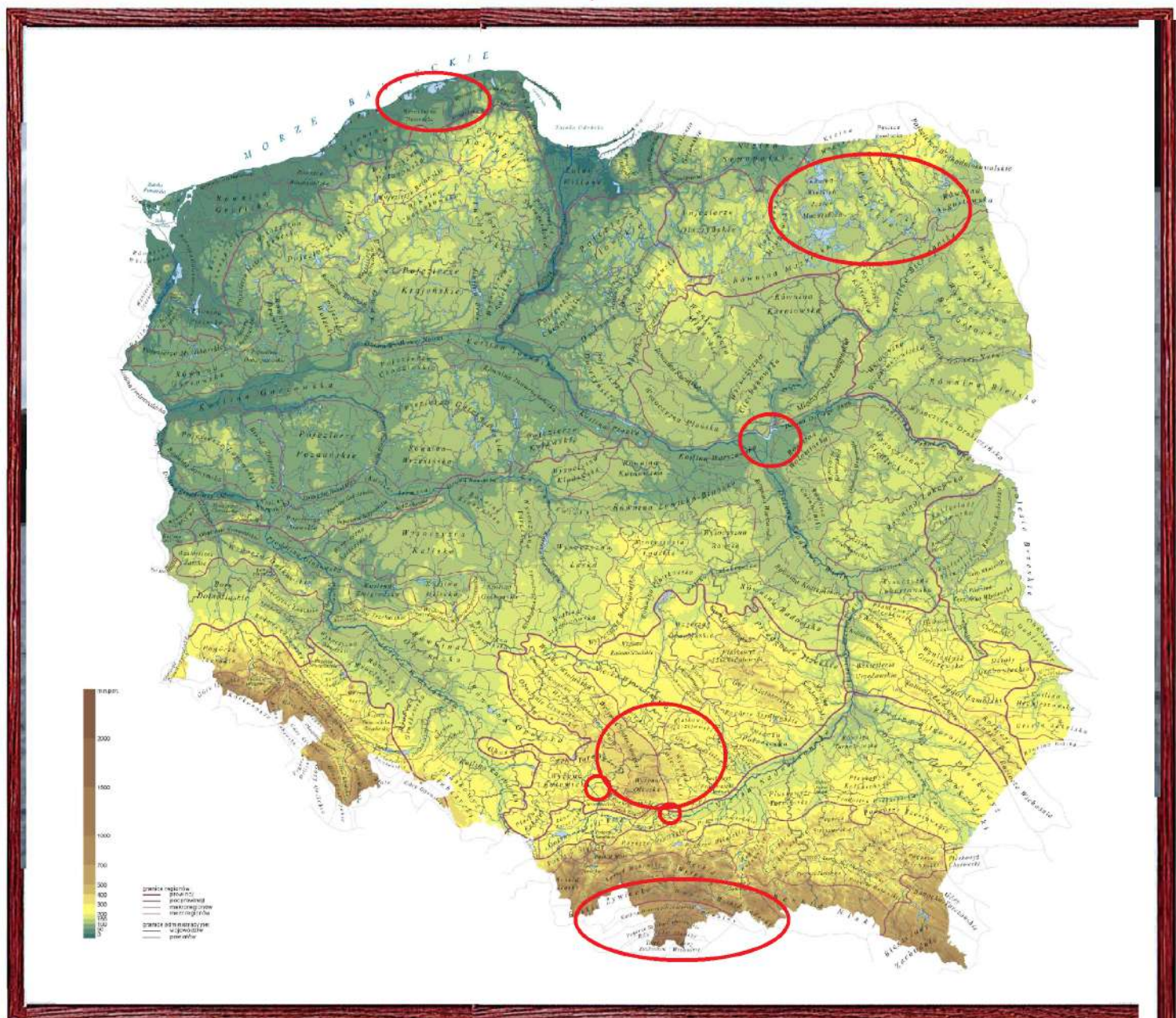




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AROUND POLAND



EXPLANATION

Poland has a lot of great sights and places worth visiting. If you ever come here, don't miss the picturesque seaside with moving dunes, the breathtaking Tatra Mountains, the primeval forest in Białowieża, the Masurian Lakeland, the Jurassic Highland with its numerous castles of the Eagles' Nest Trail, or beautiful cities of Kraków or Wrocław. And that's just the beginning!



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EXPLANATION

The Tatra Mountains are the highest range of the Carpathians. They form a natural border between Poland and Slovakia. The highest peak of the Tatras is Gerlach, situated in Slovakia. The highest Polish peak in the Tatras is Rysy, 2499 metres above sea level. The Tatras are protected by law by the establishment of the Tatra National Park, Slovakia and the Tatra National Park, Poland, which are jointly entered in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves.



