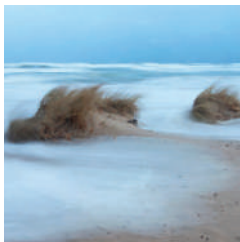
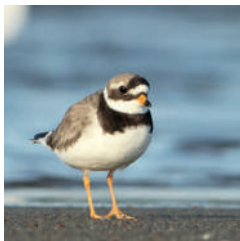


Sobieszewska Island





A Meeting with Nature

Sobieszewska Island, the most mysterious and delightful place in Gdańsk. Serving as the city's green lungs, it is quite large, 35 square kilometres, in fact. It is part of the Vistula Spit and is Gdańsk's easternmost district. The Island is a mystery to Gdańskers themselves; many of them still don't know that this pristinely beautiful area is just 25 minutes away from the historic city centre! Just a stone's throw away for any self-respecting tourist who cannot miss such a picturesque spot along their way. Sobieszewska Island is truly unique in Poland; it borders the waters of the Still Vistula to the south, the Bold Vistula to the west and the Vistula Przekop canal to the east.

The Island's beginnings were as wild and uncontrollable as the river that created it. Completely unexpected, on the night of 31 January and 1 February 1840, the waters of the River Vistula, built up behind an ice jam, crashed on the village of Neufähr, tore through the dune hills and reached the Bay of Gdańsk. A new river mouth was formed that poet Wincenty Pol called the Bold Vistula. Then, in 1889-1895, the enormous Vistula Przekop canal was built between the villages of Świbno (Schiewenhorst) and Mikoszewo (Nickelswalde). A hundred years later an obelisk was erected on the Vistula floodbank to commemorate this great hydro engineering achievement, the biggest construction project in Pomerania. This was the origin of this one-of-a-kind green paradise for respite-seeking Gdańskers. The broad beaches with fine sand, clean sea, lush forests and fresh air are the Island's biggest assets.

It is not just laid-back tourists and avid mushroom-pickers that have noticed Sobieszewska Island's natural assets; it is a Protected Landscape Area, and its natural reserves have the status of the Special Protection Area for Birds at the Mouth of the Vistula.



This strip of seaside land that has been cut off by the waters of the River Vistula is a place of respite for both humans and animals. The Island has habitats for many valuable species: beavers and birds such as the goosander, the white-tailed eagle or the common ringed plover. The vast majority of the bird species visit Sobieszewska Island during their spring and autumn migrations; they also come here to stay the winter. The birds prefer to rest in places that are rather inaccessible to people, such as the Bird's Paradise (Ptasi Raj) and the Seagull Sandbank (Mewia Łacha) sanctuaries, and in the sea and rivers that surround the Island. Watching these tireless wanderers is a true treat of nature. However, we must remember to do this while respecting the rules and regulations. In the sanctuaries, you can use the infrastructure for nature watching: informative trails that lead through the sanctuaries and observation decks. In recent years, the Seagull Sandbank has become a favourite spot for grey seals and the site of Poland's only Sandwich tern colony.



In the summer season, visiting tourists are educated by the members of the Kuling Waterfowl Research Group who, apart from minding the bird colonies and banding the migrating birds, hold group and individual lectures in the sanctuary (www.kuling.org.pl).

The Island's natural assets are underscored by the two research centres located in Górki Wschodnie: the Biological Station of the University of Gdańsk's Faculty of Biology (ul. Ornitologów 26, tel. +48 58 523 20 81) and the Polish Academy of Sciences' Ornithological Station (ul. Nadwiślańska 109). Both centres provide educational activities for organised groups but can also be an attraction for individual tourists. At the Biological Station, you can see the picturesque Dune Laboratory which, although artificial, contains many valuable species of plants that were replanted from sites allocated to port industry (e.g. the sea holly, the wild pansy and the sea sandwort).

