Geography

Landsdapes

The natural landscape of Poland can be broadly divided into three relief groups: lowlands, highlands, and mountains.

Poland is a relatively low-lying country. 91.3 percent of its territory lies below 300 m above sea level.

The highest point is Mt Rysy in the Tatras (2499 m), while the lowest point is located west of the village of Raczki Elbląskie (1.8 m below sea level).

There are three main mountain ranges in Poland: the Carpathians, the Sudetan Mountains, and the Góry Świętokrzyskie (Holy Cross Mountains).

The longest rivers are the Vistula (1047 km), Oder (854 km), Warta (808 km), Bug (772 km), Narew (484 km), San (443 km), Noteć (388 km), Pilica (319 km), Wieprz (303 km) and the Bóbr (272 km).

Poland has some 9,300 lakes with surface areas over 1 ha; they make up 1 percent of the country's territory. The largest is Lake Śniardwy (11,383 ha) in the Mazurian Lake District, and the deepest is Lake Hańcza (108.5 m) north of Suwałki.

The structure of the relief can be divided more specifically into a series of four distinct zones.

- To the north lie the marshes and the dunes of the Baltic sea;
- To the south is a belt of morainic stretch with thousands of lakes, the southernmost border of which marks the limit of the last ice sheet.
- In the center of Poland is the third zone, which includes the central lowlands. This is the site of agriculture in places where the loess was deposited above the relatively sterile soils.
- The fourth zone is composed of the mountains and highlands to the south; though limited in size, it offers a most spectacular landscape. Along the southernmost border of the country are the Sudety mountains and the Carpathian ranges and their foothills.