

ŁOMŻA TASTE
THE TOURISM

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Map Legend

 Bus Station	 Memorial site
 Post office	 Interesting wooden structure
 Emergency ambulance service	 Open air museum
 Police	 Secular architecture of interest
 Municipal Guard	 Shelter
 Viewpoint	 Theatre
 Church	 Cinema
 Burg	 Gallery
 Museum	 Town beach, pool
 Manor	 Sports hall, stadium, skate park
 Fort	 Tennis court
 Public utility building	 Monument of nature
 Cemetery	 Monument
 Jewish cemetery	 Lapidarium

Map index

Łomża (front cover)
 Approximate distances from Łomża (p. 8)
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 Around Łomża (back cover)

Welcome to Łomża

A town towering over the Narew River – such a picturesque panorama spreads before the eyes of travellers arriving from the direction of Piątница. The Łomża buildings occupy the high Narew bank and this location is certainly the town's great asset. But this is not Łomża's only merit. Over 1,000 years ago, when the first settlement was established here, military considerations were more significant than the location's aesthetics. The burg, whose remnants still stimulate one's imagination, can be found in the town's vicinity. Its role was to guard the trade route and the passage across the Narew River. According to the records, as of the 11th century the settlement featured a church, making it the first church in the Mazovia region.

In 1418 Łomża was granted a town charter. Fate favoured the town up until the 16th century. The two subsequent centuries mercilessly inflicted hardship on the settlement, as did the Second World War, during which almost 80% of the town's constructions were destroyed. Nonetheless, some interesting, historical monuments survived that are worth close attention. The 16th-century cathedral is the most important historical landmark. It is surrounded by small streets and scattered with mansions that recall times in which the town was the governorate capital. A row of magnificent houses at Dworna Street present an especially pleasant sight.

Certainly, Łomża would not have become what it is now, had it not been for the Narew River, which is one of the natural treasures of north-eastern Poland. In spring, one can admire the river's vast backwaters without leaving the town's boundaries. This is one of many bucolic illustrations offered by the region, with Łomża embedded in its midst. One can really take a deep breath here – a breath of crystal clear air, that is.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rafał Zubkowicz has a degree in forestry and culture studies and is the author and co-author of several guidebooks and numerous press articles. He works in the editorial office of the Las



View of the town,
photo by G. Gwizdon

Polski [“The Polish Forest”] magazine. He prefers the bumpy byroads and county paths he eagerly travels through in his home Podlasie region, to modern western European highways. “I cannot boast to have been in Rio and in Bayo. But it does not bother me at all” he says. Instead, he prides himself on having visited most of the counties east of the Vistula River and on his knowledge of the Belarusian and Ukrainian Polesie region. He loves old times’ stories. He is interested in the complicated history of Central and Eastern Europe, and enjoys encounters with nature and metaphysical contacts with the province.

ABOUT THE GUIDEBOOK

Before you set off to visit the town, it is worth taking a moment to get to know this publication. Exploring Łomża – its historical monuments and picturesque nooks – will become easier and far more pleasant. Chapter 1 offers useful suggestions that will help you plan the trip: how to get to the town, how to move about, what not to miss and what to pay attention to in the vicinity. Chapter 2 will introduce you to the nature, history and legends of Łomża, as well as the regional cuisine. In Chapter 3, you will find useful tips on what to see in the local museums and galleries, and how to actively spend your time in Łomża. The most voluminous part of the guidebook, i.e. Chapter 4, focuses on the town’s sightseeing. Suggested walking routes will lead you to the most valuable and interesting monuments and the information presented in the chapter crafts a colourful image of the town located by the Narew River. And since the town has been – and still is – closely connected with the Narew, this picturesque river cannot be overlooked. The surroundings of Łomża are described in Chapter 5, whose contents propose several hikes that will take you around the most interesting and beautiful places in the town’s vicinity.

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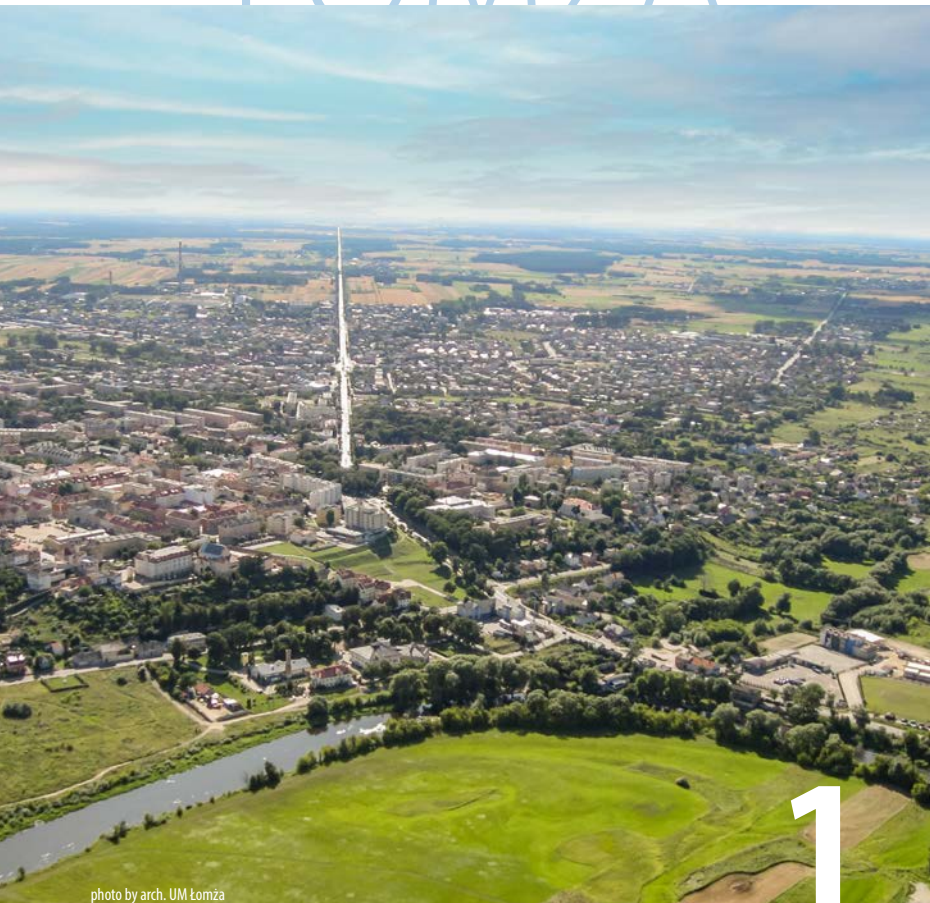