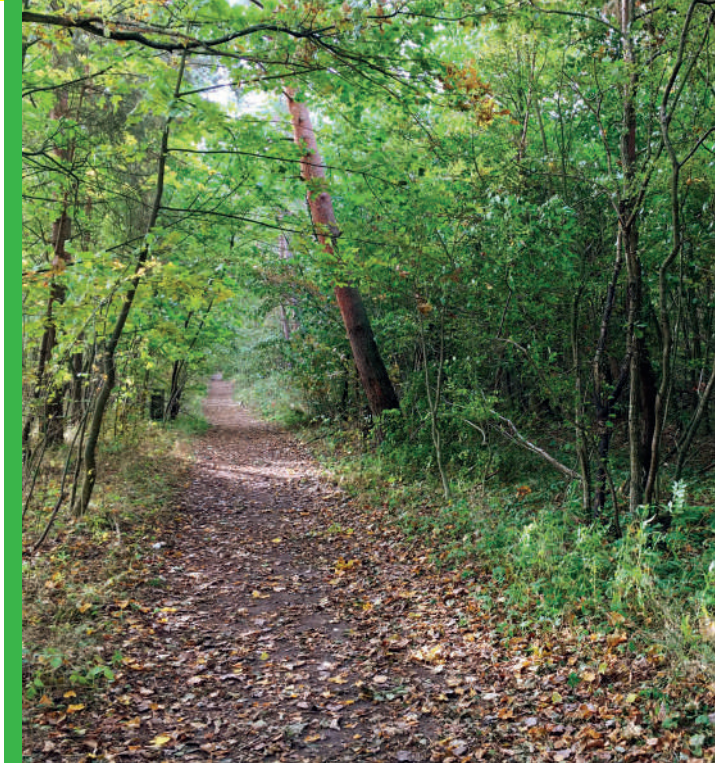






More than just the Beach

One of the biggest things the Island has going for it is its beautiful wide beach (11 km long and up to 70 m wide) and clean bathing water. Even in the peak holiday season, there are no crowds on the fine yellow sand. Tourists can enjoy comfortable decked passageways, many stands with the requisite ice cream, waffles and entertainment for the youngest beachgoers. In the summer season, Sobieszewska Island has two bathing beaches with lifeguards: in Sobieszewo (ul. Falowa), in Orlinki (ul. Lazurowa), along with a guarded bathing spot in Świbno (ul. Trałowa). Lifeguards are there every day from the beginning of July until the end of August, from 9:30 to 17:30 (Integrated Water Rescue System tel. +48 601 100 100). You can also go to the other, unguarded beaches on Sobieszewska Island: in Górki Wschodnie, Komary and Świbno. The beaches are full of small amber nuggets, with quite big specimens that can be found especially after storms.



The Island has something for military buffs too, as its forests conceal traces of World War II: remains of foxholes, trenches and air raid bomb craters; the Biological Station, described earlier, used to be an airport for amphibious aircraft. In the middle of the dune forests, in the midst of pines, rowan, buckthorn and juniper bushes, there are lovers' lanes that will enchant you with their atmosphere and soothing silence. Even on holiday safety should come first. Hydro engineering structures, such as the concrete lead-in piers at the Mouth of the Vistula or the stone levee built in the western part of the Island in 1887-1888, are off limits to pedestrian traffic and can be hazardous to anyone who walks there. Perhaps in the future, the levee might be adapted for pedestrians. Another attraction is the ferry that runs from May to October across the Vistula from Świbno to Mikoszewo, from where you get to the Island from the east.







Culture and Nature

If you are a culture vulture or are looking for smart entertainment on Sobieszewska Island, visit the Treasure Island (Wyspa Skarbów) culture centre, which is part of the Gdańsk Archipelago of Culture (ul. Turystyczna 3, www.wyspaskarbow.gak.gda.pl, tel. +48 58 323 91 15). The centre holds painting, drawing, sculpture, art ceramics and photography exhibitions, meet-the-author sessions, shows and concerts. For kids, it has a children's theatre, art workshops and family events, such as the Kite Carnival. It runs many diverse activities for children, young people, adults and senior citizens, also during the summer holidays. The exhibition rooms are open on weekdays from 10:00 to 20:00. History buffs should visit the Hall of Memory dedicated to Wincenty Pol, a well-known poet, geographer and traveller, to see an exhibition dedicated to him, the history of Sobieszewska Island and the Żuławy Vistula Lowlands.



Another noteworthy landmark is the Kazimierz Water Reservoir in Orlinki, located on a dune hill. It is a modern water tower, which plays both a typically technical role (stabilises the pressure in the water grid) and an educational one. From May until the end of September, the reservoir is a venue where the visitors can see an interactive exhibition and go up to an observation deck. The observation deck is 45 m above sea level and ten metres above the tops of the tallest trees; from it you can see the Island's and Vistula Delta's natural assets, the panorama of Gdańsk, the Bay of Gdańsk, and even the Hel Peninsula. You can visit this unique place after making an appointment for a specific date using the form available at www.szlak.gda.pl. The Kazimierz Reservoir is to become part of the soon-to-open Gdańsk Water Grid Route, which will combine the protection of cultural and natural heritage.