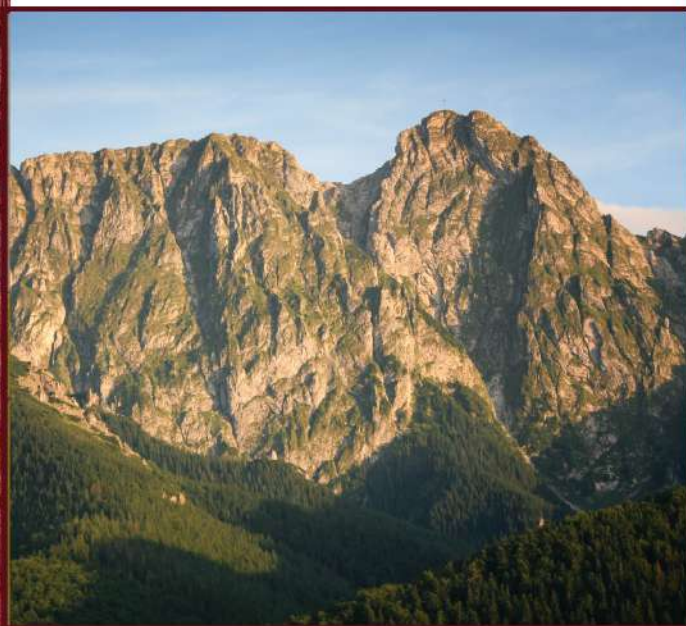
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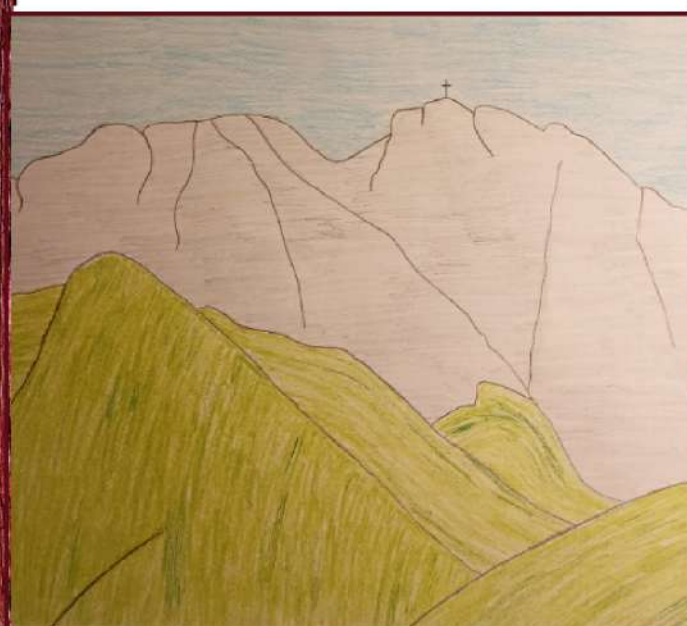
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EXPLANATION

Giewont is the highest mountain in the Giewont Massif in the Tatra Mountains – the highest mountain range in Poland.

It is 1895 metres above the sea level.

The shape of the mountain resembles a silhouette of a sleeping knight. There is a legend that under the mountain there is a troop of sleeping knights, who will all wake up when Poland is in danger. On the very top, you can see a 15-metre-high cross made of iron.



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EXPLANATION

The people of Zakopane decided to commemorate the 1900th birthday of Jesus by installing a gigantic cross on their most iconic mountain top. The cross is made up of 400 iron elements, all of which were carried up to the top by the inhabitants of Zakopane, and weighs 1819 kilograms! It took six days to put the cross up. There is an inscription which says, "Jesu Christo Deo, restitutæ per ipsum salutis MCM".



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EXPLANATION

Poland has always been a land of strong and courageous knights. Many old tales claim that the bravest of the knights never died, but have been asleep for centuries in a cavern beneath Mount Giewont.

Once, in a mountain village, a stranger entered a blacksmith shop. He told the blacksmith that he could earn a rich reward for doing a special job, but he must promise not to tell anyone. The blacksmith agreed. The stranger took a gold bar from under his coat and asked the blacksmith to make a horseshoe from it. When this was done, the stranger led him to the Koscieliska Valley. After hours of walking, they came to a cave hidden by rocks and trees.

