

Poland and Slovakia

Tatra Mountains

90 long and short walks • 7 car tours

GPS

This is a sample from the
PDF edition of

Landscapes of the
TATRA
MOUNTAINS
of Poland and Slovakia

a countryside guide
Fourth edition



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This shorter sampler includes some of the introductory text, the introductions to each of the main sections (Picnicking, Car Touring and Walking) with an example of each. There is a total of 144 pages, plus a pull-out touring map, in the full book.



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Fold-out touring map *inside back cover*

Town plans *reverse of touring map*

Zakopane, Krościenko, Štrbské Pleso, Starý Smokovec, Tatranská Lomnica

Ždiar (Car tour 2)





Travel

The quickest and most direct means of travel to **Poland** is by air. Scheduled flights from Britain by both mainstream and budget airlines land at Kraków, the closest airport to the areas covered in this guide. Driving to Poland from the UK takes at least two days; the distance from Calais (at the Eurotunnel exit) to the border is approximately 1000km, most directly via Belgium, Germany and into Poland on the E40 autoroute. Major international and some local hire-car companies are represented, though car hire is comparatively expensive and fuel little less so than in the UK. Bear in mind that theft of and from vehicles is common in Poland. Fly/drive and accommodation packages may be a worthwhile means of cutting down costs. State-operated trains and buses link Kraków and Zakopane, the former being slower though more comfortable; frequent local buses serve outlying towns and villages.

Air travel is also the most direct means of reaching **Slovakia**. Scheduled flights from Britain by a few mainstream and budget airlines land at Bratislava, the closest airport to the area covered in this guide. Both Vienna and Budapest are not much further away and are better served by major airlines. The drive to the western border from the UK involves more than 1000km of motorways through Belgium, southern Germany and northern Austria to Bratislava. You'll need a tax disc in Austria and Slovakia, available at the border crossing. From Bratislava, the E75/E50 motorway ends on the western outskirts of Žilina, on the threshold of the mountain areas. Weekly/monthly toll-paid motorway stickers are available at border crossings and petrol stations. Major international and some local hire-car companies are represented, though car hire is comparatively expensive and fuel on a par with the UK. Fly/drive and accommodation packages may be a worthwhile means of cutting down costs. Excellent state-operated train services (and public and private bus lines) link Vienna and Budapest to Bratislava, and Bratislava to major towns from where frequent local buses provide good connections to the walking areas.

Indeed, public transport is so good and inexpensive in both countries that you would not be at all disadvantaged by planning a car-free holiday.

Note that citizens of the UK and other western European countries, Canada and the US do not need visas to visit either country.



Car touring

There are seven car tours in this guide. Five of them outline **direct routes to the walking base(s)** in or near each of the featured national parks. Each starts from a large town with good connections to an arrival port for the relevant country, or where cars may be hired for the duration of your visit. Two of these tours offer a choice of approaches (called 'itineraries'), which could also serve as links between parks.

The two other tours describe **trans-border routes**: between Zakopane (Poland) and Poprad (Slovakia), and between Malá Fatra National Park and Zakopane. The touring routes are intended to help you plan a holiday of up to a fortnight. It's worth noting that all the routes could be linked into one extended circuit — for which you would need at least four weeks!

The tours and itineraries start and finish at places where **accommodation** is available; other places where you could stay

Ridge view to Vel'ký Kriváň (Walk 28)



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en route are noted. For detailed information about local sights, track down the official tourist information office — called *biuro informacji turystycznej* in Poland, *informačné stredisko pre turistov* in Slovakia, as distinct from accommodation agencies, many of which display an ‘Information’ logo. Don’t necessarily expect to find any English speakers among the staff.