photo by arch. UM Łomża

*How to get there and the most
important attractions*

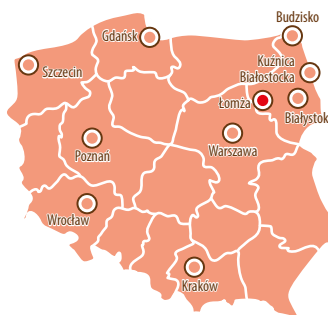
How to get there

Łomża is a town situated within the historical northern Mazovia, although according to the current administrative division, it is affiliated with the Podlaskie Voivodship. The Łomżyński County together with the Kolneński County comprise the western boundaries of the voivodship. The town itself lies at the bank of the Narew River intersecting the main transportation routes of north-eastern Poland. National Route 61 that connects Warszawa and Augustów (and then Lithuania) runs here. The route leads through Ostrołęka and stretches out 160 km from Warszawa to Łomża. Travellers coming from the capital can also take a shorter road – via Ostrów Mazowiecka (140 km). Considering Polish road conditions, this road is pretty satisfactory, as it follows Expressway S8 for the most part, so please be careful (while driving fast on the ring road) not to miss the exit to Łomża. A subsequent part of the route runs along the lower quality voivodship Route 677; but its lesser status is compensated by its straight line course. Łomża can also be reached by national Route 63 (from the south from Zambrów and intersection with S8; from the north from Mazuria – from Pisz and Węgorzewo) and Route 64 (from Białystok, intersection with Route S8 in Jeżów Stary).

Due to its location at the intersection of several routes, many people travel through Łomża heading north to Mazuria, or the Lakeland of Augustów and Suwałki. It is particularly tangible in the summer, when the school holidays start (or end), and also during some weekends.

TRAVELLING BY BUS

Since railway in Łomża is a thing of the past, bus connections play a significant role in intercity transit. You can easily get here from Białystok



Approximate distances from:

Białystok – 70 km	Poznań – 460 km
Budżisko – 160 km	Szczecin – 595 km
Gdańsk – 280 km	Warszawa – 140 km
Kraków – 410 km	Wrocław – 500 km
Kuźnica Białostocka – 135 km	

(70 km), Warszawa (140 km) or the nearby county towns of Kolno, Ostrołęka and Zambrów. Several buses run daily from each of these locations. Łomża also has direct connections with Gdańsk, Kołobrzeg and Szczecin.



Bus station,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

How to get there and the most important attractions

Bus Station, ul. Dworcowa 2. hotline no. +48 692 190 937, available from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The bus station inquiry desk can be found in one of the pavilions in the strip mall in al. Legionów 48L next to the station. The inquiry desk is open from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Town transport

The town centre is very compact, so there is no need for transportation. Out of the nineteen bus lines operated by the Municipal Transport Company (MPK), seven run beyond the administrative borders of Łomża and reach farther, interesting destinations. Bus lines no. 1 and 15 run to Piątница; no. 4 – Stara Łomża and Pniew; no. 9 and 19 – Nowogród, and no. 15 – Nivki (route along the Narew via Drozdowo). Most buses that travel out of town serve working commuters and students; therefore, bus service is limited on weekends.

Bus tickets within the town are priced differently, according to needs. One way tickets cost 2.80 zł and are available in kiosks and other points of sale. A little cheaper virtual tickets can be purchased on your mobile device via the Callpay application. You can also buy promotional single tickets which are valid from 6 p.m. from bus drivers (2 zł), 60 minute tickets for all bus lines (4 zł), day tickets for all bus lines (10 zł), 10-day tickets (50 zł) and five-ride tickets for 14 zł. Another solution is to purchase a season ticket (10-day, 1-month or 3) available in paper and electronic formats. Extra-municipal ticket prices depend on the distance. Residents of Łomża are entitled to discounts.

Almost all MPK buses stop in the vicinity of the Bus Station (bus stops at the intersection of Legionów Avenue and Sikorskiego street). Bus schedules and detailed prices are available at

the Town Council website (www.lomza.pl; click on the **MPK** link).

Tourist attractions

On your first visit to Łomża, make sure you enter the town from the north. That way you can appreciate the town's unique, picturesque location. Parts of the oldest and the most interesting section of town, the Old Town, are visible from afar on the high Narew River bank.

