



The Great Mazury Lakes Trail

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When we think of Mazury, we usually associate it with sailing on the lakes, beautiful, wild landscapes, large stretches of forests, and wind - not always blowing in the sails. And that's right! Someone who has never stayed in this area is not aware of how much he has lost, but someone who has just once been tempted to experience the Masurian adventure, will remain faithful to the Land of the Great Mazury Lakes forever. The unquestionable natural and touristic values of the region are substantiated by the fact that it qualified for the final of the international competition, the New 7 Wonders of Nature, in which Mazury has been recognised as one of the 28 most beautiful places in the world.

We shall wander across these unique areas along the water route whose main axis, leading from Węgorzewo to Nida Lake, is over 100 km long. If one is willing to visit everything, a distance of at least 330 km needs to be covered, and even then some places will remain undiscovered. The route leads to Węgorzewo, via Giżycko and Ryn to Mikołajki, from where you can set off to Pisz or Ruciane-Nida. If one wants to sail slowly, the proposed route will take less than two weeks. Choosing the express option, it is enough to reserve several days to cover it.

What can fascinate us during the trip we are just starting? First of all, the environment, the richness of which can be hardly experienced on other routes. Magnificent shores, mysterious lake surfaces, the horizon emerging among the straits, canals, islets and peninsulas, picturesque bays bathed in the setting sun... And everything is covered with abundant wildlife throbbing with energy, the screaming of rare bird species and encounters with local animals. It is here, if we are patient enough, where we can spot the white-tailed eagle, see the famous Polish primitive horses (Konik polski), or a lynx escaping into the forest.

The Land of a Thousand Lakes also provides a fascinating encounter with unusual culture, history and art. Local monuments, starting with Masurian huts, through collections of the oldest Reformation prints, the fortresses and castles of the Teutonic Knights, and ending with beautiful temples of various nominations; Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, which are amazing. On the one hand, traces of ancient settlements, masterly architecture, tiny enchanting churches, museums with breathtaking exhibits. On the other hand, unbelievable legends full of magic and supernatural powers, voices of the Galindians enchanting as the whisper of the wind, the ruffians' screaming, and the rustling of the Pisz Forest leaves. Let us remember that it is sometimes worth stepping down onto the land to savour this unique history and culture, where their echo continuously circulates above and around the Land of a Thousand Lakes.

It's time to board, dear lovers of aquatic pleasures. Grab the paddles, move the wheels, wind in the sails ... Let King Sielaw be friendly to you!



WATER, FORESTS AND WIND, i.e. the essence of the Mazury climate

Wind in the sails...
photo GEP Chroszcz





CHAPTER I.

A few words about the region

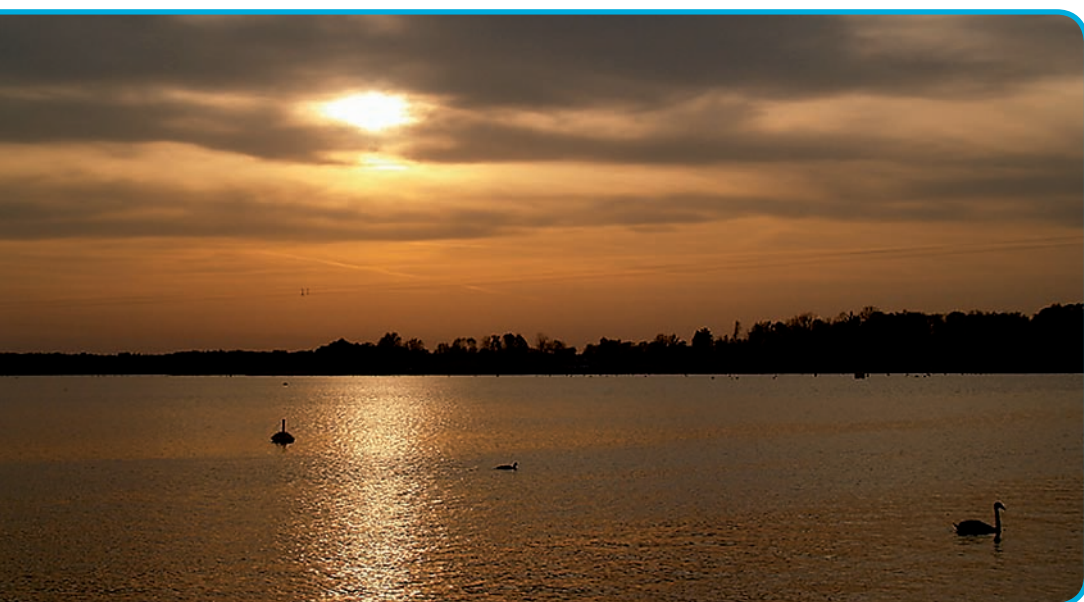
LAND OF THE GREAT MAZURY LAKES

You will never find a similar place in Poland! The Great Mazury Lakes is an area which is unique, not only on a national scale but also worldwide. The only possible competitor in Europe is Finland. Mysterious,

untamed, always beautiful, sometimes dangerous... Pristine landscapes, and the abundance of forms, which can be seen as a result of the long 'stay' of the Scandinavian Ice Sheet here, has made the area one of the most attractive regions in Poland. The lake districts, which are very interesting in terms of hydrology, are located in this region. In the west, Chełmno-Dobrzyń Lake District has many small lakes, including, among others, Główny Lake and Sosno Lake. In its eastern part, the Hump of Lubawa stands, with its unusual land relief, abundant mixed forests and two big lakes: Dąbrowa Wielka and Dąbrowa Mała. The Dylewo Hills are particularly characteristic, with the highest peak in the European Plain east of the Vistula up to Ural – Dylewo Mountain (312 m above sea level). The well-developed system of terraces with lakes and endorheic basins in the Drwęca Valley is very picturesque, along which the natural reserve stretches, with the famous Czarci Jar (Devil's Ravine) at the source. The remaining areas of this part of the region are less interesting due to their monotonous, flat nature. This deficiency, however, can be compensated by a visit to some interesting places in this part of Warmia and Mazury, such as Lubawa, Nowe Miasto Lubawskie or Grunwald, which were Prussian settlements in the past.



Drwęckie Lake,
photo J. Pruszyńska





West of Chełmno-Dobrzyń Lake District, the Iława Lake District is situated, once gracefully called Pomesania. Situated by four rivers – the Vistula, the Osa, the Drwęca and the Pasłęka – it is distinguished by numerous hills and lakes among which the most interesting lakes include: Jeziorak, Narie and Drwęca Lakes. The Iława Forests are also worth visiting as they constitute, together with Jeziorak Lake – the Landscape Park of the Iława Lake District, with its characteristic landscape including: terminal moraines, recessional moraines, sandre fields, and cavities filled with water after the dead ice. One of the most interesting attractions of this part of the lake district is the Elbląg Canal of which part was acknowledged as a monument of technology in 1978, while in 2011 the whole facility was recorded as a historic monument. While visiting this part of the region, the tenement houses in Ostróda are a must-see, Jasne Lake near Siemiany, with its unusual, water visibility of over 10-metres, or the monuments of Morąg.

Finally, we reach the Mazury Lake District, located in the central and eastern part of the region. Visitors to the area can expect excellent tourist services and a wonderful natural environment with a full range of attractions. The route proposed in this publication is also entirely situated within the area of this lake district. It stretches from Olsztyn to the Great Mazury Lakes and Elk, and is divided into several smaller mesoregions: the Olsztyn Lake District, the Mrągowo Lake District, the Land of the Great



Narie Lake,
fot. J. Pruszyńska

Jelenie Inclined Plane,
fot. J. Pruszyńska





Węgorapa Land,
Mamry Lake,
Krutynia – river rafting,
photo GEP Chroszcz

Mazury Lakes, the Land of Węgorapa, the Szeskie Hills, the Elk Lake District, and the Mazury Plain. Chains of moraine hills, sandre fields and numerous lakes, covering 7% of the lake district area, ensure this diverse landscape is the main landmark of the region. Apart from unusual flora and fauna, it is possible to find traces of magnificent historical events, adventures and legends here – at least in Pisz Forest, Giżycko or Węgorzewo.

The Land of the Great Mazury Lakes covers the central part of the Mazury Lake District. The lakes and reservoirs, covering an area of 486 km², represent one fourth of the whole lake resources of our country. Clusters of reservoirs, natural water routes as well as marshlands and moors make this region unique, not only from a hydrological point of view. Lakes of oblong shape and great depth are a reminder of the erosion of streams flowing from the glacier at high speed. A typical example is the channel stretching along a distance of 35 km from Ryn to Ruciane (Lakes of Ryn, Tałty, Mikołajki and Beldany). The lakes of Śniardwy, Mamry or Niegocin represent the recessional moraine, i.e. the basins. They developed in depressions between the hills of terminal moraines and are typically of large surface, small depth and diverse shore line, with numerous peninsulas and islands.

Talking of the hydrology of the region, one should not forget its biggest rivers – the Łyna, the Drwęca and the Pasłęka. Although their sources are located within a short distance from each other, the rivers flow into three different basins. The Łyna (264 km in length, 190 km within Poland), the biggest river of the region

and the left-sided tributary of the Pregola, originates in the vicinity of the place of the same name (nearby Nidzica). The Drwęca (207 km), the right-sided tributary of the Vistula, flows into the area of Drwęck



near Olsztynek by the Hump of Lubawa. With the Elbląg Canal, it is connected to the Vistula Lagoon, making a scenic canoeing route. The Pasłęka (169 km) empties directly into the Vistula Lagoon which has its source in the meadows of Gryżliny in the Olsztyn Lake District. The most well-known river of Mazury is the Krutynia (100 km) along which a very popular canoeing route leads. What is important is that the rivers of the region amount to one thousand km of canoeing routes! Some of them also make state watercourses. Navigation routes, on the other hand, have a total length of over 200 km. In addition, numerous passes, straits and canals allow easy sailing between the lakes and rivers, making numerous options possible.

Pisz Forest,
photo GEP Chroszcz



Sosna Taborska (Taborska Pine) Reserve,
photo J. Pruszyńska

The early post-glacial landscape of the land is diversified due to numerous hills, the height of which reach up to 300 m above sea level. Among the widespread forest areas, the most characteristic ones include: Napiwoda-Ramuki Forest (pine woods), Rominty Forest (pine and spruce woods, sometimes called the Polish Taiga), the Borki Forest (miscellaneous forest stands) and Pisz Forest. The latter deserves special attention due to numerous ribbon lakes, hills of terminal moraine and wavy plains of recessional moraine. It is dominated by pine and spruce forest stands. The Pisz Forest also hides an interesting history of settlements and many amazing legends, thanks to which its mysterious character successfully attracts tourists, whose interests are not only due to geographical reasons. Adding Tabórz Forests and Łława Forests to the above-mentioned places, which are typical of completely different forest stands, in comparison to those in the east of the region, we can certainly classify the land as one of the most interesting areas of Poland from a botanical point of view.



NATURAL PROTECTION

In the territory of the region, 8 landscape parks and over 100 natural reserves exist. The total area of protected zones covers over 60% of the region's territory, and the forms of protection are diverse, from the above-mentioned landscape parks, through reserves to natural wonders. A considerable part of these areas are deemed as silence zones and it is possible to moor your canoe or boat only at indicated places. Every effort is taken to let protected species and relics be enjoyed by the arriving tourists.