Both countries’ comparatively new **motorways** are built to a high standard, but **main roads** are very variable — where they’re good, they’re excellent, elsewhere, unpredictable. On **minor rural roads** be prepared for cavernous potholes, wandering sheep, blind corners, and horses and carts. Many Poles and Slovaks drive fast and often recklessly; they are also fond of driving while using their mobiles. *Defensive driving is recommended.*

In both countries **petrol stations** are widely available, from near motorways to villages, perhaps more plentifully in Poland than in Slovakia. Opening hours range from 24/7 to being closed on Sundays in rural areas. In case of a **motoring emergency**, telephone the European emergency number 112.

The pull-out touring map is designed to be held out opposite the touring notes and contains all the information you need on route. The key on the map explains the **symbols** used in the text. Routes via the larger towns follow the main road/highway, **bypassing the centre**. Should you choose to stop, seize the first available opportunity to park (indicated in the notes); the further you venture towards the centre, the more difficult parking becomes. Some cumulative distances and an estimated driving time are given, though the latter is likely to be confounded by road works and/or slow moving vehicles on the many long stretches where safe overtaking is impossible. If you would like additional **touring maps**, those published by Freytag & Berndt at scales of 1:500,000 for Poland or 1:280,000 for Slovakia are recommended.

Speed limits in Poland are: 20km/h residential areas, 50km/h built-up area, 90km/h outside built-up area, 100km/h single and two-lane roads, 110km/h dual carriageway, 130km/h motorway. In Slovakia they are 50km/h urban areas, 90km/h out of town, motorway 130kmh. In both countries your average touring speed is likely to be about 55km/h. Tolls are payable on motorways in both countries. In Poland probably the only relevant motorway is just west of Kraków; pay at the gate. In Slovakia the only motorways (in 2022) are between Brno (Czech Republic) and Bratislava, and northeast from there to near Zvolen. Buy a vignette at the border crossing or online at www.eznamka.sk. You’ll usually find a **café or restaurant** in towns and villages on or very close to main roads, but shopping for a picnic may be less convenient, so set out with all you’ll need.

Car Tour 1: PIENINY AND TATRA NATIONAL PARKS

Two itineraries with straightforward routes to bases for walks in two Polish national parks, the first visiting a World Heritage-listed wooden church

En route: Picnics 1-7, Walks 1-10


The two Polish national parks are within easy reach of the town of Nowy Targ (84km/52mi south of Kraków). To the east a good road traverses undulating countryside, passes the large Lake Czorszyńskie and scattered villages, most just off the road. One is Dębno, with a wonderful 14th-century wooden church dedicated to the Archangel Michael, a Unesco World Heritage Site. At the small town of Krościenko, one of two possible bases for walks in Pieniny National Park, the road crosses the river Dunajec, and your route continues along a lesser road to the spa town of Szczawnica, the other base, in the rather narrow valley of the river Grajcarek.






It's only a short drive south from Nowy Targ to reach Zakopane, the gateway to Poland's Tatra National Park.

**Itinerary 1: Nowy Targ • Dębno •
Krościenko • Szczawnica • Nowy Targ**

72km/45mi; 1h10min driving





En route: Picnics 1-2, Walks 1-3

From the dual carriageway highway 47 in **Nowy Targ** (, exit at a major junction to follow route 49 (towards *Jurgów*) back under the highway and eastwards, through traffic lights, across a bridge over the river Biały Dunajec and on to a roundabout (2.3km). Continue in the same direction along route 969 towards *Nowy Sącz*.

The road leads out into the countryside in the valley of the river Dunajec, with the villages mostly set back from the road. **Dębno**★ (14.5km     wc), clearly signposted and on the south side of the road, is definitely worth a stop. The information boards outside the beautiful small church of St Michael the Archangel are in Polish only, but if you visit when it's open (09.00-12.00, 14.00-16.30 Mon-Fri, 09.00-12.00 Sat; *cl Sun and on rainy days*), you should be able to pick up a leaflet in English. The

*Plaque at Schronisko na Choczołowskiej
Polanie (Walk 8), recalling the
clandestine meeting here between
John Paul II and Lech Walesa*

interior is almost completely covered in centuries-old paintings and frescoes, a miracle of preservation.