The most important landmark of Łomża is the **cathedral**, founded by Mazovian Dukes at the beginning of the 16th century. At the time, the town equalled major municipal centres of the Mazovian region – Warsaw and Plock. The church, miraculously rescued from the war destruction, is a monument of great spiritual value for Łomża residents, while for tourists and historians of architecture it is a rare and



Cathedral,
photo by G. Gwizdon



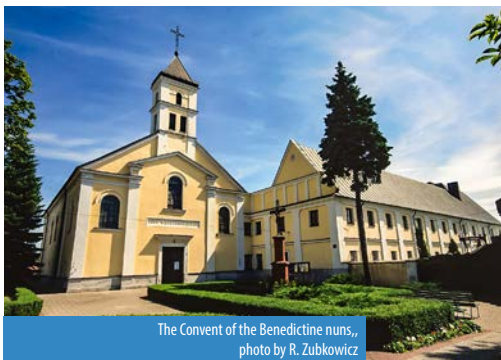
Old Market with Town Hall in the Background,
photo by G.Gwizdon

treasured example of Gothic architecture in the region.

In its glory days the **Old Market Square** was the town's centre. Today the square does not serve commercial purposes any more, although the town council still resides in the **19th-century Town Hall**. The Market Square and the neighbouring streets are an excellent location for a stroll, especially since the area is free from the stressful metropolitan rush. You may be pleased to know that while walking here you are retracing the footsteps

of several historical and famous figures – from Saint Bruno of Querfurt, Queen Ann the Jagiellonian, actress Hanka Bielicka to the late Pope John Paul II.

Łomża also features other interesting places of worship. **The Church and Monastery of the Capuchins** was erected in the 18th century, while the 19th-century **Convent of the Benedictine nuns** was built at a time in which the town, having deteriorated severely, was given a new chance to flourish as the governorate capital. Most of the surviving historical mansions also date from that period. They reflect contemporary aspirations and the potential of the Narew town. **Dworna Street** is embellished with the best preserved and most beautiful houses – among the most representative ones are the District Court and Food Policy Bank [BGŻ] buildings. At Dworna Street, or more precisely at Jana Pawła II Square there is another



The Convent of the Benedictine nuns.,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

How to get there and the most important attractions



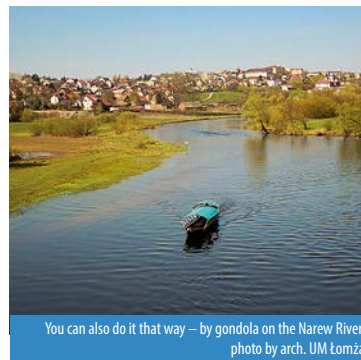
Backwaters of the Narew,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

monument remembering the governorate epoch – **the former Orthodox Church**, i.e. the present Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

A walk around town also features a few cemeteries. A **Catholic cemetery**, once accompanied by Protestant and Orthodox cemeteries, was established towards the end of the 18th century. This cemetery, not only contains several hundred historical tomb stones, but also gates, chapels and tall, centenary trees. There are two **Jewish cemeteries** with numerous examples

of Jewish tombstone masonry. In comparison to other cemeteries in the region, both cemeteries can be considered well-preserved. If Łomża could decide when to present itself at its best, it would probably choose spring. The town looks at its reflection in the vast **backwaters of the Narew River**, which fills up at that time of the year, flooding over its meandering riverbed. During the **bird migrations** the flooded meadows become an object of interest not only for the winged travellers but also for ornithologists. The natural course of the river and the valley, whose character is maintained by extensive agricultural activity are protected by the **Łomżyński Landscape Park of the Narew Valley**. Its western borders are simultaneously the town boundaries – nature's attractions can therefore be admired without setting out on long hikes, even without leaving Łomża itself. The river valley, as well as the parks and green areas in the town create a favourable microclimate.

Other nature reserves are also not far away from Łomża. They include above all the **Biebrzański** and **Narwiański National Parks** – Poland's most important refuge for fauna and



You can also do it that way – by gondola on the Narew River,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



The Lutosławski Manor in Drozdowo,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



Tsar fortifications in Piątница,,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

flora associated to wetlands. The natural assets of Łomża, town situated within the **Green Lungs of Poland Zone**, are highlighted by **four nature reserves** established in its vicinity. Also, the Narew Valley has become a part of the European **Natura 2000** wildlife conservation network.

When in Łomża, it is worth visiting several nearby destinations. The present town emerged from an old **burg located once in Stara Łomża**. It was there that St Bruno allegedly established the first church in Mazovia around 1000 C.E. The hill on which the church was most likely located is currently an excellent viewpoint. You can see with your own eyes what the meandering blue line on the map really looks like. What is more, you can admire the views of the Narew and Biebrza Rivers from other sites as well, hiking along the river streams or kayaking. The **Lutosławski Manor in Drozdowo** is worth a visit with its **Nature Museum**, and the beautifully situated **Wizna** features an interesting **Gothic church**.

A hike along the Narew may be enhanced by a visit to **Nowogród** with the **Kurpie Open Air Museum** located on the high bank of the river. History, especially military history, has made a match between Łomża and **Piątница**. It happened as a result of the **tsar fortifications** which were meant to guard the river passage. Three massive forts, connected by earth embankments, fulfilled this function in 1920 and September 1939, when the Narew constituted a significant line of defence against the German invasion. **Polish fortifications**, expanding from Wizna, via Łomża to Nowogród, are remnants of those times.



The Kurpie Open Air Museum in Nowogród,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

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photo by arch. UM Łomża

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*Landscape
exploration*

Geographic and natural characteristics

Although the situation within the North Mazovian Lowland does not promise a diverse landscape, the surroundings of Łomża are particularly beautiful. Łomża's naturally fortified position was once its main asset. Today, it contributes to the town's picturesque panorama. The town spreads across the moraine hills about 125 metres above sea level. Łomża lies at the edge of the mesoregion of the Łomżyńskie Interfluvium and is literally on the edge – the Narew Water Gap forms its northern peripheries, with the margins of the Narew Valley towering several dozen metres above the water mirror. Beyond the river spreads the Kolneńska Plateau, also elevated above the meandering river bed. The slopes of the ancient valley of the Narew, therefore, offer several viewpoints in the vicinity of Łomża, ideal for admiring the vast landscapes. Further away from the town, however, the area is not that diverse.