The landscape parks of the region include: Brodnice, Górzno-Lidzbark, the Masurian, the Rominta Forest, the Iława Lake District, the Wel, the Elbląg Height, the Dylewo Hills Landscape Parks. The leading park is obviously the most well-known as well as being the oldest - Masurian Landscape Park, which encompasses the biggest Polish lake, Śniardwy, and a small part of the Pisz Forest, also known as Jańsborski Forest. Special attention should be paid to reserves within the boundaries of the park - Łuknajno lake, with the biggest settlement of mute swan in Poland and Czapliniec reserve, the habitat of grey heron.

In total, 102 natural reserves are located within the land (ornithological, forest-peat land, landscape-florist-fauna, landscape-forests, forests, waters, landscape, geological), among which four were registered in the list of Ramsar Convention register (Karaś Lake, Oświn Lake, Drużno Lake and Łuknajno Lake). The Convention signed in 1971 is to protect and maintain the wetlands in an unchanged condition.

In the region it is also possible to see over two thousand natural monuments. Among them it is worth mentioning the impressive huge old oaks, pines of original shapes, charming linden alleys, glacial erratic and buffer strips. The most interesting monuments include: the second biggest erratic in Poland in Bisztynek, the Devil's Stone (with a circumference of 28 m), the Tatar Stone near Nidzica, Bażyński's Oak tree avenue in Sztynort and Lira pine in Ruciane-Nida.



Mazury Landscape Park,
photo GEP Chroszcz



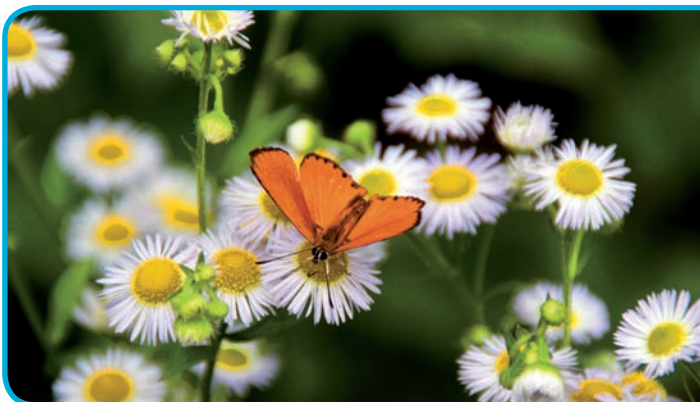


FLORA AND FAUNA

In the Land of Great Mazury Lakes, lovers of botany, ornithology or zoology will certainly never be bored – such a variety of diverse species can rarely be found in other parts of Poland. The area is also abundant with numerous plants – broom moss, peat moss, raised moss, swamp willow or Lapland willow, as well as a limited number of gammarus, sponges and European pond turtle. A richer palette of curiosities is represented by local bird species. If we are lucky, we may see black grouse, white and black swan, common crane, Ural owl, cormorant, grey heron, black and green woodpecker, or the charming nutcracker. However, if we are not able to spot any “rarity”, we can use our other senses – diverse, (and loud) sounds will certainly substantiate the close presence of Masurian birds.

Within Mazury, many interesting animal species can be encountered. In

The Land of Great Mazury Lakes provides shelter for unusual species of fauna and flora, photo GEP Chroszcz



THE WHITE STORK

In Warmińsko-Mazurskie, the white stork is worth special attention. Its worldwide population amounts to about 230 thousand couples, with one out of eight coming from Warmia or Mazury! Numerous “stork” villages in Mazury can gather up to several dozen nests, therefore it is relatively easy to see storks feeding in the valleys or river pools. For several years efforts have been undertaken which are aimed at providing maximum protection for this species, among others, through the construction of convenient places for nesting and education of the local communities.

Every one in eight storks in the world is a native Warmian or Masurian!, photo GEP Chroszcz





Cran
Grus grus



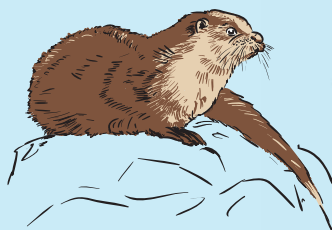
Grey heron
Ardea cinerea



Woodpecker
Dendrocopos minor



Beaver
Castor fiber



Otter
Lutrinae



Stoat
Mustela erminea



The inhabitants of the Great Mazury
Lakes, fig. RS, M. Rypiński, A. Styriska

many cases they include specimens which do not live at large, and the indicated areas under protection provide the only opportunity to have contact with them. On Masurian routes it is often possible to spot squirrels, hedgehogs, hares, foxes, beavers and badgers. If we are extremely lucky, we may also see an elk, wolf, deer, otter, or even a stoat!

Some of these species can be encountered at only one place on our route, therefore, if we are interested in animal or vegetational “rarities”, it is worth including these corners when planning our route.

UNGULATES

Kosewo Górze, with its picturesque location at the border of the Masurian Landscape Park by Kuc Lake, welcomes visitors to the deer farm which is the scientific research station of the Polish Academy of Sciences. It is possible to walk among the tamed deer as well as visit fallow deer, mouflons and does. The facility also accommodates a museum with an impressive collection of deer antlers. Sightseeing is possible with a guide.

While sailing on Śniardwy Lake, one should not omit another attraction of the region, namely, Popielno where studies on the wild Polish konik (primitive horse) have been carried out for years. It stems directly from the wild horse, i.e. the tarpan and the horses live in herds in a widespread reserve established specially for them. In the forest where they live, footpaths are indicated which help visitors become acquainted with various plant species.

The descendants of the wild tarpans – Polish koniks, photo GEP Chroszcz





CHAPTER II. The Great Mazury Lakes Trail – let's go!

Sunrise over the Great Mazury Trail,
photo D. Zaród



The Trail of the Great Mazury Lakes leads through the biggest towns located on the lakes, which we are now going to pass: Węgorzewo, Giżycko, Ryn and Mikołajki. In these towns you can find many interesting historical structures; it is also worth mooring by the shore in random places just to see the various cultural treasures scattered over the Land of the Great Lakes. Some of them are placed just by the shore, however, to reach others, it is necessary to travel several kilometres across the countryside. If one wants to spend most of the time on the water and take advantage of the splendid natural environment, the Great Mazury Lakes are certainly interesting, with the richness of their shore lines, numerous tiny islands, picturesque passes and bays. Behind Mikołajki, the trail splits into two – one path leads to Ruciane-Nida, the other to Pisz. Both choices are full of fascinating spots, the decision on which to visit will be one of the most serious dilemmas while on the trail.



WĘGORZEWO – GIŻYCKO – RYN – MIKOŁAJKI

Before we board a boat to take us to Giżycko, along the route across the second biggest lake of Poland – Mamry, we should become acquainted with several interesting facilities in the old Masurian city of Węgorzewo. It is here where we shall start our adventure with the Great Mazury Lakes.

Church of Saints' Peter and Paul
in Węgorzewo, photo GEP Chroszcz



WĘGORZEWO

This beautiful Masurian town is located on the island of Węgorapa. Its name refers to numerous eels [Polish: *węgorz*] living in this area. Węgorzewo is worth visiting due to several unusual monuments. One of them is the **Church of Saints' Peter and Paul** – this late Gothic temple, erected in the years 1605-1611, was originally Evangelical, but since 1945 it has belonged to the Roman-Catholic faith. The interior of the church is decorated with a rich, Baroque altar from 1652, the pulpit is from the beginning of the 17th century, two confessionals from the turn of the 17th/18th centuries, as well as the oldest organ in Mazury – dating back to 1647. Another interesting building is the **castle** built by the Teutonic Knights in 1398. The pentagonal, two-storey brick building consists of three wings, and from the south – to improve its defensive qualities – the courtyard is closed by a curtain wall (without development





Museum of Folk Culture in Węgorzewo,
photo GEP Chroszcz

from the interior side). In the 18th century, due to reconstruction, the castle in Węgorzewo lost its defensive nature. After a fire in 1945 parts of the castle, mainly the walls, survived. The structure has now been restored.

When staying in Węgorzewo, it is recommended that you pop into the **Museum of Folk Culture** with its presentation of exhibits including household items, clothing, ritual art, pottery, sculpture and paintings. The exhibits come from what was previously Eastern Prussia as well as family settlements of the contemporary inhabitants of Węgorzewo, mainly from the eastern borderlands of the former Republic. Next to the museum, there is an ethno-

graphic park where traditional Masurian housing can be seen. In Węgorzewo, part of the old railway station from the 19th century is also worth visiting. The station hall accommodates an exhibition which illustrates and is devoted to the history of the railway in Mazury.

We shall sail to Mamry along the Węgorzewo Canal (920 m) and Węgorapa river, to reach the large and deep reservoir called Mamry Właściwe [Proper Mamry].

THE SCHOLAR FROM WĘGORZEWO

Throughout his life, Jerzy Andrzej Helwing, a Lutheran pastor, physician and botanist, and a member of Scientific Societies in Berlin and Königsberg, was associated with Węgorzewo. He lived at the turn of the 17th/18th centuries. Coming from a middle-class family, he received an in-depth education, and his interests oscillated among many diverse disciplines. His great curiosity of the world encouraged him to make a scientific trip around Europe in his early years, and to study archaeology at an older age. Helwing's greatest passion was botany. Over several dozen years he gathered excellent collections consisting of rare flora and fauna species, including fossils; mainly fish, insects and snails; and minerals. Helwing's studio was visited by outstanding personalities of this epoch, among others, King Stanisław Leszczyński, who purchased a wonderful collection of fossils from the scholar.

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PARK IN WĘGORAPA

The park was established in the 1990s as a response to the urgent need to preserve the decline in traditional folk housing, so characteristic for Mazury. The exhibition is largely composed of Masurian arcaded cottages, two stromal cottages from the village of Krzyżewo and an 18th century cottage with gable flange, which originally came from the town of Woźnice. Their interiors have been adjusted to fulfil the functions of exhibition areas. The fire engine standing next to the fire station or wooden statues and stone Prussian countrywomen – very popular in villages – are promising foreshadowers of an encounter with traditional Masurian culture, which the heritage park presents in various openings.

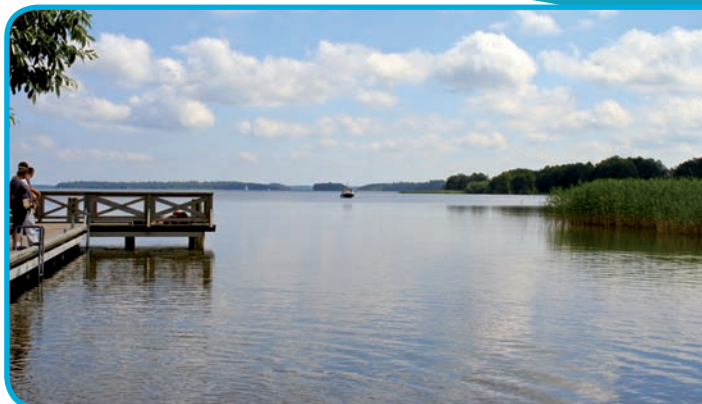
The Ethnographic Park in Węgorapa, photo GEP Chroszcz





MAMRY LAKE

The post-glacial moraine lake is part of the Land of Great Mazury Lakes. Mamry has a total of six reservoirs, the first of which on our trail is Mamry Północne, also known as Mamry Właściwe. Subsequently, the area containing the reservoirs also includes the lakes: Święcajty, Kirsajty, Kisajno, Dargin and Doba. The second biggest lake in Poland (104 km²), reaches a maximum depth of 44 m. The bottom is significantly diversified, the shores are rather low and swampy, and



THE MAZURY CANAL

Construction of a ditch in Mamerki started in 1911. Within the boundaries of Poland, a 22-km section of the canal stretches, where construction restarted in 1936 and continued for almost 4 years. After World War II the project collapsed and it has never been completed. In Poland, five water locks are located on the canal: Leśniewo Górne, Leśniewo Dolne, Guja (Piaski), Bajory Małe (two locks). The lock in Leśniewo Górne is worth particular attention due to its massive, reinforced concrete walls with a place cut out for the Nazi emblem as well as the one in the village of Guja, the only completed and operating lock in this system.