Back on the main road, you soon cross the outlet from **Lake Czorszyńskie** (16km), and after 400m pass a road off right (signposted to a B&B) that leads to a parking place from which to contemplate the lake (16.7km ). Continuing east, past the village of **Maniowy** (19km ), the road undulates gently above the lake, then climbs quite steeply from





Above: autumn colours on the saddle below Świstowa Czuba (Walk 10); left: parish church of St Clement in Zakopane



near the village of **Kluszkowce** to parking for a hilltop viewpoint over the surrounding countryside on the north side of the road (23km 📍). The road then begins a long descent back into the Dunajec Valley through scattered villages and farms. In the vicinity of **Połoczki** (30km 📍) you'll find a comparative rarity in the area — a petrol station.

Continue to **Krościenko** (31.5km 📍📍📍📍📍; Walks 1 and 2), where, at a junction on the threshold of a bridge over the Dunajec, you continue straight ahead towards **Szczawnica**, crossing the river. The road follows the river upstream for a few kilometres to this small town, spread out just above the river Grajcarek, a tributary of the

Dunajec. Most accommodation in **Szczawnica** is near the town centre (36km 📍📍📍📍📍📍📍; Picnics 1 and 2, Walk 3). Return to **Nowy Targ** by the same route (72km).

Itinerary 2: from Nowy Targ to Zakopane

23km/14mi; 25min driving

En route: Picnics 3-7, Walks 4-10

To leave **Nowy Targ**, head south on route 47. (If approaching Nowy Targ from the Pieniny National Park in the east, follow route 49 under the north/south highway; then turn left almost immediately towards **Zakopane**, to join the highway, route 47.) There's a petrol station (📍) almost 2km south, at the end of the dual carriageway.

The busy road leads due south, up the wide valley of the Biały Dunajec, where the villages increasingly merge with each other, to the village of **Poronin** (📍📍) and a major junction (17km). Continue straight on along route 47 (📍), through what could be described as not unattractive suburbs, to central **Zakopane**★ (23km 📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍📍; Picnics 3-7, Walks 4-9; town plan on the reverse of the touring map).



Picnics and short walks

River banks, lakesides, scenic lookouts, meadows, and mountain inns all offer opportunities for dining outdoors. Formal picnic grounds, with tables and other facilities, or benches beside rivers and so on, are quite common in both Poland's and Slovakia's national parks, but it would still be prudent to take something to sit on, since picnicking is very popular and all the amenities may be occupied!

All the picnic spots recommended in this section are easy to reach; some follow parts of the walks described elsewhere, others are fine short walks in their own right. None is more than 50 minutes from a safe parking place or public transport, though the majority are much closer; remember that the times shown are out *and back*.

The location of each picnic is shown by the symbol **P** printed in green on the relevant walking or touring map, and some are illustrated. The symbol **O** indicates a site in full sun. **Keep in mind the Country Code on pages 33-34.**

Stock up with oven-fresh rye bread, some spicy salami, *oscypki* (the ubiquitous smoked goats' cheese, on sale at street stalls), pickled cabbage, fresh cucumber and tomatoes, stone fruit, locally-grown apples or plums from an outdoor market, a bottle of local beer or wine — what more could you ask!

1 Sokolica ridge (map pages 42-43)

(Car tour 1). : see transport for Walk 2 on page 133. 1h30min on foot, with approximately 25m/82ft ascent. Follow Walk 2 to the 45min-point; picnic on the grass; retrace steps to the start.

After crossing the river Dunajec by punt (see footnote on page 46), a short climb leads to a meadow with attractive views of part of the small town of Szczawnica.

2 Dunajec Gorge (map pages 42-43; photograph page 49)

(Car tour 1). : see transport for Walk 3 on page 133. 1h on foot, with negligible ascent. Starting from the car park at the confluence of the rivers

Grajcarek and Dunajec, follow Walk 3 from the 23min-point to the 49min-point; retrace steps from there. Take advantage of the picnic table just past the Lesnica road junction.