On Foot, with Walking Poles or by Bike

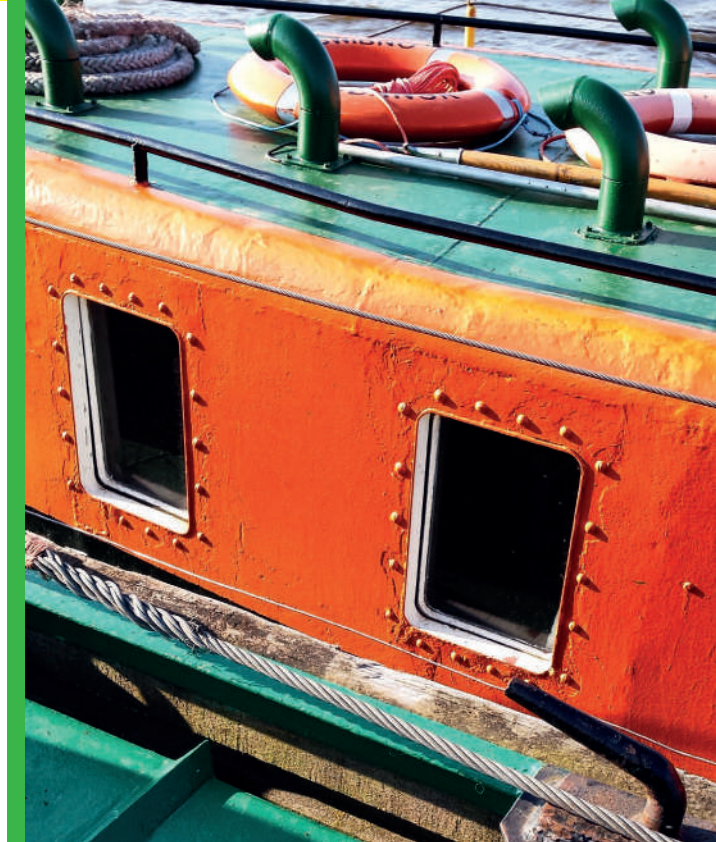
The efforts of the Friends of Sobieszewska Island Society have led to a number of tourist routes to be marked out on the Island: the Wincenty Pol Bicycle Route (blue route, length: 24 km), the Sobieszewska Island PTTK Tourist Route (green route, length: 10 km, with Seagull Hill (Góra Mew) the highest peak on Sobieszewska Island (32 m above sea level) along the way, and the Nordic Walking and Cross-Country Skiing Route (33 km). The routes are shown on signs displayed in the Island's key locations. Bike rental is available at ul. Nadwiślańska 139 B in Górkki Wschodnie (tel. +48 58 323 91 91) and in many hotels throughout the Island. You can also rent water equipment to canoe from Przegalina through Sobieszewo all the way to the Żabi Kruk Water Sports Club (almost 24km) or go on a cruise around Sobieszewska Island (more information at ul. Żabi Kruk 15a in Gdańsk, tel. +48 506 056 073).



By Bus and by Car

You can get to Sobieszewska Island by bus, service no. 112 and 186 (daily) and express service no. 212 (weekdays only). These buses run to Sobieszewska Island (Sobieszewo, Świbno, Przegalina and Górki Wschodnie) from the Gdańsk Main Railway Station (ul. Podwałe Grodzkie) and the Upland Gate (Brama Wyżynna) stop at ul. Wały Jagiellońskie. Importantly, you can get to Sobieszewska Island from these stops also by night service no. N9. The travel times to Sobieszewska Island: services no. 112 and 186 is about 35 min., by service no. 212 about 20 min.





You can drive to Sobieszewska Island from three directions. From the north via a pontoon bridge on the River Martwa Wisła, open 24/7 all year round (the schedule for when the bridge opens for vessels is available at www.gzdiz.gda.pl).

The bridge provides a permanent link between the Island and Gdańsk. In 2017, there will be certain traffic disruptions on account of the construction of a new drawbridge. There are two other roads to Sobieszewska Island: from the northeast via a drawbridge on the lock in Przegalina (paid boat lockage, tel. + 48 58 323 93 76) and from the east via ferry across the Vistula Przekop canal (crossing at Świbno - Mikoszewo, runs from late April/early May to mid-October, every day 5:20-20:00, every 30 min or so).

In the summer season there is also the water tram FŁ service (three cruises a day; the detailed timetable is available at www.ztm.gda.pl and at line FŁ stops).

ATMs are available only in Sobieszewo at Bank Spółdzielczy ul. Turystyczna 6c and at the Globi store at ul. Turystyczna 10.

You can find all the sightseeing information about Sobieszewska Island at: www.sobieszewskaisland.pl.

This gorgeous place attracts more and more Polish and international tourists each year. It's worth coming here to see that anyone who once gets a taste of the Island's beauty will gladly leave their heart here. This will certainly be the case with the Polish scouts who will come to the Island in 2018 for the Gdańsk 2018 ZHP Polish Scouting and Guiding Association rally to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Polish scouting movement. In August 2017, we will find out if thousands of scouts from all over Europe and the world will come here too. Gdańsk has invited them to the 2021 European EuroJam Rally and the World Scouting Jamboree two years later.



Baltic Sea



1. Treasure Island (Wyspa Skarbów) Culture Centre
2. Shrine of Our Lady of Salette
3. Forsterówka – former residence of Albert Forster, the Nazi Gauleiter of Gdańsk
4. Shrine of St Adalbert the Baptist of Gdańsk
5. Lock in Przegalina
6. Stone Weir (Kamienna Grobla) causeway
7. Kazimierz Reservoir water tower and observation deck



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