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Inspired Travel: Poland's Wine Country

June 16, 2014 by [Katie Hammel](#)



Katie Hammel

Tucked into the 350 miles that separate Warsaw and Berlin, the Lubuskie region is the unofficial capital of Poland's small but growing wine production. It's the largest of Poland's three main wine-growing areas, just over three hours from Warsaw and two from Berlin via train. Thanks to the location's accessibility, the region is a long but possible day trip. It sees few American visitors, despite its convenience and proximity to other popular destinations, but we hope that changes soon. It'd be a shame to miss out on what may be one of the wine world's best-kept (and utterly idyllic) secrets.

The Wine Scene

Because of the climate, traditional varietals such as merlot and cabernet are harder to grow in Poland, replaced instead with earlier-ripening varietals more commonly seen in Germany, such as rondo and seyval blanc. Despite the challenges, the wine here is surprisingly good — having garnered awards at international competitions — and it looks like they're

only going to get better. According to some experts, rising global temperatures mean that within the next 30 years, Poland's climate could become one of the best-suited for grape growing in the world.

For now, Poland's wine industry is still very small; there are only about 400 wineries in the whole country, and few of these plant more than a couple of acres. (By comparison, there are more than 25,000 wineries in France alone.) Most don't export far beyond the region, let alone out of the country. Which means that if you want to taste the wines, you need to head to the source.

Thankfully, that source is an extremely beautiful place. Lubuskie is Poland's most heavily forested area, and what's not covered in dense woodland is dotted with tiny jewel-box towns or spread over gently rolling farmland. It's an area where a Polish phrasebook is absolutely necessary — but the extra effort is worth it. You'll be rewarded with a more rural side of Poland, away from the grand squares and Baroque architecture of Warsaw and Krakow, where farmers still work the land and where medieval castles loom over sparkling blue lakes.

Where to Stay



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One of the best wineries in the region is located on the grounds of the [Mierzecin Palace Wine and Wellness hotel](#), a renovated palace set on 200 acres of beech forest, farmland, and vineyards. There's a wine-themed spa, restaurant, equestrian center, and award-winning winery that supplies wine to the Polish president. But for all of its amenities and acclaim, the 66 rooms start at an affordable \$70 per night. Visitors are also welcome to taste the wines and enjoy the grounds for the day without staying overnight. Guests can arrange a guided ride, take a lesson, or enjoy a carriage-ride around the property's gardens and forest.

What to Do

There are 14 stops on Lubuskie's 125-mile Wine and Honey Route. At each one, visitors can learn about Polish wine making, meet the winemakers, and sample their wines — in addition to learning about beekeeping and honey production. But beyond the wine, there are also plenty of outdoor activities to keep travelers busy. The region has two national parks and more than 500 lakes, which together form a 125-mile canoeing route called the Lubuskie Water

Trail. Bird-watching is quite popular in the area, as are hiking and horseback riding through the plentiful wooded trails. Long-distance biking on the area's quiet country roads is another way to explore the small towns or visit wineries.

When to Go

Summer temperatures can range from the 70s up to the 80s and 90s in a heat wave. In winter, it can be bitterly cold, with temperatures dipping below freezing and snow sticking to the ground. For a better chance of mild days, visit in May or early June — or wait until September or October, when temperatures drop back to the mid-60s and the colors on the trees and grapevines change to brilliant reds and oranges. (Note: The grape harvest begins at the end of September or early October.)

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