The location of Łomża at the bank of the unregulated Narew River is a thing unique in itself. But the town has at its disposal numerous green areas such as three parks, which together with squares, gardens plots and lawns constitute 70 hectares of land (in comparison, the Royal Baths Park in Warsaw consists of 74 hectares).

NATURE PRESERVATION

Łomża is situated on a terrain of unique natural value which is manifested by the number of nature reserves established in its vicinity. They are mostly



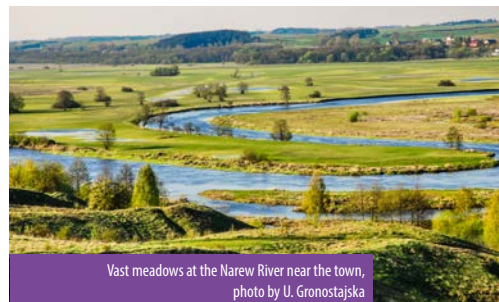
Łomża enveloped with water,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

The Green Lungs of Poland

Apart from a foundation's promotional name, this term describes a functional area, the idea of which was formulated in the 1980s, which aims at integrating nature preservation with sustainable economic development in the most eco-friendly region of north-eastern Poland. The Green Lungs area initially incorporated five former voivodships: Białostockie, Łomżyńskie, Olsztynskie, Ostrołęckie and Suwalskie. Today, the area includes 55 counties with a total of 61,000 square km (19% of Poland's total land mass). There are numerous wildlife conservation entities here: 4 national parks, 13 landscape parks and 263 nature reserves – about 40% of the Green Lungs of Poland are under various forms of preservation.

associated with the natural, unchanged Narew River Valley. The area is part of the Green Lungs of Poland Project (see box) that encompasses north-eastern Poland – a territory lacking industrial infrastructure with a well-preserved natural environment.

Łomżyński Landscape Park of the Narew Valley. Very few towns of the size of Łomża can boast a landscape park located next to the



Vast meadows at the Narew River near the town,
photo by U. Gronostajska

town boundaries. The Łomżyński Landscape Park was established in 1994 in appreciation of the unique character of the Narew Water Gap. The park area – over 7,000 hectares – encompasses a section of the river that is several kilometres long. Starting in the village of Bronowo, where the right-bank tributary, Łojewek, flows into the Narew, it ends at the environs of Łomża (on the road to Piątnica), where the river bed characteristically bends twice at 90 degrees. So, after a brief walk from the Old Market Square to Woźniowska Street, you can admire the beautiful view over the Narew meadows that make up part of the park. This is a privilege other towns in Poland can only envy.

The Narew itself meanders heavily when nearing the town. If the river bed were straightened out in this section and all the old river beds and branches were added up, the Narew would be several times longer. Fortunately, the river was not "corrected" in this part and has kept its natural course, which is something uncommon in the lowlands. If you are familiar with the river's characteristics in the Narwiański National Park (in the vicinity of Tykocin or Ostrołęka), you will be surprised to see that a distinctive feature in this section of the river is its rather narrow valley that is 1.5–2.5 km wide. Its edges are framed by the

Landscape exploration

steep slopes of the moraine hills that tower 40–50 m above the river bed. Understandably, the area is a host to diverse, zonal vegetation. The river and backwaters contain aquatic and reed vegetation. A stretch of wet, fertile meadows, created and sustained by human agricultural activity, spreads directly into the valley. Pastures and arable land are located on

more elevated, drier regions. Higher up the fairly fertile, mineral-rich slopes of the moraine hills feature thermophilic vegetation, forming turfs that resemble steppes. These open lands are complemented with forests of diverse character, depending on their location within the valley – the forests of most value being located at the lowest altitude – i.e. riparian forests that are flooded in spring. In total, the abundance of vascular plants within the Landscape Park amounts to 735 species. Among them 23 are under strict protection and 94 are considered rare species.

The park's emblem features the northern lapwing, a bird that is characteristic of the vast river meadows. It is accompanied by other species whose habitat requirements comprise



The black-tailed godwit, a species characteristic of the open land,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

Where to bird-watch

Passionate ornithology enthusiasts recommend a part of the Jednaczewska Levee (see page 95), located in the Rycki Kierz Nature Reserve behind the bridge at the Łomżyńska (where the levee turns right). In the springtime, the road elevated above ground level runs among the backwaters for a few kilometres. Interesting terrains on the other side of Łomża include the vicinity of Bronów, situated on the opposite river bank (a gravel road between the villages of Koty and Grądy-Woniecko). There you can spot the **aquatic warbler**, for whom the Narew is one of the most significant refuges. Numerous fine bird-watching enclaves are located around the local roads running along the Narew: Łomża – Siemień Nadrzeczny and Czarnocin – Krzewo.

open lands, meadows, peat bogs, reeds and old river beds, such as the black-tailed godwit, the redshank, the bittern, the little bittern, the spotted crane and the aquatic warbler, and among birds of prey: the Montagu's harrier, the lesser spotted eagle, the Eurasian eagle owl and the short-eared owl. Birds dominate this land especially throughout the early spring migrations. One can then observe large flocks of geese, lekking ruffs and numerous northern lapwings. Interesting ornithological observations can be carried out directly from the town. A most easily encountered bird that can be spotted even by less attentive bird watchers is the white stork – its nests, located on telegraph poles or roofs can be found in every village in the vicinity of Łomża.