The Mazury Canal, photo GEP Chroszcz

surrounded by forests. On the west side of the trail the legendary Island of Upały can be seen. It is the biggest island in this area and its southern shores, covered by waterside reeds, is a favourite place for various species of birds. Upały is the nesting place for many birds, including the white-tailed eagle. In the past, at the southern edge of the island, a tiny islet called Pyramid appeared, its name associated with the pyramid-shaped monument designed by Earl Lehndorff. Unfortunately, after the water level rose, the islet was submerged by the waves of the lake. In the western bay, visible from a distance, **the Mazury Canal** begins (total length: about 52 km, on the Polish side: 22 km; the canal is no longer in use). Almost on the shore of Mamry, 8 km from the trail in **Mamerki**, numerous **bunkers** can be visited. They were the main Headquarters of the German Land Forces (OKH). In one of them, Adolf Hitler, who visited Mamerki several times, was stationed. The area of the headquarters, including the interiors of the bunkers, has been made available to tourists.

Heading towards the south, we pass the Kal Peninsula on the left, where there is a narrow opening to Święcajty lake.

Mamry,
photo GEP Chroszcz





Hold the halyard,
photo GEP Chroszcz

ŚWIĘCAJTY LAKE

The lake surface amounts to almost 9 km², its maximum depth reaches 28 m. This 5.5 km long and 2 km wide lake is interspersed by two bays – Paluszek and Kal. By the latter, on the left-hand side, the village of Kal is situated, where traces of an ancient Prussian settlement were found. Stopping for a longer time on the local shore, it is worth wandering a little farther into the land to visit Kalski Słup (a 16th-century cemetery obelisk), and discovering several legends connected with it. One of the legends tells the story of unusual deeds performed by a devil from the village, the other – of the execution of dangerous criminals, still another – of stopping the rising waters in Mamry.

At the entrance to Kal bay, the green Kocia Island lies by the shore of which several sailing piers are located. Ogonki, on the eastern bank, is the biggest village on Święcajty Lake. At the site where the Sapina river flows into the lake, the sailing route towards Gołdapiwo Lake begins. The beautiful panorama of the neighbourhood and the interesting shore line of the reservoir can be admired from the higher, northern shore of the lake. On this site is a large World War I cemetery, where German and Russian soldiers are buried. We shall head further towards the south, passing the Kurka Peninsula and Ostry Róg, to enter the next lake of the Mamry complex – Kirsajty.

KIRSAJTY LAKE

Small, overgrown and swampy – this describes the whole of Kirsajty with its area of over 2 km². Included within Mamry, it lies between the lakes of Northern Mamry and Dargin. The sludgy bottom is covered with submerged vegetation, while the western shore is marked by a deciduous forest. The shores are low and swampy. If we sail under the bridge, we leave Kirsajty and the dangerous Dargin Lake emerges in front of us. The narrow pass connecting both lakes was used as an outdoor location during the shooting of the film *The Pharaoh* – on Kirsajty an artificial island was created from which Sarah and Ramses sailed across the Nile.

POGANCKIE KĘPY

Two rather small islands welcome sailors and offer them shelter against the wind. They are accessible only from a northerly direction. Fascinating legends are associated with Poganckie Kępy. One of them tells the story of bloody rituals practised by the Prussians; another one – of a witches' Sabbath. Whoever has bad intentions should avoid this place because, as all the local inhabitants know, "whoever dares to curse, mock or laugh at this place and the witches, shall be damned forever"!

DARGIN LAKE

Then we enter the waters of Dargin Lake. The lake, with an area of 30 km², is 10 km long and over 5 km wide. Its maximum depth reaches 37 m. Apart from its rocky shores, Dargin has large groups of concealed rocks, which may be particularly dangerous under northern winds. There



are five of them – the biggest group is called Sztynort Stones (when the water level is low they protrude above the water, however, they are usually invisible when the water level is higher or/and there are waves), three others prevent access to two islands on the lake, Pogankie Kępy. Two groups of rocks located in the north east, at a distance of 80 and 150 m off the eastern island, are at a depth of several centimetres only. The third group, 250 m west, is deposited at a depth of 60 cm. They are invisible to sailors, therefore, it is easy to run up against them with a leeboard or rudder blade. The last cluster of rocks is located next to Harski Róg.

To the north of Dargin is the poorly visible entrance to the Sztynort Canal (170 m), leading towards Sztynort Lake, the only route to the yacht marina in Sztynort. Sztynort, a picturesque settlement sprawling alongside Sztynort Lake, was associated with the House of the Lehndorffs for 400 years. The palace, whose beginnings go back to the 16th century, is worth attention. Due to damage and numerous alterations not only the original structure but also the location of the residence was changed. The extension of the complex carried out in the 19th century was particularly significant, when many interesting buildings appeared within the palace park (today entered in the register of monuments), next to the outbuildings and new wings of the palace. During World War II, the residence was taken over by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Third Reich, and after the war, it was the seat of the headquarters of the Soviet Army. After they had left, many valuable pieces of art disappeared from the facility which slowly deteriorated over the next few decades. Today, several buildings in which the best times have already passed, are worth visiting. These include: a tea room, a chapel and cemetery, stables and a hunter's lodge. The efforts aimed at recovering the splendour of the residence will be undertaken by the Polish-German Foundation of Cultural Monuments Protection, which received the building in 2009. This small settlement was also associated with Ignacy Krasicki who often visited his local property. He used to express his admiration in letters describing the charm of this site, and many followers still remember his statement: "Who possesses Sztynort, possesses Mazury".

The sailing route ends at Doba Lake, situated west of Dragin. Three camping sites are located here and the best places for mooring include Kąt Rajcocha bay and its vicinity. It is worth remembering that the whole reservoir is contained within the silence zone. One of the most interesting islands is Wysoki Ostrów (the Cormorant Island), a wildlife reserve, which is a nesting place for cormorants and grey herons. Cormorants draw special attention – the concentration of them is really impressive and some individuals reaching up to 1m in height with a 1.5 m wing span, draw the attention



Sztynort marina,
photo GEP Chroszcz



THE LAST OF THE LEHNDORFFS

The Lehndorffs' House is associated with the story of the planned assassination of Hitler. The last descendant of the family, Lieutenant Heinrich, was the co-organiser of the plot against Führer in the Wolf's Lair [Wilczy Szaniec]. After the assassination attempt had failed, he was arrested. He tried to escape 3 times on the way to prison, however, unsuccessfully. After the court verdict, he was executed on 4th September 1944. Heinrich's family was sent to a concentration camp, and after the war his daughters were brought up by foster families. The palace in Sztynort, after its period of prosperity, changed owners and turned into a ruin. Numerous traces of several centuries' presence of the Lehndorffs were stolen.

THE MAGIC GILMA

Gilma, according to local belief, has many extraordinary properties confirmed both by the legends associated with the Island and by the esotericists. According to the legends, Satanists used to meet in the chapel on the island, and the local peasants, wishing to convert them, cut a hole in the wall through which God was supposed to visit them. Another legend states that under the full moon it is possible to find treasure – a sack full of gold. Esotericists claim that Gilma is a place with an exceptional concentration of energy (chakra), which flows across the island along many energy-bearing channels.

of observers for a long time. The island of Gilma is also of interest. Traces of the old Prussian **settlement** can be seen here in which the Galindians ruled. A little later a fortress was erected, then at a later date it was turned into a chapel of which the remains have been preserved until now.



KISAJNO LAKE

Leaving Dargin, we sail between Wysokie and Królewski Róg to enter the Lake of Kisajno. It is one of the most beautiful lakes on our trail, with a very interesting, abundantly developed shore line and numerous islands. In the north, the border runs through the line connecting Królewski Róg and Wysoki Róg. On the eastern shores, spreading from Olchowy Róg to Królewski Róg, rocks are deposited in the shallows. This shore is not very attractive – along its almost whole length, military camps are placed, and a little farther, in the countryside there is a military training area. Additionally, forests, meadows and waterside reeds discourage sailors from camping in this part of the lake. The place is even called the “Masurian Biscayans” – because, when winds from different directions meet on Kisajno, Dargin and Łabap they create a whirlwind. The islands of the lake are part of a reserve and it is forbidden to approach them from a distance closer than 20 m. Tracz bay, located in the north-east corner of Kisajno is worth seeing, from there it is possible to enter Niegocin Lake

through Łuczański Canal (Giżycki, 2.1 km). By the shores of the bay it is possible to rest for a while and purchase any necessary items. The second route towards Niegocin leads through the Piękna Góra Canal, Tajty Lake and the Niegocin Canal. Along the western shore of Kisajno Lake the route named Łabędzi Szlak [Swans’ Trail] stretches, full of charming bays and straits among numerous islands, it can be entered through a narrow pass north-west of the Piękna Góra Canal. The trail is of particular interest due to the abundance of water birds who have settled here. Observing a white-tailed eagle through binoculars as it flies over Kisajno Lake is an incredible experience.



Kisajno,
photo GEP Chroszcz

GIŻYCKO

We enter Tracz bay and head towards the south along the Łuczański Canal, from which the beautiful panorama of Giżycko spreads. In front of us, we shall see the biggest town in the Land of Great Mazury Lakes, situated



between Niegocin and Kisajno Lakes. It has taken its current name after the pastor, **Gustaw Gizewiusz Giżycki**, a determined fighter for Polish identity, who was the leader of the nationalist movement in Mazury rising under the influence of the Spring of Nations. Our attention in Giżycko will be drawn by one of the most beautiful harbours in Mazury, where numerous boats and yachts are moored. The view of the marina is particularly impressive in the evening. On the other hand, the most famous building in this town full of mysteries is the **Boyen Fortress** which stands in the eastern part of the town, and takes its name after the Prussian general, **Hermann von Boyen**. It has the shape of an irregular polygon, surrounded by a brick and stone wall. Many innovations of military architecture were used during its construction, which started in 1844. Until 1957, it was a military facility, which later became one of the main tourist attractions of the region after it was passed to the civil authorities. In order to provide the town with a convenient connection to the fortress, a decision was made to build a bridge over the Łuczański Canal (2.1 km).

In Giżycko the **Evangelical church** is worth visiting. The wooden temple was erected after the Reformation period, and only in 1633 was the brick building erected on its site, which was later a victim of two fires. In 1826, the cornerstone was set in the new foundations. The church, built on a rectangular foundation, according to a design by the German architect, Karl Frederick Schinkel, represents the Classicism style. Inside, special attention should be paid to the altar with its paintings by Karl Gottfried Pfannschmidt as well as the pulpit and matroneum. In the summer, the parish hosts **the International Festival of Organ and Cameral Music**.

In the town centre, the **Neo-gothic pressure tower** is awaiting those eager to gaze at the beautiful panorama. The red-brick building



THE SWING BRIDGE ON THE ŁUCZAŃSKI CANAL

In 1889, the company Bechtel C.O. Grundberg und Shel from Zielona Góra undertook the task of constructing a bridge to connect the eastern and western parts of the town. The bridge, weighing over 100 tons, was equipped with an additional steel span (of 20 m length and 8 m width), which is drawn laterally instead of upwards. During modernisation in the 1960s, it was furnished with an electric drive which, unfortunately, significantly contributed to degradation of the shore, and as a consequence, exploitation of the bridge was suspended. As late as 1993 it was re-opened, simultaneously recovering the original manual drive. Thanks to appropriate construction solutions, its operation takes only 5 minutes. The opening celebration of the bridge in May launches the sailing season in Mazury every year.



