

## **DETERMINANTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN THE PŁOCK REGION**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Płock region is located in the Mazovian Plain in the north-western part of Mazowieckie Voivodship. The area covers two units of the local county, including the county of Płock and the city of Płock, the region's hub. The county of Płock shares borders with Sierpc, Płońsk, Sochaczew and Gostynin counties and, from the West, with Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodship. A population of around 110 thousand residents occupies an area of 1,796 km<sup>2</sup>. The city of Płock is also the administrative district. The city is built around Tumski Hill, and is inhabited by over 122 thousand people on an area covering 8,804 ha.

The term region is conventionally understood as a separate, relatively homogeneous area distinguished from neighbouring areas by natural or acquired characteristics [Domański 2006]. The criteria for their separation are essential in terms of the extent and nature of the regions. One of the most important ones is the administrative criterion, which leads to defining the legal form of local administration units. The administrative division is of fundamental importance for spatial aspects of the management of socio-economic development. It is also relevant to tourism [Mazurski 2011]. In Poland, the administrative criterion has served to determine the range of Regional Tourism Organisations. For the tourist, dividing regions according to physical-geographical and cultural criteria is also an important way of dividing space, as these factors provide the basis for determining tourist attractions with either a natural and anthropogenic character. Tourism is also an important area of economic activity, and therefore it is possible to use economic criteria to distinguish regions with shared or interrelated economic centers [Liszewski 2011]. In this article, the administrative criterion was used as the basis for dividing the Płock region.

The subject of research in this article is the region of Płock, considered as an area of land and an urban county. The area is flush with tourist attractions, both natural and anthropogenic, which enable the development of tourism and have socio-economic importance [Powęska 2005]. The city of Płock, as the heart of the region and the historical capital of Mazovia, offers more man-made attractions. However, uniquely located on a bank above the Vistula river, Płock is also an area of natural attractions. A larger region of Płock is interesting in terms of the development of tourist attractions, both anthropogenic and natural ones, particularly those in the Gostynińsko-Włocławski and Brudzeński Landscape Parks.

The aim of the article is to identify opportunities to develop tourism in the Płock region. This is important both for the city, as a more and more dynamic economic centre in the country, and for rural areas, for which, apart from agriculture, tourism could have an important socio-economic impact. The main aim is achieved through three specific sub-objectives: (i) to analyse the potential advantages of the region in terms of their use in tourism, (ii) to characterise the accessibility of the region to transport and (iii) to determine the level to which the region's tourism infrastructure has been developed.

## **SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTER OF THE REGION**

The Płock region comprises counties that are different from each other in a number of respects, and can therefore be regarded as complementary. Agriculture and the natural features of the countryside and the industrial and commercial character of the city complement each other. The county of Płock is diversified in terms of the natural, social and economic issues the define it. The county's economy is mainly based on agriculture. Suitable soil conditions in the east have allowed the area to play a leading role in agricultural production. In terms of agriculture and livestock breeding, particularly the breeding of hogs, the district commands a leading position in the region. All these elements interact to benefit the development of agro-food production.

Areas located on the other side of the Vistula river, south of Płock, play a different role due to their unfavourable soil conditions. However, the denser forestation and reservoirs can be used to develop tourism and recreation there. The Gostynińsko-Włocławski and Brudzeński Landscape Parks are rich in water and woodlands, and play an important role in shaping tourism in the region. There are around 4,200 businesses operating in the region, mainly in the service and trade sectors. Most are located in Płock, the region's major industrial and economic center. The city plays an important economic role not only in the county and voivodship, but also in the country. The headquarters of the largest state-owned company, PKN Orlen, a producer of crude oil and one of Europe's largest fuel distributors, is in Płock. The oil industry is highly developed because both PKN Orlen and oil pipeline company PERN "Przyjaźń" (English: "Friendship") are located in the region. Moreover, not only is Płock home to well-developed engineering, textile, food and construction companies, but it has also been selected by a number of foreign companies to establish regional headquarters. They include CNH New Holland, Basell Orlen Polyolefins, A. Schulman, Adler Polska

(Poland), Hoppenstedt Bonnier Information, Bildau and Busmann Polska (Poland) and Hero Polska (Poland).