A quiet road offers an introduction to the spectacular Dunajec Gorge.

3 Gubałówka **O** (touring map, and partly shown on the plan of Zakopane on the reverse of the touring map; photograph opposite)

(Car tours 1 and 7). from Zakopane to Gubałówka (see Transport, page 132). The nearest convenient parking is off Szkolna, just north of the highway overpass. From there follow signposting, taking the first left (Wałowa Góra) and then

going left again to the lower funicular station. 55min on foot, all downhill (approximately 220m/722ft). Exit from the upper funicular station and turn right along the road (used only by local people). It soon bends left past a communications tower and descends to an unsurfaced road on the right after just over 1km (16min); follow blue waymarks from here. After 600m bear left along a track past a house with distinctive dormer windows (24min) and continue to the forest ahead. A trail leads straight on, then across a small meadow, through a narrow band of trees, to a large meadow with excellent mountain views (40min), where you can picnic on the grass. From the far side of the meadow, bear left downhill, more or less on the edge of the field. The path then swings right into a narrow valley for about 200m to meet a trail, which you follow to the right. It becomes an unsurfaced road between houses, then a narrow road that leads down to a junction; turn right across a bridge, back to the lower funicular station (55min).

An outstandingly scenic downhill walk through some of Zakopane's rural hinterland with unrivalled panoramic views of the Tatra Mountains.

Optional side-trip or Alternative shorter walk: From the upper funicular station exit, turn left along the road for 0.5km, to the pretty wooden church shown at the right, set back from the road on the right; there are benches under the mountain ash trees in its grounds.

4 Zakopane's meadows (map pages 52-53)

🚗 (Car tour 1) or 🚌 (minibus) to the Strążyska Dolina car park and back, as Walk 4 on page 51. 20min on foot. Follow Walk 4 along Droga pod Regłami, at the edge of the forest, with fine views across meadows to

Zakopane. Picnic on the grass, or take advantage of the numerous benches shaded by the tall conifers.

Enjoy peace and quiet and fine views of Gubałówka and Zakopane only 10 minutes' drive from the town centre.

5 Schronisko Kalatówki (map pages 52-53)

🚗 (Car tour 1); park as suggested for motorists in Walk 5, near the junction of Ulica P Tatrzzańskich and Ulica M Karłowicza, 1km north of Kuźnice (see Zakopane plan on reverse of touring map). 🚌 take the minibus from opposite the bus station (see Transport



Picnic 3 (optional side-trip): wooden church at Gubałówka

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for Walk 5 on page 54); 1h on foot with 173m/567ft ascent. Follow Walk 5 (page 55) to the 30min-point, at a meadow dominated by the large refuge, Schronisko Kalatówki. From here you can see the buildings at the top of the cable car station far above to the southeast. Picnic on the grass or try the buffet at the inn.

To the threshold of the high mountains, with views towards the Poland-Slovakia border ridge.

6 On the Poland-Slovakia border ○ (map pages 52-53, photo page 57)

🚗 (Car tour 1); see Picnic 5 above re parking and buses from Zakopane to Kuźnice. Then 🚶 from Kuźnice to Kasprowy Wierch (see Transport on page 132). 30min on foot, with approximately 40m/131ft ascent. From the upper cable car station exit follow the broad paved trail gently downhill, to an unsignposted junction in a shallow saddle. Turn left to follow a well-used, red-waymarked trail, up and along the ridge to the rocky summit of Beskid (2012m). Retrace steps to the start. You should be able

to find a quiet picnic spot not too far from the cable car station (on the high ground to the right — the summit of Kasprowy Wierch); alternatively, descend a little way from Beskid towards the grassy saddle further east along the ridge. Please see the note on page 32 about the ‘Effects of altitude’. *The easy way to enjoy outstanding mountain vistas — by cable car to Kasprowy Wierch.*