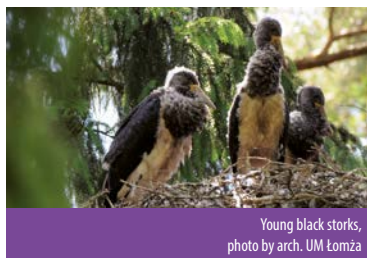
The Narew offers excellent conditions for beavers, a critically endangered species since the Second World War. At present, park staff estimate the beaver population at 200. The eastern part of the protected area which neighbours the swamps that spread to the Biebrzański National Park is often visited by moose. Shelters

and observation towers are placed in some viewpoints. Two educational paths have been laid out on the territory of the Kalinowo Nature Reserve (see page 17). The park management office is located in Drozdowo.

The Łomża section of the Narew is part of the European Natura 2000, a network of specially protected areas which underscores the rank of the region.

Narew Water Gap Natura 2000 Special Protection Area. The refuge encompasses a 16-kilometre section (over 7,500 hectares) of the Narew (between Bronowo and Łomża) and its richly shaped fringe. The area was established as part of the EU Bird Directive. The basis for this form of nature preservation is the presence of rare bird species in this terrain – a manifestation of the quality of the natural environment here. Among the rare species are the aquatic warbler, the black tern, the corn crane and the Western Marsh-harrier. In most part the boundaries of this special protection area overlap that of the Landscape Park.

Lower Narew River Valley Natura 2000 Special Protection Area. Encompasses the subsequent course of the river – from Łomża to Pultusk (about 140 km of the river, 26,000 hectares). In contrast to the Narew Water Gap, the special protection area was demarcated according to habitat features (i.e. the EU Habitats



Young black storks,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Directive). Almost three quarters of the area is taken up by meadows and pastures.

Kalinowo Nature Reserve. The forest reserve, with an area of almost 70 hectares, is located on the slope of the Narew River Valley, profoundly impacting on the diversity of the terrain. It features numerous gorges with irregular, steep slopes cutting through the gradient. The difference in altitude between the lowest and the highest points of the reserve is significant – up to 40 m. Conservation, above all, governs the oak-hornbeam forest – deciduous mixed stand consisting mostly of oak and lime trees. Fragments of sparse stand (characterised by a xerothermic oak forest), somewhat transformed by lavishly developed shrubs make up the elevated part of the special protection area. Among the shrubs wild-growing privet can be found. This shrub is commonly used for hedging (grey shoots, dark green narrow leaves and black fruit), and at Kalinowo we find its northernmost, natural station. Higher up, above the forest, the southern sunny exposition offers excellent conditions for thermophilic plant communities of xerothermic turfs. Thanks to such a variety of habitats and conditions among the protected species in the reserve, one can also encounter plants that are characteristic of the wet oak-hornbeam forest such as the Martagon lily, the bird's-nest orchid and the xerophilic *Jovibarba globifera* (the beard of Jove).



The forest in the autumn attire,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Landscape exploration

The reserve lies on the left side of the road between Łomża and Drozdowo. The blue trail running along the Narew turns into the reserve. A nature path has also been laid out there (information boards placed at the path's final stops can be seen from the road to Drozdowo).

Rycki Kierz Nature Reserve. The area under protection here is a fragment (43.5 hectares) of the oak-hornbeam forest that is characteristic of the Narew Valley. Forests such as this, which prefer relatively fertile soil, were the first to succumb to agricultural demands. Very fertile soil can be found on the flood plain of the small Łomżyńska, which flows into the nearby Narew. The forest stand boasts majestic oak trees that are several hundred years old. European white elms are also unique in the reserve since they grow in the closed forest, a rare occurrence these days. Mixed forest dominated by pines can be seen further down in the protected area. When the reserve was established, the xerothermic oak forest community was of great natural value. Unfortunately, it has been transformed as a result of shrub development which overshadowed the herb layer.

The reserve neighbours directly with the road to Jednaczewo and is separated from the Łomża boundaries by merely 2 km. You can take a hike or a bicycle ride here, along a comfortable bicycle path that will take you along the Jednaczewska Levee. A green tourist trail and a marked bicycle trail also run this way.

Wielki Dział Nature Reserve. This is the largest out of the reserves located in the vicinity of Łomża (13 km in a straight line from the town centre). The 120 hectares under protection feature the riparian forest – forest community that is characteristic of floodplain valleys. The stand above all consists of alder and majestic ash. A characteristic feature of the riparian forest is its optimal level of soil fertility, resulting from early

Amazon-like Jungle

An interesting description of the Narew riparian forests, written two centuries ago, was published by German engineer-meliorator, Wucke, in the *Dziennik Warszawski* ["Warsaw Daily"] (cited after H. Syska, *At My Azure Narew* Warsaw, 1953): "From the village of Wizna, the Narew River has valleys on its left bank where the descent is gradual, and the speed of the river is uniform, from feet to 1-1.6 inch, reaching the village of Bronowo, where begins a thick forest that boasts majestic oak trees. This forest, covered with flood mud and annual plant decomposition from the valley, almost equals the American forest. Shrubs climbing over the limbs of ancient oak trees include wild common hop and ivy, creating wreaths of different lengths. The entire nature presents itself in pure form".

spring flooding. A fragment of the riparian forest protected in the reserve offers an insight into what river valleys used to look like centuries ago, before being utilized by man – places which had originally been covered with forests became the presently admired, beautiful Narew meadows. Due to the plant communities' unique character, the entire area is under strict protection. You can see forests similar to the ones protected in the reserve along the road from Pniewo to Gać (Wielki Dział is also located in its vicinity).