Boyen Fortress in Giżycko,
photo D. Zaród

Swing bridge on Łuczański Canal,
photo GEP Chroszcz



SAINT BRUNO'S HILL

In Giżycko, on the hill near Niegocin Lake, a monument is located to commemorate a bishop and missionary – a martyr and Catholic saint – Bruno of Querfurt who, according to the legends, was murdered on this very spot. To pay tribute to the missionary, inhabitants of the town erected a massive cast iron cross on the hill in 1910. A board with the following label was placed on it: "To the brave German missionary who died as a martyr for Christ and his kingdom, as a pioneer in Mazury, together with 18 companions, on 9 March 1009, for the noble Bruno of Querfurt to commemorate him. The Evangelical church. Leca 1910".



Swans on Niegocin Lake,
photo GEP Chroszcz

was erected in Giżycko in 1900. When the water supply network was modernised in 1996, the tower stopped supplying the town with running water and, luckily for tourists visiting Giżycko, it became private property. At that time, the dome was enriched with a beautiful observation deck, and the interior accommodated a camera museum. After climbing 129 steps (or, alternatively, using a lift) we will reach

a height of 46 m above the lake surface and enjoy a beautiful view over the surrounding area. On the horizon, it is possible to see St. Bruno's Hill, which should be the next stage of the Giżycko tour. The stone car, bicycle and walking trail leads towards the hill from the castle, along which it is possible to reach Wilkasy. From the hill, a splendid view of Giżycko, Niegocin Lake, and Boyen fortress spreads before us.

Giżycko also offers its tourists various places facilitating sports and leisure in the open air – it's time to walk amidst a charming **town forest**. Forest wandering offers us the opportunity to meet does, hares and other inhabitants of the green sanctuary close to the town. Atmospheric garden sheds can be found here from which the surrounding beauty of nature can be admired. In the forest, bicycle trails are also indicated. It is an area comprised mainly of deciduous trees, and is accompanied by numerous streams which occur in this area. In Spytkowo, 4 km north-east of Giżycko, there is an **Indian Village** – ideal entertainment for the youngest members of the family. Tipi tents arranged as museum stations help visitors to become acquainted with the Indian culture through presentations of clothing, weapons and female jewellery.

NEGOCIN LAKE

After visiting all the attractions offered by Giżycko in the very heart of the Land of the Great Lakes, it is time to travel further – in front of us, Niegocin Lake stretches. One of the biggest Mazury lakes, it is open to winds from all directions, and the wave arising on its surface can sometimes reach impressive dimensions. The reservoir has an area of 26 km², reaches 5.5 km in width and 7 km in length. On the eastern shore there are fields and meadows, while the western shore is covered by forests. West of Niegocin, lies Wilkasy, where tourism rules – mainly water sports. A modern marina is also popular. From there, we shall begin our journey to Mikołajki.

BOCZNE LAKE – JAGODNE LAKE – SZYMON LAKE

From Wilkasy we set off towards the south in the direction of the 3 km-long Boczne Lake. At its eastern shore we pass the sailors' village of Rydzewo, on its western side – the pier in Bogaczewo. Then we enter



the 110-metres' Kula Canal, the shortest of the Masurian canals. Under the low, steel bridge we reach a calm and quiet bay of the same name. Taking advantage of protection against unfavourable conditions, we stretch the mast and set off towards Jagodne Lake. It is a typical ribbon lake, 9 km in length and up to 1.5 km in width. We continue sailing and after several hundred metres, Szymon Lake emerges – a typical transit lake which leads us to the beginning of a sequence of canals, at the end of which Tałty Lake awaits us. We enter the Szymon Canal – the longest, reaching 2.3 kilometres. From the canal we approach the shallow, swampy and 3 km long Szymon Lake. Then we sail into the Mioduński Canal (1.9 km), to enter the waters of Kotek Wielki Lake. Passing the pier on Kotek Lake, under the bridge, we enter the 500-metres' Grunwald Canal (470 m, informally also known as Lelecki), leading us directly to Tałtowisko Lake. Following on for another 1.5 km, we enter the last canal – the Tałty canal (its length is about 1.6 km), to reach Tałty Lake at the end.

TAŁTY LAKE

A typical ribbon reservoir of the area reaching 11.6 km², with a length of 12.5 km and a width not exceeding 1.8 km, making up part of the 35-kilometres' ribbon from Ryn to Ruciane. Sailors should pay special attention to the large and heavy waves which commonly rise under strong winds on Tałty Lake – the deepest lake on the trail (50 m). If several days' wind ravels on the lake, it is better to hide in Skonał Bay, washing the Jasna Peninsula from the north.

Now we have to decide if we are going to continue our adventure towards the north, to Ryn, or towards the south, to Mikołajki. Combining these two options is an interesting alternative – in the north it is worth visiting Ryn Lake and the charming town of Ryn, then turning back towards the Mecca of sailors – Mikołajki.

FATHER SARTORIUS

At the beginning of the 18th century, a plague reached Rydzew. It was a terrible experience for the parish priest at that time, Jan Sartorius, as it killed seven of his children. Out of grief, the priest created the painting called "Mourning", showing his family during prayer at the cross. The painting was finished with a poem written by this parish priest. Until 1961 the painting was kept in Rydzew church, later it was moved to the Museum of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. There we can see the unusual masterpiece by this desperate father.

THE MASURIAN CANALS

The history of watercourses in Mazury goes back to the 14th century, when part of the current trail was covered by the Master of the Teutonic Knights, Winrich von Kniprode, in a common boat. Plans for the construction of a canal emerged several centuries later, and the first water connections between Śniardwy and Mamry appeared as late as the 2nd half of the 18th century. Irrespective of the six water locks and ten bridges in operation, they were used for just a little longer than 20 years, until they were finally destroyed during the Napoleonic wars. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that plans were re-launched to develop a system of canals and the design and structure planned at that time, has been working efficiently up to today without any major problems. Moving from the south, the Great Mazury Lakes are connected by the following canals: Jeglin, Tałty, Grunwald, Mioduński, Szymon, Kula, Łuczański, Niegocin, Piękna Góra, Sztynort, Węgorzewo, Masurian.

Within the system of Mazury canals, the water locks are also worth attention, enabling navigation, and allowing for the overcoming of differences in water levels between the lakes. In the system of the Great Mazury Lakes, three water locks are in operation: Karwik on the Jeglin canal (on the way to Pisz), Guzianka (in Ruciane-Nida) and Przerwanki (on Sapina at Gołdapiwo Lake).

Jegliński Canal, photo GEP Chroszcz



RYN LAKE

Behind the Pazur cape and Mrówczy Róg, a dreamlike lake emerges, at the end of which we can see the unique panorama of the small town of Ryn, its buildings spread across the hills, which used to operate as a harbour for the

monastic fleet in the time of the Teutonic Knights. Above Ryn the picturesque castle dominates. On the right we shall pass the Mrówka Peninsula and Mrówka Bay. Ryn Lake is 7 km long. To the left it is hilly and covered by meadows which resemble a huge yellow carpet during the rape blooming period; whereas the right bank is covered by abundant waterside reeds.



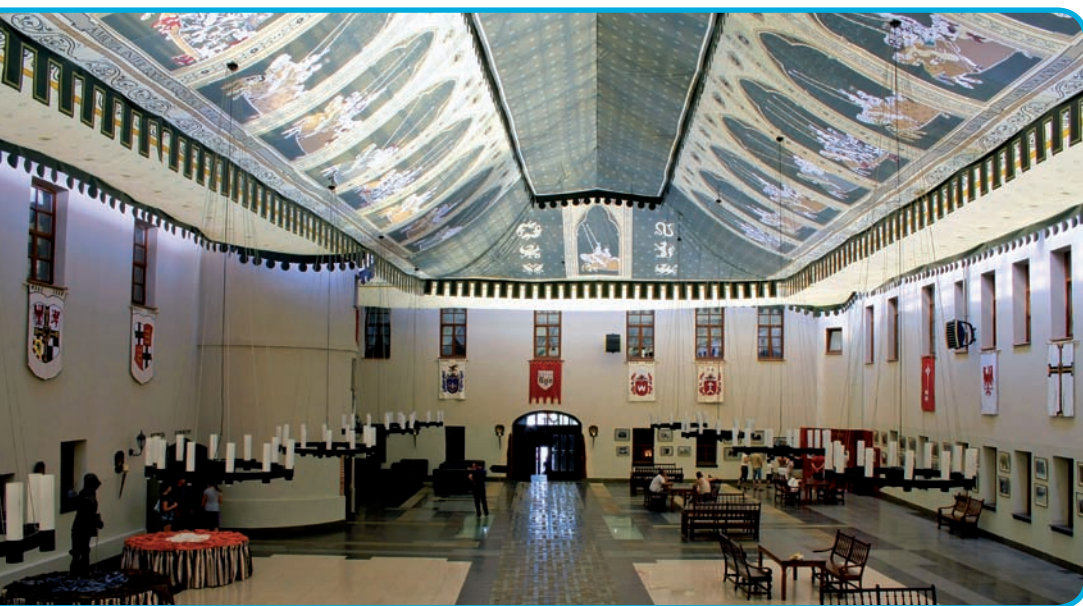
Ryn Lake,
photo GEP Chroszcz

The interiors of the castle in Ryn,
photo GEP Chroszcz

RYN

We reach the town of Ryn. With its picturesque location between two lakes, Ryn and Ołów, it was founded in 1377 by a castle, one year older, according to the legend – built by the Teutonic Knights coming from the Rhinelands, who associated the

lake with the river Rhine. That is where the name of the castle originates from – *Rhein*, which was changed by the Masurians into *Ryn*. Over the centuries, misfortune did not omit Ryn: first of all, the famous Tartar invasion in 1657, during which the city was destroyed by fire and its inhabitants exterminated or taken captive; in the years 1710-1711 the town experienced the plague, which





caused such huge devastation that the nearby villages became almost deserted. Today this place attracts visitors not only because of its touristic values but also because of its structures connected with the region's history and culture – among others, the Teutonic Knights castle and the Regional Museum.

The 14th century **castle** was erected on the site of the former settlement of the Galindians. It played mainly military functions – Ołów Lake served as its natural moat. The area surrounding the castle was in development until the time of the Tartar invasion in the 17th century, when most inhabitants were taken as Tartar slaves or exterminated. The settlement was completely burnt down, and only the castle was preserved, which is currently a hotel.

Additionally, the **museum** located in the Gallery, "Pod Imbrykiem", in the Ryn Centre of Culture presents exhibits from as far back as 200 years ago! Furniture, kitchen items, everyday utilities, such as tools for fishing are intriguing curiosities. However, that is not everything – we can also discover a boat raised from the bottom of Ryn Lake, which is the only monument of this kind displayed under museum conditions in the Warmia-Mazury Region, an exhibition of tiles from tiled stoves from the nearby mansions and palaces, and even a magic mirror, which will tell the truth to every couple who look into its crystal surface.



Ryn Museum presents items dating back to 200 years ago!,
photo GEP Chroszcz



Mikołajki by night,
photo GEP Chroszcz

MIKOŁAJKI

After visiting the northern arm of the trail we return to Tałty Lake and continue our trip towards the south, to the Mecca of Mazury – we shall soon reach Mikołajki! From the Tałty canal we sail in a south-westerly direction, passing the village of Tałty on our left, and then the Modliszki Peninsula. We sail under the railway bridge, passing an old harbour, road bridge and a footpath on the left, to moor our boat behind the pier of passengers' navigation in Mikołajki.