7 Polana Huciska ○ (map pages 64-65, nearby photograph pages 62-63)

🚗 (Car tour 1) to Siwa Polana: from Zakopane follow route 958 (Ulica Nowotarska and Ulica Kościeliska) generally south and west to the minor road signposted ‘Dolina Chochołowska’ (7km); turn left to the car park on the left (7.9km; 28° 21.798’N, 16° 29.940’E). 🚌 from opposite Zakopane bus station to Siwa Polana (see transport for Walk 7 on page 133). From the national park entrance, a ‘bus’ (a dressed-up tractor pulling two carriages) plies the valley road as far as Polana Huciska (3.5km); it’s inexpensive and runs half-hourly from





Walking

The six national parks featured in this guide, in southernmost Poland and across Slovakia's mountain areas, offer an immense wealth of walks. There are easy to moderate outings through long valleys, and challenging, exhilarating ridge walks high above. Others take you to supremely beautiful tarns overlooked by rugged peaks, or into deep, seemingly impenetrable gorges. Many afford feasts of magnificent panoramic views across the ranges and surrounding valleys. Some include a visit to a mountain inn (*schronisko* or *chata*), usually accessible only on foot, where you can enjoy refreshments in the company of other walkers. Indeed, you'll rarely be alone for long anywhere, such is the popularity of walking with people of all ages in both countries.

There are 31 main walks (and two alternatives), almost all of which have at least one shorter version. The 'Picnics and short walks' chapter includes 10 walks of between 45min and 1h30min in duration. They are also grouped by national park, where the walks are easily accessible from one or more bases.

Gradings, waymarking, maps, GPS

This guide offers a wide variety of walks with, I think, some to suit nearly all tastes and abilities. There is a quick overview of each walk's **grade** in the Contents, but note that this is the grade of the *main* walk, and there may be a less demanding shorter version: for full details, see the walk itself. Walks are graded according to distance, amount of ascent, roughness of the terrain underfoot and specific challenges. Here is a brief overview of the three gradings:

- easy — suitable for anyone who is reasonably fit and active
- moderate — require stamina; may involve some fairly easy scrambling where it's necessary to use your hands to negotiate small, easily-angled rock outcrops
- strenuous — will appeal to experienced sure-footed hill walkers who have a head for heights

Any of the above grades may be followed by:

- particularly challenging exposure; danger of vertigo

Most of the walks cross some rocky terrain (almost unavoidable away from paved paths). Although none of the walks require rock-climbing skills, some involve the use of **fixed chains and ladders**; in almost all such cases, alternatives are offered.

The walks all follow clearly defined paths and trails, many of which are tributes to the superlative skills of pathbuilders. All are **signposted and waymarked** with paint marks of various colours,

Slovak	English	English	Slovak
turistika		sunny	snečno
prístrešok	picnic shelter	tarn	pleso
ulica	street	thunderstorm	burka
vietor	wind	town	mesto
vodopád	waterfall	valley	dolina
vrch	hill	valley	kotol/ kotliné
vrchol	summit	(shallow)	
vyhliadka	viewpoint	valley basin	planina
zelená	green	viewpoint	vyhliadka
žľab	gorge/gully	waterfall	vodopád
žltá	yellow	waymarked	značený
značený	waymarked	wind	vietor
zráz	precipice	yellow	žltá

Organisation of the walks

The walks are grouped according to the car tour from which they are accessible, and by national parks and individual bases within those areas. The tours comprise a clockwise circuit from the Pieniny Mountains in Poland to the Malá Fatra National Park in central western Slovakia, as can be seen on the fold-out touring map. The walks are circular, linear or out-and-back.

At the top of each walk you will find essential information: distance and **walking time (without stops)**, grade, equipment, availability of refreshments, transport, nearest accommodation and — in almost all cases — alternative shorter walks. *Do check your walking times against mine on a short walk before venturing on a longer bike.*

Below is a key to the symbols on the walking maps.