The Plock Industrial and Technological Park (located near the PKN Orlen) also plays an important role in the regional economy, attracting new investors and providing jobs. Finally, other companies known throughout Poland that operate in the county of Plock include meat processing plants "Peklimar" and "Olewnik" and grain processors the "Malma" – food company in Blichów and "Anna" in Łąck.

## **ACCESS TO TRANSPORT IN THE REGION**

The Plock region occupies both sides of the Vistula river, in the Mazovian Lowland, approximately 100 km from two metropolitan areas: Warsaw and Łódź. The region has transport links with other Polish regions, with three important roads running through it. The first is the national road 60 (Łęczyca – Ostrów – Mazowiecka), which connects the southwest of the country with the north-eastern Poland, the Baltic countries and the Belarus. The second is route 60, which crosses national road 62 (Strzelno – Siemiatycze), and is an important transport link between the region and Warsaw. The third is national road 10 (Płońsk – Lubieszyn) which goes through a patch of the northern part of the region and links Warsaw and the Plock region with Toruń, Bydgoszcz, Szczecin and Polish-German border. Warsaw's Modlin Airport is just 70 km from Plock, while the larger, international Fryderyk Chopin Airport is within 100 km.

Unfortunately, no road of national or international importance runs through the region. In addition, there is no highway or express road to Plock and the surrounding areas (the nearest motorway junction is located around 40 km from Plock in the village of Strzelce, near Kutno). Another significant drawback for tourists is that it is not possible to reach Plock, such a large city of great importance for the region, directly by long-distance train. Only one railway line (Kutno – Brodnica), used mostly by freight trains, runs through the region, and there is little passenger traffic at present. According to the latest schedule, as of 14 December 2014, eight minibuses run from Plock railway station to Sierpc station, six go to Kutno station, and one train runs to Warsaw in the early-morning hours.

## **THE REGION'S TOURIST ATTRACTIONS**

Tourist attractions are key to the development of the region's tourism [Kurek 2007, Ozimek 2011]. The Plock region's location on both sides of the Vistula river, which flows through the region, are home to two parks: Gostynińsko-Włocławski and Brudzeński, and Plock's interesting location on Tumskie Hill (Fig. 1) are the most important features of the region's landscape.

Tumskie Hill is an escarpment that runs 5 km along the Vistula river, reaching a height of 50 m and an inclination of 43°. A broad view of the queen of Polish rivers emerges from its edges. The left-bank part of the city, including the residential districts Radziwie, Góry and Ciechomice, can also be seen from the viewpoint on Tumskie Hill. At the same



FIG. 1. Tumskie Hill in Płock

Source: Mateusz Pawłowski [August 2014].

time, the panoramic view of the forest and lake district extends into the distance, which is known as the land of Płock basin and is the main feature of the Gostynińsko-Włocławski Landscape Park. The Castle of the Dukes of Mazovia stands atop the hill, its 14th-century Gothic towers the most important cultural facilities in the city. A lower one is called the Noble Tower while the higher one is the Clock Tower. Until the Polish-Swedish war in the 17th century, the castle was the seat of a Benedictine monastery. The castle's function was later changed and it was rebuilt several times. Today, it houses the Diocesan Museum [Kulczyk 2012].

Near the Castle of the Dukes sits the Cathedral Basilica of the Mother of God worshipped in the Mystery of the Assumption. It was built in Romanesque style between 1130–1144 by Bishop Alexander of Malonne. As a result of many modernisations, the cathedral showcases three styles: Romanesque plan and apse, Gothic towers and Renaissance dome with a lantern. The cathedral is the burial place of two former Polish kings: Bolesław Krzywousty (English: Boleslaw the Wry-mouthed) and Władysław Herman.