Dębowe Góry Nature Reserve. It is one of the youngest reserves in the vicinity, established



Beautiful forest in the vicinity of Łomża,
photo by Podróżniczek

in 2001 in order to protect a rare forest community – xerothermic oak forest (oak forest in which light availability contributes to the development of thermophilic species in the herb layer). This plant formation, uncommon in nature reserves, accompanies a mixed forest comprised of pine and sessile oak. Both communities cover almost 100 hectares of land with significant altitude differences, of up to 35 m. Among other interesting flora representatives are the European columbine, the yellow foxglove and the Martagon lily. The reserve is located near the villages of Gielczyn and Podgórze. The blue tourist trail which runs from Gielczyn through Czerwony Bór to the village of Wygoda travels through its eastern margin.

A history of Łomża

The beginnings of Łomża are closely associated with the old burg in Stara Łomża, situated some 5 km away from the present town centre. Historians and archaeologists date the origin of the settlement in the 11th century. The proximity of the waterway and the river's high banks, which at the time offered natural defensive potential, contributed to the development of the settlement. A fortified burg is known to have existed in the first half of the 11th century on the site of Stara Łomża. Archaeological findings confirm that its residents conducted an intense trade exchange with remote regions. It is worth emphasising that in wooded Central Europe the rivers played the role of today's highways. Residents of the burg, however, were not meant to live in peace – the borderline location of the settlement resulted in numerous invasions of warlike tribes from the north and east (Prussians, Yotvingians and Lithuanians). The town burnt down in the late 11th or the early 12th centuries. Its location appears to have been advantageous, since it was soon rebuilt and better fortified.

Saint Bruno of Querfurt

He came from a noble Saxon family and was educated in Magdeburg, where he took up holy orders. In 988 he entered the Benedictine order and went on to live in a monastery at Pereum, near Ravenna. King Bolesław I the Brave brought the monks from Pereum to Poland. Bruno reached Greater Poland in 1005 with the bishop's pallium. He conducted Evangelical missions in Poland and the neighbouring countries. One of them, at the border region of Lithuania and Prussia, was ended with his death. He was killed on March 9th, 1009, together with the 18 missionaries that accompanied him.

St Bruno is especially significant in Łomża, since it is believed that the church in Stara Łomża came into existence through his initiative. Some historians claim that the missionary could have died in the vicinity of Łomża itself (according to others, it happened in the present town of Braniewo). In 1963 Saint Bruno became the saint patron of the Łomża diocese.

— According to 19th-century church records as well as to oral tradition, Stara Łomża featured the Church of St Lawrence, after whom one of the hills is named (the other one is called Queen Bona Mount), in about 1000 CE.



Remnants of the old burg in Stara Łomża,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Landscape exploration

Bruno of Querfurt, who was canonized after his martyrdom, is said to have contributed to the construction of the church.

THE TOWN OF MAZOVIAN DUKES

Duke Bolesław IV the Curly, who erected a castle between the present Dworna and Senatorska Streets, gets credit for Łomża's new location. When another blaze consumed the burg in Stara Łomża, residents decided against rebuilding it. At the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries the defensive value of the place decreased, while the proximity of a convenient passage across the Narew grew in significance. The terrain occupied by present day Łomża provided excellent conditions for passage. The settlement began to develop. A market square was laid out for commercial reasons, a town hall was built, and, according to records dated in 1400, Jan Białko of Warsaw was nominated as head of the town of Łomża. Mazovian Duke Janusz I used the term *civitas*, 'town', which could only mean that although the burg dominated by him was not a town, it was large and had a sizable population.



Two-złoty coin with the image of the Łomża Cathedral, issued by the National Polish Bank in its Historical Towns in Poland series, photo by arch. UM Łomża

Łomża had to wait 18 more years for the town charter. The document, signed by Duke Janusz I, gave the town residents numerous privileges, making them equal in status to residents of the older towns in Mazovia. The Duke's heir and son – Bolesław – confirmed the privileges, granting the town income from levees, one of seven (or, according to other sources, six) bridges – as well as allowing the cutting of oak forest in order to fix said bridges. Why did 15th-century Łomża need so many passages when today a much more intense traffic uses only two? It was all about money, of course. At the time bridges were a significant source of income, since a toll was charged for the bridge passage. Nonetheless, the traffic must have been intense since it allowed so many toll collectors to prosper.

Thanks to the situation at the high river bank, the town could afford not having fortifications on the river front. The other, more easily accessible town peripheries were fortified by earth embankments with three gates. The parish church (the present cathedral) is a witness of those times, when Łomża was still the legacy of Mazovian Dukes. Its construction was made possible by the privilege granted by Duchess

Ann in 1504. The church was consecrated in 1526, the year in which the last heir to the Mazovian Piast dynasty died. That year Mazovia was annexed to the Crown of the Polish Kingdom and Łomża became a royal town. Even before that time, it was a significant centre in the region. However, together with the incorporation it became a formal capital of a territory which comprised four counties: Łomżyński, Kolneński, Ostrołęcki and Zambrowski.

A GOLDEN AGE OF THE TOWN AT THE NAREW RIVER

The 16th century turned out to be a time of prosperity for the entire Republic of Poland as well as for Łomża. After the Union with Lithuania the border location of Łomża (until 1569 the Łomża land neighboured the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) proved to be an asset that promoted trade development. The Łomża merchants shipped wheat, agricultural produce and timber along the waterway to Gdańsk, Elbląg and Kaliningrad, thus warranting the construction of a port and granaries at the Narew River. At the same time the town received foreign goods. Commodity exchange was regulated by the privilege issued by King Sigismund I the Old in 1556 which granted the town three market days



The Old Market Square in 1916 – the building with a flag is the town hall and the yellow building on the right – the synagogue, photo by arch. UM Łomża

per year. It also increased the market for products manufactured by local craftsmen – whose population exceeded 200 in the 16th century. In 1593 they received a guild statute for various handicrafts. Among these were bell-founders and specialized operators of one of the largest royal arsenals in Łomża.