The first reference of Mikołajki comes from 1444, mentioning a village which took its name after the patron of a nearby chapel, simultaneously the caretaker



SIELAW – THE KING OF FISH

Mikołajki is associated with legends about the ruler of the Masurian waters, Sielaw, who possessed magic powers and who supposedly lived in the abyss of Śniardwy. One of the legends tells the story of the Prussian Queen Gustebalda, who had accidentally saved a golden fish, Sielaw's daughter, and received in exchange a magic stone which let her understand the speech of animals, plants and the wind. The Queen was supposed to keep this gift a secret, however, learning about the danger threatening the Prussians, she revealed the source of her knowledge and, in accordance with her agreement with Sielaw, she was changed into a stone due to breaching the conditions. The 16th century version of the legend says that the king ruling Śniardwy, was so shocked with the greed of the fishermen fishing on the lake that he started to fight with them, causing terrible storms and overturning their boats. Then, famine in Mikołajki had lasted until the time when a wife of one of the fishermen found a small iron ring which initiated the idea of making a net of such rings, by the use of which Sielaw was caught. In exchange for his release, the King of Fish guaranteed ample fishing to the local inhabitants. However, to prevent Sielaw from breaking the promise after his release, he was fettered to the bridge span in Mikołajki with an iron chain.

Until today, the emblem of the town shows a fish with a crown on a blue background, referring to the legendary figure of the King of Fish.

King Sielaw, fig. ES



ECO-MARINA

The continuously increasing number of tourists in Warmia and Mazury – during the season almost 10 thousand yachts and sailing boats navigate across the Land of the Great Mazury Lakes – enforces the growing need to care for the environment. Therefore, the idea of creating an eco-marina appeared. So far, ecological harbours have been operating in Mikołajki, Giżycko, Wilkasy and Mrągowo on Czos Lake (this eco-marina is located beyond the trail). The construction of further marinas is planned in Węgorzewo, Ryn, Pisz and in the western part of the region, in Zalew, Siemiany and Iława on Jeziorak. Sailors mooring in the harbours will have access to a sewage network for the collection of waste and other impurities from yachts. There will be a possibility to connect to a power supply installation as well as the possibility to use hygienic and sanitary facilities as well as other services on the shore.



Sailors' Mecca – the marina in Mikołajki, photo GEP Chroszcz

of sailors and water passages. The town was granted its municipal rights in 1726. It survived the Tartar invasion, epidemics of plague and cholera, as well as the passage of the Napoleonic army in 1812, to be finally incorporated into Poland after World War II. Even before World War I, the potential for tourism had been discovered in Mikołajki and the town began developing intensively in this direction. Several years ago, a complex called the Sailing Village was established here. Year after year, more and more tourists visit Mikołajki, luckily, the town and other important centres on the trail take every effort to prevent degradation of the natural environment of the Land of the Great lakes as much as possible. That is how the idea of an **eco-marina** emerged.

The Evangelical parish in Mikołajki is one of the oldest reformatory centres in Mazury. It has been in operation for almost 500 years and until the end of World War II it belonged to the biggest protestant congregations in the region. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is here where the

Museum of Polish Reformation has been open since 1973, owing to the parish priest of the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, **Władysław Pilch – Pilchowski**. The museum



exhibition is a unique collection of items connected with Polish writing and printing in Mazury until 1945. Portraits of reformers of the Church and the movement activists, documents and printing forms create a characteristic atmosphere for this place. Entrance is free of charge although visitors are asked to make a small donation for maintenance of the museum. During this visit it is worth popping into the **Holy Trinity Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession**. After several fires, which considerably impaired construction of the old church dating back to the 15th century, the congregation started to gather funds for its comprehensive reconstruction. The new church was erected in the years 1841-42 and it was the next (following the church in Giżycko) masterpiece by the famous architect, Karl Frederick Schinkel. The Classicistic structure shows visitors its beautiful wooden matroneum, an organ made by the organ master from Elk – Scherweit, the treasury conceals an antique goblet from 1772 and everything is found below the impressive, cradle-shaped ceiling with panels.

Mikołajki is the next example of a place where representatives of many religions can live in harmony, in spite of their many differences. When the Moses faith appeared in this area, the local community did not try to hinder its assimilation. First references to Jewish settlements in the region go back to the 1820s. During the Night of Broken Glass in 1938, Jewish inhabitants were removed by the Nazis and their fate is unknown until today. The remembrance of their presence in Mikołajki is the **Jewish cemetery** on Dybowska street. Founded in 1881, it is one of the few Jewish necropolis preserved until today, where it is possible to see grave stones in Hebrew and German. For several years, members of the Congregation of the Pentecostal Church in Mikołajki have been looking after the cemetery.



Evangelical-Augsburg church
in Mikołajki,
photo GEP Chroszcz



MIKOŁAJKI LAKE

From Mikołajki we enter Mikołajki Lake. It is a typical ribbon lake with an area covering almost 5 km², with a 5.5 km length and width not exceeding



THE HYDROLOGICAL-METEOROLOGICAL STATION OF THE INSTITUTE OF METEOROLOGY AND WATER MANAGEMENT

While staying in Mikołajki, one should not forget the IMGW Hydrological-Meteorological Station. The station specialises in synoptic and radiological surveys, and the conducting of actinometrical research (measurements of the Sun radiation, the Earth, the atmosphere). Gardens in which the measurements are taken can be visited with the staff following a previous telephone booking. What's interesting, the observatory in Mikołajki was the first to register contamination levels following the breakdown of the Chernobyl reactor.

The IMGW Hydrological-Meteorological Station, photo GEP Chroszcz



Mikołajki Lake,
photo GEP Chroszcz

1.6 km, its depth reaches 26 m. On its eastern bank, the IMGW Hydrological - Meteorological Station is located. The lake widens in a south-easterly direction, along Dybowski Róg, before changing into the narrow pass of Przeczka – the gate to the biggest Polish lake – Śniardwy, an object of fascination but also of fear for sailors. Leaving Mikołajki Lake we have two options for continuing the trail. It is worth choosing one of these routes because it will offer us the opportunity to see rarely-visited, and particularly charming corners of Mazury. The options we can choose are: Mikołajki – Ruciane-Nida and Mikołajki – Pisz trails.

MIKOŁAJKI – RUCIANE-NIDA

BEŁDANY LAKE

Choosing the first option, we head south-east of Mikołajki Lake and cross the line indicated by the cape of Popielski Róg and Stanik timber yard, simultaneously entering Bełdany Lake. In front of us – 12.5 km of a magnificent trail leading across Pisz Forest to Guzianka water lock which is often called a promenade due to the crowds of yacht parades in the season. From the village of Wierzba we shall sail along the straight and narrow section of the lake, passing the Flosek timber yard, to approach the narrowing beyond which, almost geometrically around Iznota Bay, emerges the estuary of one of the most beautiful rivers of Mazury – Krutynia. The



GALINDIA

As early as the 5th century B.C., Iznota was inhabited by the Galindians, the Baltic tribes, the kinsmen of contemporary Lithuanians and Latvians (even Tacitus mentioned them!). The Amber Road led through this area. The settlement, in the centre of Pisz Forest, refers to the history and tradition of the tribe, organises numerous interesting attractions, such as election of the wildest mistress, fortune telling, rituals, and fights between tribes.

The Galindians' tribe village, fig. RS



Guzianka water lock,
photo GEP Chroszcz



trail of Krutynia and lakes of Pisz Forest tempt us with their abundance of fauna and flora, however, it is reserved for canoeing fans. On the way we pass the famous Galindia.

We head towards the south in the direction of Ruciane-Nida. Along the eastern shore, there is a reserve in which the Polish primitive horses live at large. Sailing farther, on our right we shall see one of the oldest piers in Mazury – PTTK in Kamień. Then we pass the Kamień Peninsula and Mysia Island on the right. After several hundred metres we shall come across the next narrowing (about 300 m wide), beyond which the lake broadens more definitely to gradually reveal a beautiful view, the entrance to Wygryny Bay. At the entrance we pass the long and narrow Wygryny Island, and, in the south, Wygryny village. From this point, only 3.5 km of the systematically narrowing lake leads to Ruciane. After passing through the water lock to Guzianka Mała Lake we reach the straits which takes us to Guzianka Wielka Lake.

GUZIANKA WATER LOCK

Constructed in 1879, the water lock is 44 m long and its gates are 7.5 m wide, the difference in water levels between Beldany and Nida Lakes is 2.2 m. The vessel enters through the open gate to the chamber of the water lock in order to perform the locking procedure, then the gate closes. After the water level in the lock and the target lake is equal in balance, the second door opens and the vessel can safely continue its navigation. Guzianka, available to all vessels for over 100 years without breaks, today facilitates navigation along the section of the trail between Beldany Lake and Nida Lake within several minutes. Unfortunately, we may face an unpleasant surprise if we do not manage to perform the locking procedure in the morning or at the end of the day. For many years, the lock has had problems with managing the load, and the only rule is "first come, first served". We should remember that – in accordance with regulations – passenger ships have priority.



Marina in Ruciane-Nida,
photo GEP Chroszcz

There are numerous bunkers
in Ruciane-Nida,
photo GEP Chroszcz

SEED HUSKING MILL

It was built in Ruciane in the 1890s at the end of Dworcowa Street. The warehouse has a loading capacity for 180 tons of pinecones, which are dried in the upper, wooden part of the building in special containers. Under the influence of heat, the cones open and release the seeds which are then used for establishing nursery forests. In the former Eastern Prussia it was the biggest seed husking mill. Today, the historic building has been restored and the drying process has been improved.



RUCIANE-NIDA

Finally, we enter Nida Lake along the Nida Canal (170 m), sailing below the road and railway bridge. At the same time, we are immediately in the heart of Ruciane-Nida.

The town, with almost five thousand inhabitants, comes from the forest settlement of Ruciane, the development of which was influenced by the construction of a sawmill, huge for these times, and the railway line from Mrągowo and Szczytno to Elk. After the launching of the passengers' navigation, the opening of which was held in the presence

of the Prussian King Frederick William IV, Ruciane became a very popular place in Eastern Prussia. Contemporary Ruciane-Nida was founded in 1966 by connecting several nearby villages: the already mentioned Ruciane, Nida, Wola Ratajowa and Guzianki. At that time the town was granted its municipal rights. Nida was a small Masurian village of 16th century origin.

Currently it is an urbanised settlement and a profitable sailing station. It owes its development to its location by very clean water and to the six-year' plan within which the factory of beaverboards was constructed. Its ruins dominate the settlement and haunt both inhabitants and tourists with its social realism architecture.

In spite of the typical sailing nature of the town, the whisper of trees and wind in the sails are not the only attractions of the gorgeous Ruciane-Nida. Around the town, many natural monuments are located, including ancient oak trees and a curious pine tree of unusual shape. The tree, 33 m high and 3 m in circumference, received the charming name of Lyre because of its shape. Additionally, irrespective of whether we cover the trail by yacht or canoe, or we are tempted to make a walking or bicycle trip, we should not forget the **historic fortresses** which the town has preserved for us.

The strategically important pass with Guzianka lock, and the road and



HISTORIC SHIPS

On Masurian waters it is usually possible to meet passing historic ships which please tourists' eyes with their richness and dimensions unusual in such a landscape. One of them is the "Chopin" sailing ship which is usually moored in the Mikołajki harbour – the biggest inland ship of this type to be seen on Polish water routes. The square rig covers as much as 297 m² of the total surface of the sailing ship! A cruise by this ship across the Masurian lakes will certainly be remembered and the silhouette of the ship on the lake surface looks majestic. Another interesting object, which can be seen at the PTTK pier in Wilkasy, is the reconstructed passenger ship "Loewentin", the prototype of which came from the 19th century. Construction of the new "Loewentin" differs slightly from its predecessor due to safety regulations mandatory in Mazury.