Signposting on Walk 27

main road	spring, waterfall	bus stop
secondary road	exposed path	car parking
town or minor road	hotel, restaurant	funicular railway
motorable track/lane	café or bar	cable car or ski lift
waymarked route	mountain inn, campsite	castle, fort
path, trail, track	walk start, waypoint	cave
main walk	monastery, church	specified building
alternative walk	chapel, cross, shrine	monument
other described walk	cemetery	pylon, transmitter
height in metres	picnic tables, shelter	picnic suggestion
	best views	map continuation

POLAND'S PIENINY NATIONAL PARK

Pieniny National Park (Pieniński Park Narodowy; Walks 1-3) protects part of the Pieniny Mountains on the Slovak border, about 30km northeast of the Tatra Mountains. A small, compact park (2346ha/5797acres), it was set aside in the early 1930s. Its spectacular limestone peaks, spires and pinnacles are surrounded by forests of beech, sycamore, alder and pine, interspersed with beautiful meadows. The spectacular river Dunajec extends for 7km along the eastern boundary and forms part of the border with Slovakia and its Pieninský Národný Park.

The highest summit in the Polish park is Okraglica (982m), one of the Trzy Korony (Three Crowns), a very popular destination with



Polish walkers. Some 35km of waymarked paths and trails bring many of the park's peaks, valleys and ridges within easy reach. The park has an exceptionally rich and varied flora (1100 species of plants) and is home to 95 species of birds and numerous mammals. Fees are charged for some of the paths in the park (usually collected at one of the more frequented path junctions), as well as for parking generally. Current fees are shown on the park's website under 'Fees'. There is an information English

language section on the this website, **www.pieninypn.pl**.

The town of Nowy Targ is the transport centre for this park. It is on the Kraków/Zakopane railway line; Kraków/ Zakopane buses operated by PKS and other companies stop here too (departures approximately every hour). Some services continue to Krościenko and Szczawnica, two small towns just outside the park to the north which provide amenable bases. PKS operates the service from Nowy Targ to Krościenko and Szczawnica with approximately five departures daily, and a few more Mon-Fri during peak season. See transport details for Walks 1-3 on page 133. It is also possible to reach Zakopane from Krościenko and Szczawnica without changing at Nowy Targ, though the service is limited outside the peak season (1/6-30/9).

Photograph: windswept pine in the Pieniny National Park

Walk 1 (Pieniny): THE THREE CROWNS

Distance: 9.5km/5.8mi; 3h5min

Grade: ● moderate, with approximately 580m/1900ft ascent/descent on waymarked and signposted minor road, tracks, trails and paths. The final ascent of Okraglica is via a very firmly secured metal bridge and steps, with handrails on both sides; the small summit, enclosed by a railing, drops very steeply on three sides and demands a head for heights.

Equipment: see page 31

Refreshments: available in Krościenko. There is a source of water along the way, at Pieński Potok (see map). But do not rely on that — especially in summer — take along your own water supply.

Note: See www.pieninypl.pl for current fee payable for this walk

Transport: 🚗 (Car tour 1) or 🚌 (see page 40 and Transport, page 133) to Krościenko. Travelling by car, there is a small car park in Krościenko beside Ulica Trzech Koron on the route of the walk (49° 26.380'N, 20° 25.312'E; see walk description for directions), but it usually fills up quickly. Otherwise there's a large, pay car park in Krościenko: drive west along the main road from the river Dunajec bridge for 250m; turn left along a road (Ulica Mickiewicza) signposted 'Policja' to Ulica Rynek (the main square) and bear right to the nearby car park, on the left (28° 21.798'N, 16° 29.940'E). All buses to Krościenko stop in Ulica Rynek, where the walk begins.

Nearest accommodation: Krościenko, Szczawnica

The Trzy Korony (Three Crowns) are the outstanding landmark of Pieniny National Park and a very popular destination with Polish walkers of all ages. Many seem happy simply to walk there and back along the same path, but the slightly longer loop route described here takes in the remains of an unusual 13th-century castle. The beech and sycamore forests are magnificent, especially during autumn, while the tranquillity of the meadows scattered across the steep mountain slopes contrasts beautifully with the dramatic ruggedness of the limestone cliffs above.

