

## ZAKOPANE



The city of Zakopane is situated high in the alpine Tatra Mountain Range. It is a traditional skiing center, a resort town, and is the focal point of Highlander culture which is still a way of life.

The “Zakopane Style” introduced many Highlander elements into Polish culture. These include old masterpieces of traditional wood architecture, interior decoration, music, literature, museums and art galleries. The mountain people are known as Gorale (Highlanders) and their folklore includes interesting costumes, original dialects, folk music, dances, and customs. So called “Goral” weddings and dances are known for their authentically characteristic music.

Zakopane is the winter capital of Poland with its numerous cable cars, ski-lifts, ski-runs and areas which are accessible for skiing. Excellent snow conditions ensure a winter sports season from November until April. The Tatra Mountain Range, with its well marked trails, provides excellent and picturesque surroundings for hikers and mountain climbers.

The Tatra Mountains are the highest alpine range in the long chain of the Carpathian Mountains. There are many majestic peaks including the highest mountain - Rysy which is 8,199 ft. high. There are wide valleys between the mountains with steep slopes covered by forests. Beautiful lakes, such as Morskie Oko and Czamy Staw have been formed at the bottom of spacious glacial valleys. Many species of flora and fauna can be seen in the Tatrzanski National Park. Caves, mountain brooks and waterfalls are also abundant.

During Zakopane’s long history, it has played a major role in the development of Polish culture. Well known writers, artists, actors and philosophers lived in Zakopane and notable Polish people such as Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Henryk Sienkiewicz, and Ignacy Paderewski were among those who spent their vacations in this famous resort town.

Zakopane hosts many cultural and sporting events. “Tatra Autumn” includes the International Mountain Folklore Festival which is a week-long holiday for Highlanders who come from other countries, such as Switzerland and Austria, to participate in various recreational activities and a cultural exchange of ideas.