„Chopin”, fig. RS

railway bridge near Ruciane, were fortified at the end of the 19th century as the southernmost point of defence of the Masurian Lakes Position. This line of fortification separated the land of the Great Masurian Lakes from Giżycko in the north. After 1898, three concrete towers with machine gun positions were built, crowned by a gallery range and battlements similar to Medieval towers. One of the three-levelled towers was erected between the road and railway bridge, and the other one dominates Guzianka lock, just by the road. Their four-levelled sister tower was built in the western abutment of the railway bridge, on its southern side. South of the railway bridge, on Nida Lake, and in the forest close to the lock are some very well-preserved war shelters for the infantry.

Less than 8 km from Ruciane-Nida, on Duś Lake, the 19th century **monastery complex** in Wojnowo is located. It includes the Eastern Orthodox church and the former female monastery of Old Believers with a modest house of prayers, the so called **molenna**. In the centre of the facility stands a temple, which currently hosts an exhibition about Wojnowo before the war.

OLD BELIEVERS

The Old Believers, persecuted by the Tzarist authorities, arrived in Mazury in the middle of the 19th century, based on the settlement rights they were granted in 1825 by the Prussian King, Frederick William III. The Rasko constitute the non-reformed offspring of the Eastern Orthodox church which in 1653 rejected the changes introduced by Patriarch Nikon. In time, they divided into Popovtsy [priested ones] who created their own Orthodox church and Bezpopovtsy [the priestless] who acknowledged the direct spiritual leadership of Christ.

NIDA LAKE

If we look at Nida Lake on the map, it can be said to resemble the antlers of a stag whose head is formed by Zamordeje Bay with the antlers reaching towards Nida and Jaśkowo. The area of the reservoir covers 18 km² and extends along the broad, 23 km long arc from Ruciane-Nida up to Jaśkowo. Its width reaches 800 m, and its depth does not exceed 27 m. On both sides of the lake, is the beautiful Pisz Forest. Few people know that by entering the waters of this lake, the boundary of the Land of the Great Lakes is crossed and the Masurian Plain is reached, where Nida and Roś lakes lie as well as the natural reserve of Warnołty Lake.



Nida (Nidzkie) Lake,
photo GEP Chroszcz

On Nida Lake, behind the cape of Skonał Bay, Koński Ostrów Island emerges. Then, behind Jeleni Róg, we enter the Zamordeje Wielkie Bay. On the western shore, the Krzyżacki Rożek peninsula penetrates deeply into the lake. If the weather is favourable, it is also worth sailing into the 2 km long bay of Zamordeje Małe – its steep slopes offer rest from wind and waves and we can enjoy the silence and the peaceful atmosphere in the noble company of swans, crabs and other lake fauna. Once, the lakesides contained many settlements which do not exist anymore, only their neglected cemeteries.. One of

them, recorded in the novels by Ernst Wiechert – Sowi Róg, is worth attention. From the lake the well-known forester's house called Pranie is visible. We return around the Zamordeje Peninsula and enter the next section of Nida Lake. At the end of a long straight line, we can see the Zamordeje Cape, on both sides of which we shall find convenient mooring places.

MIKOŁAJKI – PISZ

ŚNIARDWY LAKE



Under the sails,
photo GEP Chroszcz



Choosing the second option, from Mikołajki we sail across Mikołajki Lake until we see the sign indicating a splitting of the trail. We turn left, enter the 300-metres' straits of Przeczka, at the end of which we are offered two possibilities: to the east of Okartowo and then south-east straight towards Seksty Lake. Now we have to face the demanding waters of the awe-inspiring Śniardwy Lake. It is recommended that we assess our skills earlier and check if they are sufficient enough for this encounter, which can often be surprising.

The reservoir is in a post-glacial thaw basin. Its bottom is covered with glacial erratics which are often hidden just below the water surface and pose significant risk for yachts. Its area covers over 114 km², therefore, Śniardwy – the biggest lake in Poland – is often called the “Masurian Sea”. Its length slightly exceeds 17 km, and it is 13.4 km wide, while its average depth reaches 5.8 m. On the lake, eight islands are situated, the biggest of which include Serkin Ostrów, Czarci Ostrów, Pajęcza and Kaczor. The southern bays of Śniardwy function as separate lakes – Seksty and Warnołty (where the ornithological-landscape reserve is located).



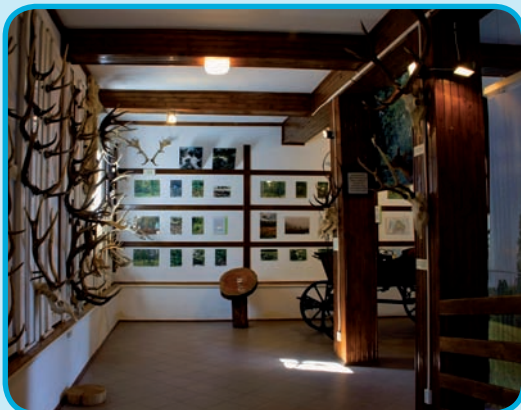
Śniardwy,
photo D. Zaród



It should be remembered that many dangers await us on Śniardwy. First of all, the lake is very changeable in terms of weather. One must not set off to conquer the lake before a detailed study of the latest map and the local weather forecast for the next few hours, taking into consideration the direction and strength of the wind and the atmospheric pressure. Secondly, clusters of underwater rocks make navigation much more difficult. The biggest of them are found north of Pajęczna Island and Szeroki Ostrów Peninsula, along the south-eastern shore and south-west of the entrance to Szyba Bay, as well as in the vicinity of Miałka Górka, situated almost in the centre of the lake.

Leaving the straits of Przeczka, we pass the village of Popielno on our right where the Experimental Station of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) has been in action since 1955.

Along the shore, stones and rocks are deposited, which are gradually penetrating into the lake, and also preventing access to the islands of Pajęczna and Czarci Ostrów. We continue sailing, towards Seksteńska



THE MUSEUM OF NATURE IN POPIELNO

At the PAN station in Popielno, a museum was established, which is now in the 18th century granary. Not only is the research output of the entity gathered here, but also the results of studies on the evolution of plant and animal species in the the Masurian Landscape Park. The exhibition consisting of several departments presents, among others, the local plant clusters, deer, beavers, cattle and the Polish primitive horses. In the research station, a project on the breeding of this species at large, has been implemented. The farm breeding of beavers is also worth attention, and the animals can be admired and fed in the farmhouse near the lake. In the museum we can also see an exhibition of sleighs and carts from various periods, as well as become acquainted with the idea of pro-ecological farming.

Museum of nature in Popielno, photo GEP Chroszcz

KARWIK

Karwik is not only the name of a water lock on the Jegliński Canal (constructed in the years 1845-1949), but also a small village which can be proud of its historic, wooden Masurian cottages dating back to the 19th century. The water lock is located in the eastern section of the canal, it is 45 m long and 7.5 m wide (difference in water levels – 1.2 m). It opens up the way to the over 5-kilometres' long Jegliński Canal, which is a section of the state watercourse connecting the Great Mazury Lakes, through Roś Lake, Pisa and Narew rivers with Warsaw.

Gate and on our starboard we pass two legendary islands. The island of Czarci Ostrów (also known as Czarci Island or Czarci Mount) is a place of particular respect, as it used to be the place for the religious rituals of the Galindians. On the island, traces of the foundations of Lyck fortress can also be found, which was closed at the end of the 18th century.

Czarci Ostrów is protected against strong winds and waves from the north west by the 400 m long and narrow Pajęcza Island, together with all its inhabitants: it is abundant with spiders and their lovers – frogs. We cover the trail along Zagon Peninsula where the lake narrows. After such an effort the best idea is to stay overnight on Seksty lake. There are several mooring places, e.g. Kaczor, Kierzek, Zdorów. From there we set off farther to Karwik and the Jegliński Canal (5.2 km).

ROŚ LAKE

After sailing along the Jegliński Canal, we raise our mast and sails and enter Roś Lake, the biggest reservoir of the Masurian Plain. On the opposite side of the lake, we can see the estuary of the Pisa river, and a little farther, a high municipal shore situated in a beautiful park. Roś Lake is north-east of Pisz. The ribbon lake (shaped like the letter "S") covers an area of 19 km² and reaches a depth of up to 31 m. Its southern edge is alongside the navigation watercourse connecting the land with Warsaw. It is worth leaving the main trail to sail inside the lake where it is possible to spend several days. In this part of the lake, there are two peninsulas, Ostrów and Pilchowo. The river, Wilkus (flowing from Kocioł lake) flows into the northern part of Roś, and two rivers flow into its western bay: Konopna, flowing through the village of Ruda and Świątek, has its source in Borowe Lake. The river, **Pisa**, has its source in this lake. The shores, except the south-eastern part – are mostly inaccessible. The waterside reeds have become a home for diverse water fowl – ducks, grebes and herons.

THE PISA

It flows from Roś Lake and flows into Narew in Nowogród, it is 80.4 km long and 2 m deep, and its decline is 25 cm over 1 km. It connects the Great Masurian Lakes with the Vistula basin. It is very demanding for sailors due to numerous meanders, simultaneously making an interesting and easy canoeing trail. It flows across plain and swampy areas. Its name comes from the word *pissa*, which meant 'swamp, mud' in the Prussian language. Germans used to call it Galindia, after the name of the tribe of Galindians inhabiting these territories. Important fact, Pisa is not only an essential state watercourse, but also the only available connection from the Great Mazury Lakes to other watercourses.

PISZ

From Roś Lake it is worth setting off to the southernmost place on the trail – Pisz. We shall reach it as we sail along Pisa river. Through the municipal park on its banks we can reach the town centre. The **castle** erected next to Pisa was called Johannsburg, and in 1645 the town received its municipal rights. At that time, the formal name of the

castle was adopted, due to which the local Masurians called it Jańsbork and the name was in place up until 1946. Simultaneously, the folk name of the town, Pysz, was used. Initially, it was a beekeepers' settlement, its



The collection of the Museum of Pisz Land,
photo GEP Chroszcz



main period of development was in the 15th century – due to its convenient location, many merchants from the south of Poland travelled through the town towards Gdańsk, and raftsmen transported goods along Pisa to Narew and farther to Vistula. In the centre of the town, several interesting buildings are worth visiting.

The oldest is the **tower of St. John's church**, reconstructed after the fire in 1694, it has survived until today with an almost unchanged shape. The walls are characteristic for the church, built in 1737 using one of the classic carpenters' methods – gritting. Inside, the main altar is from the late Renaissance period and the pulpit is of a Baroque design. Significantly younger, but an equally interesting attraction of the town is the town hall from 1900, inside which is the **Museum of Pisz Land**. It was already in existence before World War II, however, its collection mysteriously disappeared. Following the initiative of the **Society of Admirers of Pisz Land**, in 1969, the museum, still in operation today, was established. It was contained within a building called "Baszty" until 1985, and currently it is placed in the basement of the townhall. Its permanent exhibition includes a rich collection of fauna and flora representing Pisz Forest. The collection also consists of archaeological and ethnographical exhibits as well as pictures and relics of 18th century Masurian writing. One statue worth mentioning is that of a stone Prussian **countrywoman** from Wejsuny standing next to the building.