Further up Tumski Hill may be found the old town with two historic streets: Grodzka and Tumska. Narutowicza Square is located between them, home to the former palace of the Bishops of Płock (now District Court), which was built in the classical style, the House of Providence and the building of the former guardhouse and the Gothic Trumpet House. Grodzka street runs parallel to Małachowskiego street, where Marshal Stanisław Małachowski High School can be found. Established in 1180, it is the old school in Poland. Grodzka street leads directly to the old market, the oldest and the main city square. It occupies 10 thousand m<sup>2</sup>, and is surrounded by houses from 18th and 19th centuries. There is also a town hall, which is the seat of the municipal government. It was designed by Jakub Kubicki, who counts the Warsaw Belvedere among his creations. Every day at noon and at 6 p.m. a bugle call can be heard from the tower of the town hall. In addition, the scene of Bolesław Krzywousty knighting Władysław Herman is played on the tower with the figures of the princes at noon. The fountain "Aphrodite" adorns the area in front of the town hall, and doubles as an ice-skating rink in the winter. The Darmstadt House

(formerly the Hotel Berlin) is located near the town hall, as are the Płock local tourist organisation and the Płock tourist information office.

Founded in 1821 thanks to a social initiative, the Museum of the Mazovian region, famous for its rich Art Nouveau collection, is located on Tumska street. The museum's collections contain many historical, artistic, numismatic and archaeological exhibits. The museum also owns the historic granary with ethnographic collections from throughout the Mazovian region. It is located on Kazimierza Wielkiego street.

Thanks to its atmosphere and numerous historical monuments, Płock is a charming city. Its other tourist attractions include the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy, the Museum of Mazovian Jews, church of św. Bartłomieja (English: St Bartholomew), the Płock Scientific Association, the Monastery and the Cathedral of the Mariavites, the Church of St John the Baptist, Władysław Broniewski's house, the Monument of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the City Zoological Garden, the Płock pier and Sobótka reservoir. "Ciuchcia Tumska", a tourist train that takes in the sights of Płock, runs May through August.

Gostynińsko-Włocławski Landscape Park (GWPK), located in the county of Płock, is, at 38 thousand ha, one of the largest in the country. Established in 1979, it extends south of the city of Płock in the direction of Włocławek on the left bank of the Vistula river. The Park area of 6,260 ha is located in the Płock region, of which 1,522 ha spreads over the municipality of Łąck, while New Duninów covers 4,738 ha. The GWPK area abounds with natural beauty. There are 14 wildlife reservations and sanctuaries, 117 natural monuments, about 800 species of vascular plants, nearly 200 species of rare and protected plants, 58 species of plants under full protection, 14 partially protected plant species, 190 species of birds, 47 of mammals, 8 of amphibians, 6 of reptiles, 30 of fish, and 3 Natura 2000 sites. The GWPK has great tourism potential thanks to its numerous attractions. Of the more than 40 lakes in the Park, nine are located in the district of Płock: Zdwojskie lake (the largest), Lens, Sendeńskie, Jeziorko, Drzesno, Łąckie Duże (Large) and Łąckie Małe (Small), Górskie (Mountain), and Ciechomiczkie. The wild nature sanctuaries – Borderlands (Kresy), Jarząbek, Lake Drzesno, Łąck, Dąbrowa Łącka and Root (Korzeń) – are also very important for the development of tourism. The GWPK area is also known for its cultural treasures, including the 19th-century palace and park facilities in New Duninowo and Łąck. In terms of tourist attractions, the municipality of Łąck should be considered the most attractive in the region, and its greatest draw is the horse stables in Łącko (Fig. 2), which has been operating for over 90 years. Every year national and international jumping and bareback riding (vaulting) competitions are organised on its grounds.

Additionally, stallions stables offers horse riding lessons for individuals and groups under the guidance of an instructor, a variety of horse rides in the area and hippotherapy as well as participation in recreational events. The municipality's other attractions include the Forest Education Chamber and the Chamber of Historical Memory, the Stanisław Reymont Folk Art Museum, and the School Camp in Sendenie, the environmentally friendly Model Rural Ecotourism Centre. The municipalities of Bodzanów, Mała Wieś, Słubice and Wyszogród are all riverside communities on the Vistula, and have since 1988 made up the Vistula Protected Landscape Area, one of the most unique areas in the country thanks to the large number of small islands dotting the Vistula river basin. Some of those islands are permanent towheads while others are sandy islands/sandbars.