There was a bright golden light inside the cave. On the floor was an army of knights in full armor, resting their helmeted heads on saddles as if they were pillows. In their hands were battle axes and spears. Along the walls of the cave stood beautiful sleeping horses covered with blankets made of delicate fabric and horseshoes made of gold.

The stranger told the amazed blacksmith to replace the broken shoe of a great stallion with the golden horseshoe he had made. The horse did not get up even when the blacksmith nailed the horseshoe to the stallion's hoof.

Of course, the curious blacksmith asked many questions, but this was all the stranger would tell him: the knights had been in a deep sleep for hundreds of years and they would not wake until the time came for a great battle. On that day, thunder would shake the earth and the sky, giant pine trees would break like little sticks, and boulders would crash down the mountainsides.

The knights would then gallop out of the cave to fight for Poland once more.

When the job was done, the stranger led the blacksmith back to his village and made him swear never to tell a living soul about what he had seen. Then, the stranger paid the blacksmith with a bag of gold and vanished.

The foolish blacksmith could not keep from telling anyone about what he saw. First, he told his wife and then his neighbors. Soon everyone knew his secret. However, the moment the blacksmith broke his word, his bag of gold turned to sand and although he searched for the cave many times, he was never able to find it.



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EXPLANATION

The Royal Castle in Warsaw is a royal residence that used to serve as the official home of Polish monarchs from the 16th century until 1795. The castle was completely destroyed during World War II, and then in the 1970s and 1980s reconstructed on the basis of the surviving remains of the walls, cellars and arcades. Finally it regained its 17th century appearance and character.

In 1980, the Royal Castle and surrounding Old Town became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



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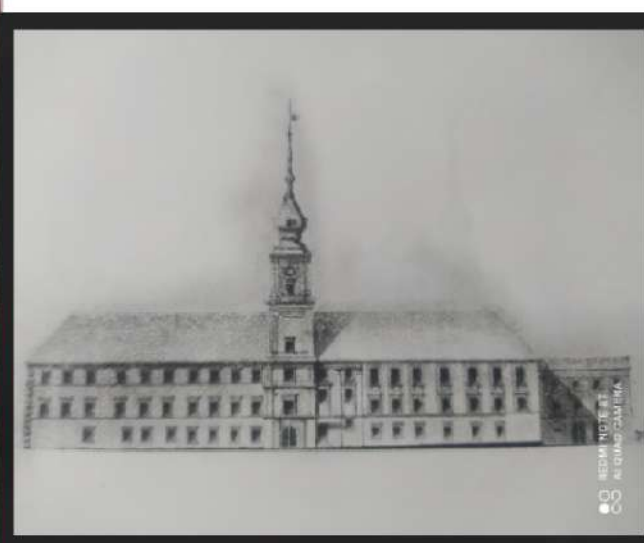
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EXPLANATION

One more picture of the Royal Castle in Warsaw and some facts about its beginnings in the royal service to the Polish monarchs.

There are many important dates in the history of the royal residence in Warsaw. One of them is certainly the year 1568, when King Sigismund II Augustus, together with his court, moved from Kraków to Warsaw and settled in the Royal Castle, simultaneously executing its radical extension and reconstruction. Shortly afterwards, in 1596, Sigismund III Vasa officially moved the capital to Warsaw, making the castle the most important royal residence.



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EXPLANATION

Sigismund's Column (Polish: Kolumna Zygmunta), originally erected in 1644, is located at Castle Square, Warsaw, Poland and is one of Warsaw's most famous landmarks as well as the first secular monument in the form of a column in modern history. The column and statue commemorate King Sigismund III Vasa, who in 1596 had moved Poland's capital from Kraków to Warsaw.



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EXPLANATION

The Bobolice Castle is a 14th-century royal castle in the village of Bobolice, Poland. The complex is located within a highland region called the Polish Jura, or the Jurassic Highland.

The castle in Bobolice was built by King Casimir III the Great in the middle of the 14th century. The castle was a part of the defence system of royal strongholds protecting the western border of Poland on the side of Silesia. The system is known as "The Eagles' Nest Trail".



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EXPLANATION

The Będzin Castle is a castle in Będzin in southern Poland. The stone castle dates to the 14th century, and is predated by a wooden fortification that was erected in the 11th century. It was an important fortification in the Kingdom of Poland. The castle was meant to be a military outpost on the southwestern border of the Kingdom of Poland. It was the most westward fortification, and was meant to hold off any invasion coming to Lesser Poland from Bohemian or Silesian lands.



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EXPLANATION

Moving Dunes in Słowiński National Park.