The architecture at that time was naturally dominated by the castle, built by Mazovian Dukes. The Gothic town hall at the market square was also an important institution for the town people. In 1575 there were 540 houses, excluding the 'jurisdictional' settlements on the outskirts that were exempt from municipal law. This is the Łomża featured in *Topographical Description of Mazovia in the Sixteenth Century* written by Andrzej Święcicki: "The town is most pleasant and the magnificence of the brick houses, the wealth and kindness of its residents and the splendour of the market square make the town second best only to Warsaw. The royal court in Łomża is very spacious; it was often visited by Mazovian Dukes, and is now used as an abode for the starost [elder]. The town hall and other public buildings are very elegant. The residential houses are magnificent".

However, this prosperity was covetous in the eyes of the nobility and starosts of Łomża, who, being far away from the central authorities, were acting rather freely and made nothing of the town's welfare. Starosts would appropriate income from the town bridge and limit the use of previously accessible utilities, and the nobility would unlawfully take over municipal land... Numerous royal interventions were necessary to confirm the residents' rights. Ann the Jagiellonian, among others, would plead on behalf of Łomża residents, since before becoming Queen she spent a few months in Łomża – after the death of her father, king Sigismund I the Old.

Landscape exploration



Male Grammar School (before 1896), photo by arch. UM Łomża

She had a vivid interest in the town's growth, since the town's income contributed financially to her court, among others.

The following century was less fortunate. Yes, the town grew – a New Town with a New Market Square (the present Kościuszki Square) were laid out – but the development potential was shattered by wars, misfortune and abuse. A 1595 Cossack raid was a prelude to destruction. A similar one took place nine years later. The impact of the Swedish Invasion is known from a mention in the 1658 royal privilege, which states that the town was razed to the ground. In the mid 17th century the town is said to have had the population of a large village, i.e. 300 – 10% of the population said to exist in the previous century. As if there had been not enough fires, epidemics and invasions, greedy officials and nobility from the vicinity continuously attempted to snatch this and that morsel of royal property. Eventually, the king had to establish a committee in 1660 to settle disputes over the stolen municipal estate and benefits – to no avail. Despite confirmation of the residents' privileges (1676), the municipal treasury was empty and there were more farmers than craftsmen among the town people.

The 18th century also began with fights that deepened the stagnation. Łomża and its vicinity were exhausted among others by the war of



The now non-existent Church of St Stanislaus
Kostka photographed in 1913, photo by arch. UM Łomża

succession between August II and Stanisław Leszczyński, in which the Swedes got involved. During the 1733 battle at the Jednaczewski Forest near Łomża, a folk hero of the Kurpie region, Stach Konwa (see box page 69) died. These years also witnessed the Kurpie rebellion that plundered the town several times up to 1736. Thus, towards the end of the century Łomża was considered an agricultural town with a population of 1,100; who lived mostly in wooden houses whose number had decreased by 350 – in comparison to the golden age of the 16th century. Instead of the former three market days, they were content with a single, annual market day. Also, the visitors from beyond the Narew had to now travel by boat, since none of the aforementioned bridges survived.

Despite the adversities, the residents of Łomża did not descend into torpor. In 1732 the construction of the brick Church of St Stanislaus Kostka was finally completed (its design had been created over a century earlier) and the church was used by the Jesuits. The College moved to brick buildings in 1754. The future martyr saint, Andrzej Bobola, lectured in Łomża for a few years. When the Jesuit order was suppressed (1774), their mission was continued by the Piarists. Other orders were also present in town – the Benedictine nuns built a convent in 1764 and the Capuchins in 1798.

THE GOVERNORATE CAPITAL

The third partition of Poland located Łomża in New East Prussia. Prussian rulers decided that the town at the Narew would be one of ten county towns in the Białystok department. Certainly, a number of offices began operating efficiently, but Prussian rule meant above all a very meticulous collection of monetary contributions. A lasting remnant of those times is a cemetery established in 1797, as well as the levee to Piąt-nica, the construction of which began in 1804. Unfortunately, the Jesuit College did not survive Prussian rule and fell into decline in 1806. It was then turned into a military hospital.

Change arrived in Łomża together with Napoleon's army in June 1807. Under the auspices of the French emperor, the Duchy of Warsaw was established, encompassing the territories which had fallen prey to Prussia. Łomża was nobilitated, and became the capital of one of the six departments. Łomża's youth was enlightened by Bonaparte himself, who is said to have stayed in the town during the 1812 campaign, and to have set off east with a group of local recruits. Towards the end of the year, the 'freezing' army marched in the opposite direction, making the residents of Łomża rather anxious – especially since it was followed by the Russian army.

Under the Kingdom of Poland, Łomża was first chosen as the centre of the voivodship (Suwalskie); but was downgraded immediately afterwards to a district town. Nonetheless, better times would come. First of all, the town's population increased year by year, thanks to, among others, the Jews who in 1822 were finally exempted from a centuries-long settlement prohibition (see box page 60). Several streets were laid out in the western part of the town together with a neoclassical, still existing town



Łomża's synagogue at the Old Market Square in 1915,
photo by arch. UG Zbójna

hall that was built (1823). In this new geopolitical reality, the capital of the Romanov Empire was connected to Warsaw through a route via Łomża, contributing to the transport and commercial boom. Nonetheless, not all residents accepted the tsar's rule. They ultimately paid for their involvement in the November Uprising with a partial incineration of the town, and arrests which continued until 1833.