FIG. 2. The horse stables in Łąck  
Source: Mateusz Pawłowski [August 2014].

Another important attraction, Brudzeński Landscape Park is located in the Skrwa valley. Established in 1988, it covers 3,452 ha. Many species of plants and animals live in this mainly forested area with diverse terrain, soil, sunlight and water conditions. There are two wildlife sanctuaries nearby: Sikora and Brwilno.

## THE REGION'S TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE

The well-developed tourist infrastructure helps make the region attractive. There are four four-star hotels located along the Vistula river in the city of Płock: “Starzyński Hotel”, “Tumski Hotel”, “Herman” and “Czardasz Hotel”; four three-star hotels: “Petropol Hotel” (opened in 2014), “Płock Hotel”, “Podkowa Hotel” and “Adrian’s Villa”; and the two-star hotels “Arcadia”, “Hotel 1”, “Petrochemia” and “Hotel 24”. According to Central Statistical Office data, in 2013 there was a total of 736 total beds spread across Płock’s guest establishments. The highest occupancy of the area’s establishments is observed in July and August, when numerous festivals take place.

In the county of Płock, there is a single four-star hotel (“Hotel Kawallo” in Słubice), three three-star hotels, two of which are located in the municipality of Łąck (“Hotel Marsel” and “Hotel Rusalka”) and one in the administrative borders of the municipality of Słupno (“Hotel TIM” in Cekanów), and also a two-star hotel in Słupno called “Zajazd Pod Szczęśliwą Nazwą”. As of 2013, there were 1,320 beds total in the county of Płock.

Dining in Płock is mostly concentrated in the city centre, in the old town, on Grodzka street and the Old Market Square. The majority of establishments are restaurants, pizzerias, pubs and cafes. Płock restaurants offer mainly Polish cuisine, though one also finds Italian at “Arturo”, Japanese at “Sakura” and Jewish at “Estera”. Interesting examples of using the existing tourist facilities as places to eat are a restaurant and café located at the water tower (Fig. 3), built in the late 19th century, and the “Molo Café”, the primary destination at the Płock pier.



FIG. 3. Restaurant and café located in the water tower

Source: [http://www.portalplock.pl/pl/334\\_informacje/7436\\_wieza\\_cisnien\\_otwarta\\_polano\\_8230\\_wode\\_foto.html](http://www.portalplock.pl/pl/334_informacje/7436_wieza_cisnien_otwarta_polano_8230_wode_foto.html) [accessed: 04.01.2015].

In Płock county, dining is concentrated mainly in places that draw tourists. The towns with the most developed gastronomy include Łąck, Grabina, Nowe Rumunki, Koszelówka, Zdwórz, Soczewka, Nowy Duninów and Cierszewo. In contrast to the city of Płock, where most places to eat successfully operate throughout the year, facilities outside the city flourish when tourist traffic is high – mainly in the summer.

Płock has the largest entertainment and sports facility in Mazowieckie, “Orlen Arena”, which can accommodate more than 5,500. The local handball team Orlen Wisła Płock plays its matches there, and other sports and cultural events are held regularly. Since its opening in 2010, the arena has played host to numerous concerts (Jean Michel Jarre headlined the opening ceremony), beauty contests (Miss Poland) and other non-handball sporting events, including Polish national volleyball team matches, martial arts competitions, and the like.

Other major sports venues in the city include: the Kazimierz Górski football team’s stadium in Płock (capacity 10,978), the Municipal Sports Centre, including an athletics stadium (bleacher capacity about 1000), three indoor swimming pools (“Podolanka”, “Jagiellonka” and the city swimming pool), two outdoor ice rinks: Old Market Square (in summer the site functions as a fountain) and near the “Podolanka” pool (also open in the winter), the sports hall in Borowiczki (along with a climbing wall), the Municipal Sports facility complex on Dąbrowski Square, and the horseback riding centre. In Płock County, the most important sports and recreation facilities include the recreation and training centre in Cierszewo (riding lessons and kayaking), the Stallions stable in Łąck, and the sports hall in Łąck.