Trzy Korony, the 'Three Crowns'

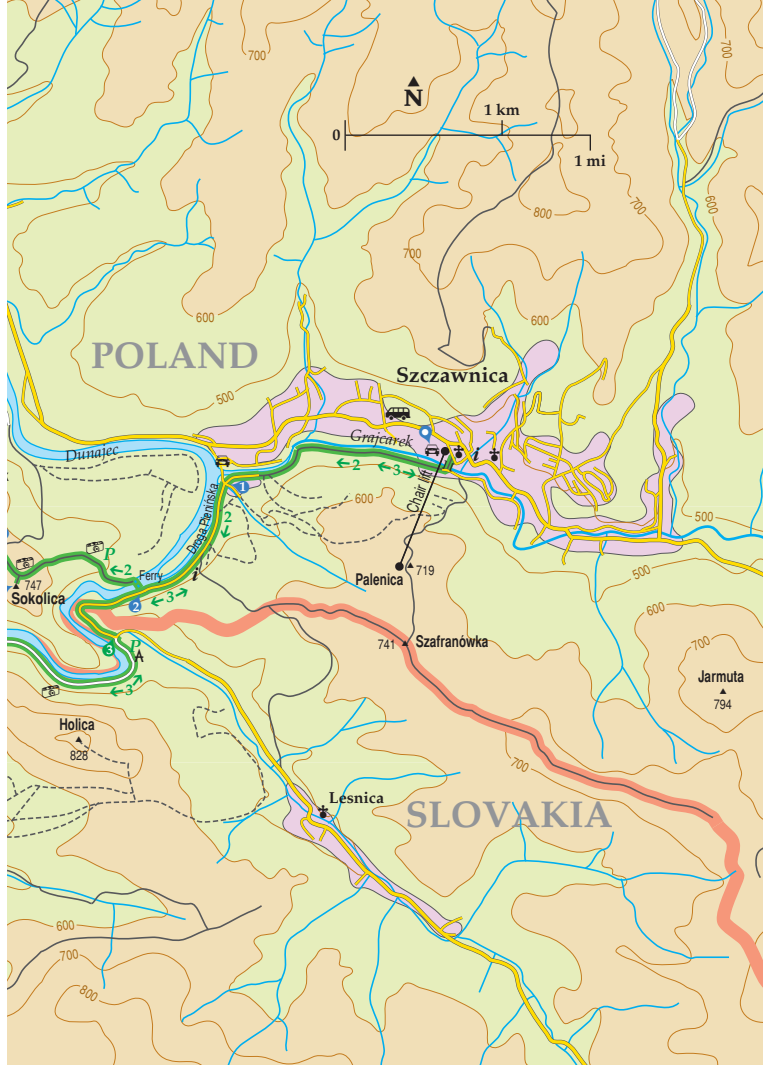




Referring to the town plan on the back of the touring map, **start the walk in Krościenko**, on the western side of Ulica Rynek, outside a bank (●). A discreet cluster of signs here includes those pointing west to green- and yellow-waymarked routes; follow them along Ulica Mickiewicza to the main road (Ulica Jagiellońska) and turn left. After some 220m turn left up a minor road, Ulica Trzech Koron. This rises steeply past a 'Pieniński Park Narodowy' **notice board** and signposts; then, within 100m, you pass a

small parking area on the right (●; if it's not full, motorists could park here).