THE MASURIAN LANDSCAPE PARK

While calling in at Pisz harbour it is absolutely necessary to mention the **Mazury Landscape Park**. It is one of the biggest landscape parks in Poland, established on the basis of the Resolution of the Regional National Council



Mazury Landscape Park,
photo GEP Chroszcz

FAUNA AND FLORA OF THE MASURIAN LANDSCAPE PARK

Pond turtle, Polish primitive horses in Popielno, or gammarus inhabiting Beldany and Krutynia (crustacean, marine post-glacial relic) are only some representatives of the unique fauna of the Mazury Landscape Park. Apart from them, we can also see wild boars, does, deer, ermines, badgers, otters or beavers. Not everyone knows that in this area, black grouse, which are endangered with extinction, live as well as the white-tailed eagle, crane, eagle-owl, northern harrier, cormorant, mute swan, hazel grouse and parrot crossbill. The white stork is the “face” of the park.

Protected plants include, among others, European yew, or carnivorous round-leaved sundew, common bladderwort and flat leaf bladderwort, martagon, as well as glacial and boreal northern chamedafne (it is the biggest habitat of this species in Poland) and Lapland willow.

in Olsztyn in 1970, which was the first initiative of that kind in Poland. The park gained its official status in 1977. Its underlying objective was to focus on protection of the unique landscape of post-glacial lakes, including their rich fauna and flora. The specific microclimate is a consequence of the natural co-existence of a marine continental climate with local factors. The total area of the park covers 536 km², including 186 km² of protective zone. Within its boundaries, the northern part of the **Pisz Forest** and Krutynia river are located, as well as 10 natural reserves, among others, Czapliniec, Czaplisko – Ławny Lasek, Łuknajno Lake and Pierwos.

Within the park, there are 29 settlement units, and some villages – such as Krutyń, Lipowo or Zgon – which are distinguished because of their unique architecture and idyllic landscape. The seat of the park is located in a historic wooden building in Krutyń village.

PISZ FOREST

The Masurian Landscape Park contains a significant part of the biggest forest in Mazury – **Pisz Forest**. Its total area covers around 1,000 km². The area is distinguished not only due to its very interesting geographical location but also due to its rarely encountered animals and vegetation. If one adds the history of settlements in this area and the still alive legends, undoubtedly, the Pisz Forest will become a mandatory stop on our trail. It includes lakes which have the same protection as reserves (e.g. Nidy or Jegocin). In the northern part, lies the Land of Great Mazury Lakes. The two main rivers serving the



NATURAL DISASTERS IN THE PISZ FOREST

Until the middle of the 18th century, in the woods of the Pisz Forest, extensive exploitation of the forests increased due to the development of settlements. However, man was destroying the land side by side with nature – wind and hurricanes have caused serious damage in this area. The biggest hurricane affected the forest in 2002 when the disaster destroyed 12 thousand hectares amounting to 35% of the tree stand. Enormous devastation was noted in the regions of Wilcze Bagno and Dłutowo. Recovery of the environment to its condition before this memorable hurricane may take several decades.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the area was also visited by invasions of pests, which significantly contributed to damage of the forest and made the local inhabitants' life difficult.

forest territory are: Krutynia (constituting a popular canoeing route) and Pisa. The forest is mainly overgrown by pine woods as well as birch trees, aspen and oak trees growing on sander sands. Plants protected within the territory of the Forest include: Jacob's Ladder, common sundew, buffalo grass, lungwort, several species of the orchid family as well as martagon. Several hundred years ago, it was possible to encounter auroch or wolverine, today the attraction includes doe, deer, elk or lynx.

Towns and villages distant from transportation routes utilised natural resources until the end of the 19th century, in order to produce everything required for everyday life. In the forest, smokehouses produced charcoal, tar and pitch. Iron mills were also in operation, even a steel mill with a furnace in Wądołek. They used natural resources of bog iron from which pots, kitchen plates, door hinges, etc. were produced using charcoal as fuel. Obviously, there were sawmills too. This unique forest industry provided work and adequate living conditions for the local inhabitants up until the railway was established, which consequently introduced better products from industrialised areas.



Pisz forest inspectorate,
photo GEP Chroszcz



RUFFIANS IN PISZ FOREST

The woods of the Pisz Forest had always been a shelter for rascals, scamps and all sorts of bandits who felt safe in the wild environment with its inaccessible pathways. However, quite early on, strict rules were enforced as a response to their presence – forest rangers were entitled to kill the ruffians on the spot, consequently, innocent noblemen and peasants were sometimes murdered, as in 1708. The problem was not solved until the end of the 19th century, however, many legends survive, reminding us of the presence of the ruffians in Pisz Forest.

Ruffians, fig. RS



Park of Wild Animals in Kadzidłowo,
photo D. Żaród

Today Pisz Forest is becoming deserted – the population of former villages has decreased due to wars, unpredictable acts of nature and the temptation of civilisation. Consequently, on our trails, we can often encounter traces of former villages, such as cemeteries, with preserved monuments or crosses. It is worth emphasising that today the forests make an ideal place for walking and cycling excursions.

At this point we are coming to the end of our trail, setting off almost

INSPIRATION OF ARTISTS

For a long time, the region has been a stepping stone for poets, writers, painters, and today also actors or singers. The deserted areas promote recovery of artistic powers and the return of inspiration. Personalities who have used the silence, calmness and unusual nature of the forests include, among others: Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, Jerzy Putrament, Igor Newerly, Agnieszka Osiecka and Olga Lipińska. The character of these lands is expressed perfectly by the German writer, Ernst Wiechert, the flesh and blood Masurian, who often used to describe his homeland, its traditions, history and the rural philosophy of life. Weichert's forest epopee, "The Jeromin children" is particularly worth mentioning.

THE FOREST PROMOTIONAL COMPLEX "MASURIAN FORESTS"

The complex west of the trail comprises five forestry inspectorates (Spychowo, Mrągowo Strzałowo, Maskulińskie and Pisz as well as the PAN Research Station in Popielno) and it encompasses the whole area of the Pisz Forest. This initiative is aimed at promoting nature in this unique part of Poland, and the walking and bicycle trails will help us to discover it, likewise the attractions tailored specially to the needs of tourists. On the shore of Spychowo Lake, we can find, among others, the Forest Museum, amphitheatre, Forestry Educational Path "Niedźwiedzi Kąt" [Bear's Corner], and the shelter "Eko-oczko". In the territory, south of Pisz on the Pisa river, is the Szast Protective Forest, where a tentative walking trail for tourists is indicated and an observation tower has been built. In the forest, it is possible to see the damage caused by the hurricane in 2002, and to observe the gradual recovery of the environment after this natural disaster.

thirty kilometres westwards – on the land – to spend unforgettable moments in the bosom of the extraordinary nature and culture on a visit to Kadzidłowo. In this small village, there is a 60-hectares' private **Park of Wild Animals** which is inhabited by elks, beavers, wild horses and miniature goats as well as fallow deer and roe deer, Polish konik (primitive horse) and various species of birds. Most of the animals living in the park are friendly towards people, and it is possible to feed them and even enter the farm. Just next to the park is **the Culture Settlement**, a private museum in an arcaded cottage, on the ground floor of which we can visit the classroom of a former Masurian school as well as the teachers' room. The attic accommodates a collection of exhibits.



Water tourism is a unique way of spending leisure time. It encourages both fans of active recreation and those who enjoy calm and quiet relaxation far from civilisation, to come to Mazury. Yachts, sailing boats, canoes, speedboats, rowing boats, paddle boats as well as swimming and fishing are the ideal sports to practice on Masurian waters. To benefit from this natural environment, it is necessary to follow certain precautionary measures because the waters of the Mazury lakes may turn merciless for careless adventurers driven by recklessness instead of common sense. Below, some suggestions and advice which could prevent tragedy. Many of the recommendations are addressed to persons sailing on the Masurian routes by larger vessels, such as yachts, sailing boats or other water transport used by tourists and in sports. The following instructions also contains information promoting safety on canoes, speedboats, and even swimming across the lake.

A sailor without a map is like a soldier without a gun. While weapons at the end of the 19th century may still be fully efficient, if a route is planned based on an out-dated map, the journey may end up a complete failure! For several years, the system of marking navigation obstacles has been visibly improving, and new maps are updated with such details continuously. It is better to be equipped with the most recent map before setting off on a sailing trip (always check if it has been recently updated!) and studying it carefully from the point of view of our planned water route.

Meteorological instinct. No one leaves the port before checking the weather forecast for the forthcoming days of the planned cruise. A detailed local forecast is needed, which is not always provided by the TV weather service. We can use the radar map presenting current forecasts for regions (e.g. ↗ www.pogodynka.pl, the website also offers the service of SMS-based



CHAPTER III. Safety on the water

In the Land of the Great Mazury Lakes you can sail in a variety of ways: by kayak, boat, pontoon or you can simply swim... ,
photo iStockphoto.com
photo GEP Chroszcz





Watercraft equipment close to the heart of every water sport fan,
photo GEP Chroszcz



warnings in changes of atmospheric conditions). Local fishermen or the nearest WOPR station (Volunteer Water Rescue Organisation) may also be helpful. Along the route, 17 high poles have also been installed to warn sailors cruising on the lakes of any dangers connected with changeable atmospheric conditions. The lanterns on these poles emit a bright yellow light which is visible from a distance of 8 km, irrespective of the weather. The status of risk may be assessed by the intensity of the light blinking – the faster it blinks, the more dangerous the conditions on the waters.

It is also necessary that we pay attention to the direction and strength of the wind as well as to the atmospheric pressure. Such data, combined with our own observations, should give us an approximate determination of the weather for the next few hours. As time goes by, a watchful sailor develops the necessary skills to predict his own forecasts, but even many years' experience in sailing will not protect against a storm more than an hour before it strikes (it does give the sailor sufficient time to hide in a safe place though, with the exception of the very dangerous Śniardwy lake).

We should remember that alcohol consumption whilst in charge of a boat can have far-reaching consequences. Alcohol significantly slows down our reactions to external factors, which play a key role in sailing. Penalties for persons driving vessels are exactly the same as for drunk drivers. Attendance in court and depriving the person of his sailing license is obviously the least painful tragedy to be caused by lack of imagination. Statistically, alcohol is the most common cause of sailing accidents.

Safe cruising across the Masurian waters is obviously the result of common sense, but also of natural forces. Therefore, in this part of the guide, attention should be drawn to the nature of the reservoirs located along the route and the resulting threats from them. The specifics of ribbon lakes is based on the fact that the winds usually blow along the channel. However, it can happen (e.g. Beldany lake) that crosscuts of various sizes occur, transferring the lateral winds. This should be particularly considered during sailing trips.

We should not forget that we are not alone on the reservoirs, therefore we should keep our eyes wide open.



Probably the most annoying threat is that caused by the water motorsport fans who rarely observe the limitations mandatory on the reservoirs, and the level of their mindlessness is often unbelievable. Even though the water police, especially during the summer season, promote safety on the lakes as a matter of prevention, it is worth avoiding close encounters with seemingly out-of-control speedboats on the lakes. Navigation of tourist and sports vessels along the Great Lakes route is sanctioned by the regulation of the Inspector of Inland Navigation in Giżycko. It is recommended that you become acquainted with regulations concerning travelling on the Masurian waters, which have the prevailing power. It is essential for us to remember that we are not allowed to sail anchor boats on the sailing route at night, without the permission of the Inspectorate; we should also respect the priority of commercial vessels over sports and tourist vessels, including rowing boats, canoes, sailing boats, etc.