The main cultural venue of the region is the 3,500-seat amphitheatre, which was built in the 1960s, when it immediately became – and indeed remains today – one of the city’s extraordinary examples of modern architecture. Since then it has served as a venue for concerts, festivals, and other artistic and cultural events. The amphitheater was rebuilt

TABLE. Hiking trails in the region of Płock

Name and length of the trail	Trail head	Trail end	Course of trail	Attractions (within the Płock region)
Red trail of Bolesław Krzywousty – northern part (65 km)	Płock PTTK	Sierpc PKP	Płock PTTK – Biskupice – Cierszewo – Kobierniki – Sikórz – Parzeń – Brudzeń Duży – Cieślin – Jakubowo – Choczeń – Bledzewo – Miłobędzyn – Sierpc PKP	headquarter of PTTK Płock, Płock Scientific Society, Brudzeński Landscape Park, Horse-riding Center in Cierszewo, 19th-century. Classicistic manor in Sikórz, landscape sanctuary “Sikórz”, 19th–20th-century. Classicistic manor in Brudzeń Duży
Red trail of Bolesław Krzywousty – southern part (60.5 km)	Płock PTTK	Kutno PKP	Płock PTTK – Dzierżązna – lake Jezioro – lake Sendeń – Lake Białe – Gorzewo stacja ZHP – Kruk – Gostynin PKP – Sierakówek PKP – Strzelce Kujawskie PKP – Raciborów – Kutno PKP	headquarter of PTTK Płock, rail and road bridge of Legions of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, Płock Radziwie, Gostynińsko-Włocławski Landscape Park
Yellow trail – the main trail in Kotlina Płocka (71,5 km)	Dobrzyków PKS	Włocławek	Dobrzyków PKS – Jezioro Ciechomicie – Jezioro Górskie – Grabina PKS – Łąck PKP – Jezioro Sendeń – Krzywkołek – Trzecianno – Nowy Duninów PKS – Włocławek	Gostynińsko-Włocławski PK – forest sanctuary “Łąck”, palace-park complex in Nowy Duninów
Green trail of Kazimierz Wielki (71.5 km)	Gąbin PKS	Włocławek	Gąbin PKS – Koszelówka – Matyldów, Lake Łąckie Małe – Lake Łąckie Duże – Łąck PKS – Janów – Gorzewo stacja ZHP – Lucień – Miałków – Lake Lucieńskie – Cieślikowo – Lake Skrzyneckie – Włocławek	Classicist town hall from 1826 in Gąbin, eclectic palace from 1872–1873 in Łąck, stallion stables in Łąck, the gallery of painter-artist Alojzy Balcerzak in Koszelówka
Blue trail – Vistula-side trail of Władysław Broniewski – eastern part (49 km)	Płock PTTK	Wyszogród PKS	Płock PTTK – Borowiczki – Wykowo – Białobrzegi PKS – Kępa Polska – Zakrzewo – Podgórze – Wyszogród PKS	church from 1785 in Kępa Polska, 17th-century wooden church in Zakrzewo Kościelny, late 18th-century. Baroque church in Wyszogród, 15th-century Franciscan monastery and church in Wyszogród, 18th-century monastery in Wyszogród
Blue trail – Vistula-side trail of Władysław Broniewski – south-western part (32 km)	Płock PTTK	Gostynin – Plac Wolności	Płock PTTK – Soczewka – Krzywkołek – Lucień – Gostynin (plac Wolności)	1906 Neo-gothic Church with one nave in Soczewka
Black trail of Andrzej Małkowski (25 km)	Płock PTTK	Gąbin PKS	Płock PTTK – Ciechomicie – Grabina – Jezioro Ciechomicie – Matyldów – Zdówrz PKS – Koszelew – Gąbin PKS	Lakes: Górskie, Zdwońskie and Ciechomicie with infrastructure, forest with spruce, oak, birch and larch
Black trail of Aleksander Macieszy (17.5 km)	Nowy Duninów	Krzywie	Nowy Duninów – Środoń – Duninów Duży – Lake Lucieńskie – Smolarnia – Krzywie	Architectural monuments in Nowy Duninów, natural monuments, diverse forest
Green trail of St Hubert (18 km)	Płock Borowiczki sugar factory (cukrownia)	Białobrzegi PKS	Płock Borowiczki Cukrownia – Cekanowo – Słupno – Szeligi – Borowice – Miszewo Murowane – Białobrzegi PKS	Chapel of St Hubert in Ciekankowski Forest, wooden parish church in Słupno from 1753, 19th–20th-century brick manor house in Borowice, 15th-century church in Miszewo