Słowiński National Park is a national park in Pomerania, northern Poland. It is situated on the Baltic coast, between Łeba and Rowy. The northern boundary of the park consists of 32.5 kilometres (20.2 mi) of coastline. In 1977 it was made a UNESCO biosphere reserve.

The most famous feature of the park is its moving dunes.



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EXPLANATION

Masurian Lake District, also known as "the Land of 1000 Lakes" is the area in the North-East of Poland. In fact, there are over two thousand lakes in this area!

These lakes were ground out of the land by glaciers during the Pleistocene ice age around 14,000 - 15,000 years ago, when ice covered northeastern Europe.

The largest lake in Masuria, and in the whole of Poland, is called Śniardwy.



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EXPLANATION

Lake Śniardwy is the largest Polish lake.

It is located in Masuria. In cloudy weather the opposite shore cannot be seen, which is why Śniardwy is also called the Masurian Sea. On the lake there are picturesque islets and coves, which make nice resting areas for numerous sailors. Fantastic bathing areas and the proximity of Mikołajki with a well-prepared tourist base is a guarantee of a pleasant holiday on Lake Śniardwy.



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EXPLANATION

Masuria is the most popular sailing destination in Poland. As the biggest lakes: Śniardwy, Mamry, Niegocin, Dargin and many others are connected by canals, you can sail from one side of Mazury to the other in two – three days.

The Great Masurian Lakes Trail is more than 130 km long and ensures sailing in the surroundings of lush nature, clean air and birds singing.



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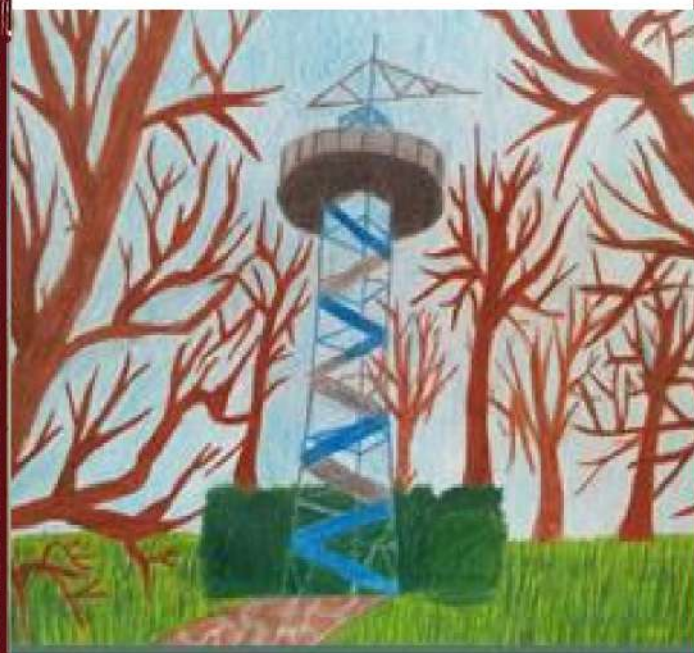
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EXPLANATION

Katowice is the capital city of Silesia and the most important post-industrial centre in Poland.

There are a lot of things to do and places to see in Katowice. One of them is the Kościuszko Park with its famous Parachute Tower. In fact, it is the only parachute tower in Poland!

In September 1939 it was used as one of the defence points and also as an observation spot. Now it is one of Katowice's landmarks.



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EXPLANATION

The main square (Polish: Rynek Główny) of the Old Town of Kraków, Lesser Poland, is the principal urban space located at the center of the city. It dates back to the 13th century, and at 3.79 ha (9.4 acres) is the largest medieval town square in Europe.

In 1978 UNESCO placed the Main Square as part of the Old Town Kraków on the list of World Heritage Sites. The Cloth Hall is the central feature of the main market square in the Old Town.



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EXPLANATION

salt continuously until 2007, as one of the world's oldest operating salt mines. Due to falling salt prices and mine flooding, commercial salt mining was discontinued in 1996. The Wieliczka Salt Mine is now an official Polish Historic Monument and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its attractions include the shafts and labyrinthine passageways, displays of historic salt-mining technology, an underground lake, four chapels and numerous statues carved by miners out of the rock salt, and more recent sculptures by contemporary artists.



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EXPLANATION

The Wawel Royal Castle is a castle residency located in central Kraków, Poland, and the first UNESCO World Heritage Site in the world. Built at the behest of King Casimir III the Great, it consists of a number of structures from different periods situated around the Italian-styled main courtyard. The castle, being one of the largest in Poland, represents nearly all European architectural styles of medieval, renaissance and baroque periods. Under the castle you can visit the cave in which a dragon once used to live.