On the bowsprit,
photo GEP Chroszcz



The so-called **"captive ferryboat"** is another threat. The sign warns that a ferryboat is being pulled along the rope stretched between the banks, raised several metres from the bottom in front of the ferry, and it is placed just below the water surface. If the ferryboat has already moved from the shore, we should never try to pass in front of it. The opposite occurs behind the stern – the line raised from the bow, after the passage of the ferryboat, immediately loses tension, and falls to the bottom making the passage safe. In the Land of Great Lakes, we can meet such a case only once, on Beldany lake (in the village of Wierzba). Thus, entering the waters of this reservoir, remember: never in front of the bow of the ferryboat, always behind the stern!

When passing a ship, especially on the more narrow canals, if our vessels are moving we should try to approach the shore just behind the stern of the ship, turning quickly towards its wake, to the middle of the canal, straits or pass (against the direction of the turn manoeuvre). It may happen that the ship passes us at the moment we stand by the shore. Then we should hold strongly onto our yachts, sailing boats or ships at safe distance from the shore, as the wave generated by the passing ship may even break the board side. As for smaller vessels, we should always try to reach the shore directly to prevent the boat overturning. One significant hazards involves power lines hanging above the water – touching them with the mast may cause death or disability of a crew member on board.



Drop the anchor behind the stern at a proper moment and control its passage into the water,
photo GEP Chroszcz

The problem of **anchoring** is also worth mentioning. Preparing an anchor consists of uncoiling the rope (its length should be 5-7 times longer than the depth of the reservoir at a given place) and its coiling into bigger rolls. Then the rope should be placed on the stern board, and the anchor itself should be put on top of it (if some time is to pass before the anchor is lowered into the water, the best idea is to tie it to avoid tangling). At the correct moment, we drop the anchor behind the stern and control its passage into the water. If the vessel is already close to the pier, it is necessary to support the anchor, to avoid hitting the pier or the shore.

At the end, a small comment on **bridge marking**. Navigation regulations for inland water routes foresee marking of bridge spans, depending on whether traffic below the bridge is one-way or two-way. A yellow, vertically-placed square on a bridge span informs us of two-way traffic and indicates maintaining particular caution. Two signs placed next to each other indicate one-way traffic. On the bridge span, the threshold (safe) water is also shown – the same vertically placed squares, but in red and white.

Summing up: in order to fully enjoy the wind in the sails and before setting off for a cruise, it is absolutely necessary to get acquainted with the basics of sailing skills and the mandatory principles

of this sport. During sailing, watchfulness, correct reading of the signs and fast reaction to changing conditions are the prerequisites of safety. It is also worth remembering that not only sailors are exposed to dangers in the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes. Fans of other water sports should also maintain particular carefulness – canoes, paddle boats, boats, even if they are small and sail close to the shores, they are also exposed to the freak conditions of the Masurian waters. Thus, proper preparation before crossing Mazury by water routes is not only the responsibility of sailors but also lovers of active recreation using water equipment other than a yacht, a sailing boat or a ship.



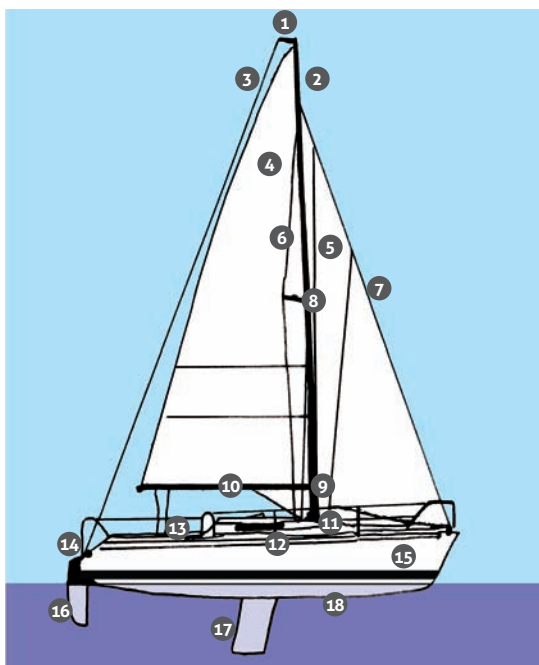
SAILING DICTIONARY

Backstay	a wind blowing diagonally from the stern direction
Bilge	the lowest compartment of a yacht where water may be collected
Boom	a wooden pole to which the bottom of sail is attached
Bowsprit	horizontal pole at the bow
Calm	no wind, smooth water surface
Centreboard	a moving keel, retractable through the slot in the bottom of the sailboat and allowing to maintain its stability
Cleat	a device for securing various ropes
Close hauled	a wind blowing diagonally to the boat prow
Dead before the wind	aft wind from the stern direction
Foresail	the foremost sail on a stay
Galley	kitchen aboard a yacht
Half wind	wind abeam, perpendicular to the sailing vessel's axis of symmetry

Mainsail	the main sail on a sailing vessel, second from the stem
Mizzen	first sail next to the stern of large ships
Reefing the sail	reducing sail area
Rigging	moving equipment of a sailboat
Shackle	a hinged metal loop used as a connecting link in rigging systems u
Shroud	a steel rope sustaining the yacht from both sides
Stay	a metal rope supporting the mast, connecting the top with the stem
Stern	wave wake on the water surface behind the stern of a sailing ship
Tack	a wind blowing from the right or left side of the hull
Thimble	a metal shaped piece used to protect rope loops
Top	upper part of the mast
Yard	a horizontal spar used to attach the upper part of sails

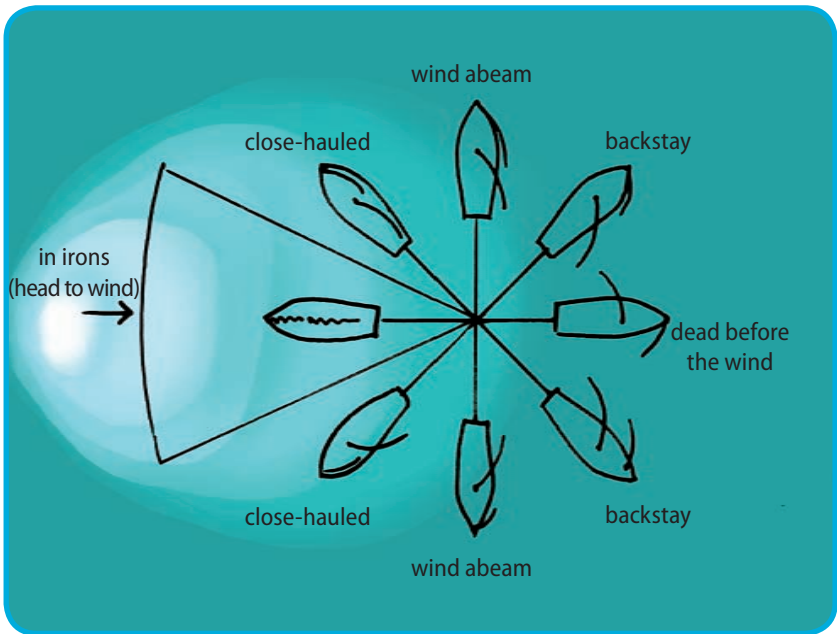
MAIN ELEMENTS OF A SAILING BOAT

1. Top of the mast
2. Mast
3. Backstay
4. Main sail
5. Jib (fore-sail)
6. Shroud
7. Stay
8. Crosstrees
9. Gooseneck

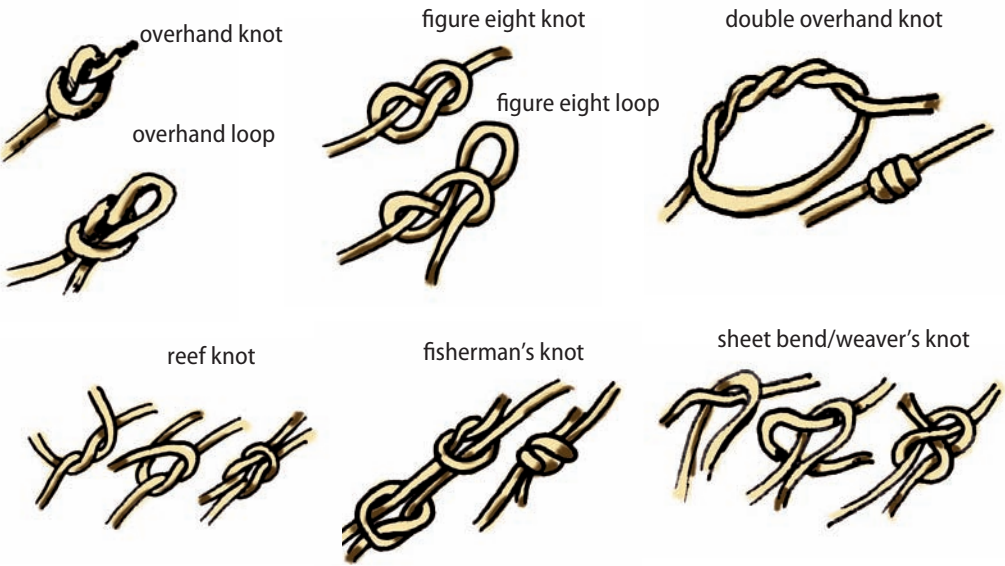


10. Boom
11. Mast heel
12. Beading
13. Cockpit
14. Rudder
15. Hull
16. Rudder blade
17. Keel/centre board
18. Hull

COMPASS ROSE



BASIC SAILING KNOTS





MOPR (VOLUNTEER WATER RESCUE SERVICE) STATIONS

LOCATION	LAKE	TELEPHONE, E-MAIL	ADDRESS OF ENTITY
Giżycko	Niegocin	☎ +48 87 4282300 @ giżycko@mopr.com.pl	✉ ul. Dąbrowskiego 14a 11-500 Giżycko
Harsz/Składowo	Mamry	☎ +48 697890134, -136 @ skladowo@mopr.com.pl	✉ Harsz Składowo 60 11-610 Pozezdrze
Mikołajki	Mikołajskie	☎ +48 669925158, 48 874215431 @ mikołajki@mopr.com.pl	✉ ul. Okrężna 9 11-730 Mikołajki
Pisz/Łupki	Roś	☎ +48 669925108 @ pisz@mopr.com.pl	✉ Łupki 15a 12-200 Pisz

www.mopr.com.pl

USEFUL WEBSITES

↔ www.mazury.info.pl

↔ www.mazury.pl

↔ www.mazury.nek.pl

↔ www.cmazur.pl

TOURIST INFORMATION

Węgorzewo

✉ pl. Wolności 11
☎ +48 87 4274009
@ infotur@wegorzewo.pl
↔ www.wegorzewo.pl

Mikołajki

✉ pl. Wolności 7
☎ +48 87 4216850
@ it@mikolajki.pl
↔ www.mikolajki.pl

Giżycko

✉ ul. Wyzwolenia 2
☎ +48 87 4285265
@ infogizycko@post.pl
↔ www.gizycko.turystyka.pl

Pisz

✉ pl. Daszyńskiego 16
☎ +48 87 4232675
@ cit.pisz@home.pl
↔ www.pdk.pisz.pl

Ruciane-Nida

✉ ul. Dworcowa 14
☎ +48 87 4231989
@ cit@ruciane-nida.pl
↔ www.ruciane-nida.pl

Ryn

✉ ul. Hanki Sawickiej 1
☎ +48 87 4218061
@ rck-it@ryn.wp.pl
↔ www.rck-ryn.pl

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

☎ 601 100 100
Emergency Communi-
cation Centre of WOPR
(from any telephone)

☎ 984 – Emergency
number
in Mazury
☎ 999 – ambulance
☎ 997 – police
☎ 998 – fire brigade
☎ 112 – Emergency
Communi-
cation Centre
(from mobile
phones)

