect their work. In the hierarchy of Poles’ fears, unemployment has moved up to the first place.
  - Polish resourcefulness and enterprising spirit find their expression in trade. One will find street-markets in the least expected places.
Lifestyle – The Polish way of doing things, cont.

The table

- If in France one cannot count all the types of cheese, in Poland the same applies for sausages and cold cuts
- Polish cuisine has elements taken from the cooking traditions of the many national groups lived in country (Jews, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Lithuanians)
- The essential part of the main Polish meal is soup. The most popular is barszcz.
- The most popular traditional dishes are: pierogi (dumplings), bigos (made of cabbage) & golabki (cabbage leaves stuffed with meat)
- As for drinks – the Polish speciality is clear vodka, but beer lovers should not be disappointed either. Stronger spirits include number of fruit and herbal drinks consumed for their medical or warming-up properties, or simply because of their taste.
Intercultural differences – Hofstede’s results

- Characteristics of Polish
  - Creativity
  - Ambition
  - Enthusiasm
  - Spontaneous action
  - Natural ability to delegate
  - 2 Poles = 3 opinions
  - Bureaucracy
  - Tendency to complain
  - Postponing until the last moment
  - Unpunctuality
  - Limited communication
### Intercultural differences – Hofstede’s results

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