The road ends at the last house, from where you follow a track steeply up through trees. When you reach a wide meadow, the fine view of Krościenko shown on pages 46-47 soon provides a good reason to pause. From a notice board at a trail junction on the **national park boundary (32min)**, continue straight on, following blue and yellow waymarks. The trail soon bends right across a meadow and into deciduous forest,

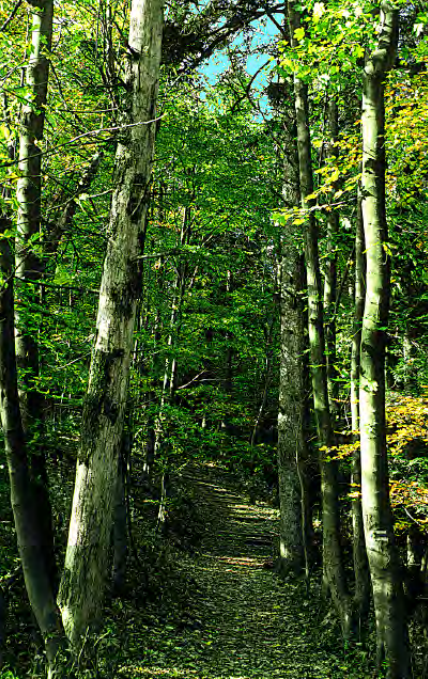


climbing steeply. Bear left at a fork and go on, past a junction on the left called **Banków Grońnik (2; 41min)**, again along a trail. **Pieński Potok (3; 49min)**, a stream, has been partly diverted along a hollowed-out log for easy filling of water bottles.

There's more climbing before you reach the next junction, where you turn left towards *Zamkowa Góra* (Castle Mountain), following blue waymarks **(4; 54min)**. (You will return on the trail to the right.) The trail undulates through forest — the

beeches are huge — and becomes a stepped path that leads around a small valley to a long flight of steps up to **Zamkowa Góra (5; 1h16min)**, the highest castle in Poland. Above you is a sizeable fragment of the castle and to the right is a **shrine**; unfortunately the information board is in Polish only. Climb another flight of steps to a lookout platform beside a more extensive section of the superbly built castle wall.

From the information board, continue up more steps, then go along a



Left: forest trail near Niedźwiadki; right: two-lane metal steps on the approach to Okraglica, the highest of the Trzy Korony

short log-supported path with a firm handrail beside a high cliff. Numerous steps carry you steeply up — through, between and across limestone outcrops — to the **crest of the ridge**. But you're only there for a moment. You then go down to a path junction called **Polana Kosarzyska** (6; **1h24min**), where you keep straight ahead.

Press on, up the meadow and into the forest, with little respite, to a trail point called **Niedźwiadki** (**1h35min**) and up onto the crest, from where it's not far to the **Trzy Korony** (7; **1h38min**). If this seems an anticlimax, with the tiers of picnic benches and the national park fee collector's tiny shelter, well, you're not quite there yet. (There's a much quieter picnic area a short distance along your ongoing path.)

The summit of **Okraglica** (8), the highest of the Trzy Korony, is at the end of two metal bridges (with up and down lanes), and a flight of steps. The

platform is often crowded, with good reason. The panoramic view is exceptionally varied — the river Dunajec directly below, the striped patchwork of fields beyond, the nearby rugged grey-white spires, and the High Tatras on the skyline to the west.

Back at the Trzy Korony path junction (7; **1h48min**), set off down a trail towards *Przełęcz Szopka*, following blue waymarks. You cross a meadow, pass a **picnic shelter** (**1h51min**) and descend steeply to a junction at the saddle, **Przełęcz Szopka** (9; **2h6min**). Continue on the yellow trail towards *Krościenko*, through a succession of beautiful meadows, back to the Zamkowa Góra junction (4; **2h14min**). From here retrace your steps to **Banków Grońnik** (**2h22min**), the **national park boundary** (**2h35min**), then go steeply downhill to the main road (**2h55min**) and turn right, back to **Krościenko** (**3h5min**).



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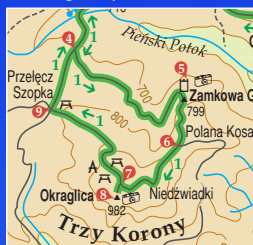
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