Source: own elaboration based on [http://zwiedzajmy.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=186&Itemid=239](http://zwiedzajmy.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=186&Itemid=239) [accessed: 02.01.2015].

and re-opened in 2008, and is now illuminated at night in the shape of a flying saucer and perfectly suits the tourist landscape in the city of Płock. The building is covered with a special roof, made of a membrane that fans out over the audience. A variety of musical, cultural and entertainment events have been staged since the amphitheatre re-opened.

The region's hiking trails, which lead through the most attractive places and venues in the area (Table), are another very important asset for the development of tourism in the area.

The hiking trails lead mainly through historical sites, wildlife sanctuaries and manorial parks. A good number of these trails can also be biked. These trails are located mainly in areas Gostynińsko-Włocławski and Brudzeński Landscape Parks and in the adjacent cluster of lakes in the Łącko and Gabin areas, the city of Płock and along the Vistula valley. Designated trails lead to sites in the Płock region as well as in the neighbouring areas. The hiking trails are marked by the Płock Marking Commission to make explicit reference to the natural, bibliographic and historic heritage of the region.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The man-made and natural assets of the region of Płock combine to form a very solid basis for the development of tourism. However, it is the diversity of potential tourist assets in the region that should be emphasised. The convenient location of the city of Płock on Tumski Hill and the opportunities presented by the Gostynińsko-Włocławski Landscape Park on the left side of the Vistula and the Brudzeński Landscape Park on the right side give the area its greatest potential. In contrast, the municipalities located on the north-eastern side of the city of Płock remain agricultural areas.

The tourist infrastructure enabling the region of Płock to be visited is as full as the area is rich in tourist attractions. Płock's accommodation and dining are of standards from low to high, and therefore meet tourists' likewise variegated needs. The dining and accommodation infrastructure is less well developed in the rural areas, but the city offers services and facilities for tourists visiting them. The network of hiking trails may be treated as a way to learn about the region's historical and natural sites.

On the downside, limited accessibility to transport negatively affects the development of tourism in the Płock region. It is essential that it be improved if tourism and the region's other social and economic functions are to develop. The rich cultural and natural assets and the appropriate services along with the dining and accommodation infrastructure enable the development of tourism in the region. However, both the assets and infrastructure are located in pockets – in Płock and in Gostynińsko-Włocławski Landscape Park and Brudzeński Landscape Parks. Tourism can also play an important role in the socio-economic development in other areas in the region, and opportunities for the development of various forms of agro-tourism should be emphasised particularly.

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**Summary.** In the region of Płock, which includes the city and the surrounding county, the right conditions for tourism to develop are in place. This is important for the city, as an ever more vibrant economic center, as well as for the outlying rural areas, for which, next to agriculture, tourism could play an important role in socio-economic development. Given that, the article presents an analysis of the potential of tourist assets, the level of development of the tourist infrastructure and the region's transport accessibility. The analysis reveals disparities in terms of the saturation of tourist assets and tourist infrastructure facilities. The city of Płock is much more developed than the rural areas. However, for the Płock region as a whole, the rural and urban areas are complementary. A factor that negatively affects the development of tourism in the region is the poorly developed transport infrastructure, which somewhat limits accessibility. Improving it is utmost importance if the region is to develop its tourism potential and other socio-economic areas.

**Key words:** Płock region, tourist attractions, tourist facilities

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