In 1842 voivodships were renamed governorates, and districts turned into counties. A promenade garden was established in the same year (Jakub Waga Park). The regulation of main streets, which in the following decades would become an architectural pride of the town, began even earlier. The Narew continued to play a significant role in the town's development, especially since the construction of the Augustowski Channel, through which it was connected to the Niemen River basin. The Warsaw-Petersburg route

Landscape exploration

featured a postal service, which at the time was an important entity for passenger transit.

The Łomżyński County and its capital paid a terrible price for their support of the January Uprising. The Wawer (Konstanty Ramotowski) and Zameczek (Władysław Cichorski) Battalions were unable to prevent the torture and death of 50 grammar school students, who were captured as they walked towards Czerwony Bór hoping to join the partisans. Towards the end of 1863 the county was taken over by General Mikołaj Ganecki, who gained notoriety for arresting 1,000 people in a short period of time (600 of them were exiled to Siberia).

Paradoxically, administrative reform, which after the January Uprising aimed at assimilating the Kingdom of Poland into the remainder of the tsar's empire while bringing repressive authorities and rebellious people together, became an opportunity for development for devastated Łomża. The reform resulted in placing the governorate capital at the Narew. It was one of ten administrative units of the Kingdom, and it comprised eight counties. Łomża turned over a new leaf – it was enhanced by new architectural buildings and institutions: a hospital (the Medical School at Wiejska Street), three Orthodox Churches (the main one now being the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary), and a prison. Schools, a movie theatre and a Folk House



The Orthodox Church at Soborny Square (the present Jana Pawła II Square), fot. arch. UM Łomża

were built. Magnificent buildings were erected to cater for the newly established economic and financial institutions. These can be admired today at Dworna Street. One of the mansions was expanded and turned into the governor's palace. Most of the historical residential architecture dates exactly from that period. The town did not however evolve into an industrial hub – the impediment being among others the lack of a railway line. Numerous army divisions were stationed in Łomża, as were in the majority of governor towns. The military role of the town increased with the modernization of the fortifications in the years 1902–08.

The town, which in 1904 had a population exceeding 24,000 (not counting a garrison of several thousand) had a multinational character. Almost half of the population was Jewish. There were many Russians, especially among officials and teachers. A German community of 200 had a meagre impact on the town's character. Each of the nations professed a different religion and each had their own centres of religious worship, institutions and organizations.

Facing the war in 1915 the Russians managed to connect Łomża with Śniadów by means of a railway line (not operating now). The fights that took place in the vicinity of Łomża in spring and summer of that year turned the town into one huge military hospital. Thanks to the adaptation of all public buildings for hospital purposes, several thousand wounded could be housed. 1,200 of the injured were buried at the local cemeteries.

In the summer of 1915 the Russians retreated at the advance of the Central Powers. The Piątnica fortifications did not play any significant role at the time. The destruction of the town was accompanied by significant human losses – the Russians evacuated as much as 24% of the governorate population, and in Łomża itself the percentage was even higher. The Germans could not care less about

the town, imposing as one of their first regulations a monetary contribution of 60,000 Rouble. The 1st infantry regiment of the Polish Legions reached the Narew in November of 1916 being replaced a few months later by the 4th regiment. In the summer of 1917 residents of Łomża witnessed the dissolution of the unit, after the so-called Oath Crisis (Piłsudski, who refused to swear allegiance to the emperors of Germany and Austro-Hungary, was then imprisoned and most of the legionists interned). The prison at the present Legionów Avenue, currently the 1st and 2nd Degree State Musical School, was the location in which several hundred rebellious legionists were held.

A CENTURY OF FREEDOM AND WARS

In independent Poland Łomża found itself in the Białostockie Voivodship. In addition to typical county institutions, the town also housed some of the provincial offices. As of 1918 Łomża also boasted a bishop, although the Łomża diocese was not formally recognized until 1925. Life in the reborn Republic of Poland was interrupted by the Polish-Soviet war. After five fierce days of fighting, on August 2nd 1920, Russian soldiers carrying red flags entered Łomża. Not for long – on August 22nd they were expelled eastwards.

Apart from the agricultural tool factory, iron foundry, sawmill, brickyard, mills and cotton wool factory, interwar Łomża had no industry. Manufacture was left in the hands of numerous craftsmen. Some of the most important architectural investments of the time were a market hall at the market square, power station, the bishop's palace and the Catholic House. The town boasted an exceptionally large number of elementary and high schools, both Polish and Jewish (including a yeshiva, associated with the synagogue), and a seminary. The 33rd infantry regiment and the command of the 18th infantry division actively participated in the town's life. Before



A bunker near Nowogród,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

WW2, on April 1st 1939, the county, with Łomża as its capital and a population of 28,000, was annexed to the Warsaw Voivodship.

In September 1939 the town and the vicinity were defended by the Narew Independent Operational Group, which tried to hold off the invasion from Prussia at the fortified river line. The defence continued until September 7th, but when Nowogród and Wizna were defeated, the Polish garrison at the fortification in Piątnica and Łomża withdrew, fearing the impending besiegement. Residents of Łomża felt the menace of war once more when two weeks later the Germans retreated and surrendered the town to the Soviets.

Łomża residents were among those who most felt the deceptiveness of the post-war discourse about the Soviet occupation – the Red Army entered the eastern territories of Poland in order to protect the Ukrainian and Belarusian population (the town even became the headquarters for one of the regional Belarusian Socialist Soviet Republic). The issue is that there has never been such a republic in the Łomżyńskie County. Łomża residents, however, remembered the terror and people being exiled eastwards. The title of a newspaper published in the years 1939–41, *Wolna Łomża* ["The Free Łomża"], sounds like a joke today.

German occupation also marked Łomża with terror. It affected the Jewish population first and

foremost, being confined in a ghetto in the eastern part of town and then mercilessly murdered. About 5,000 Poles and 7,000 Jews from Łomża were buried in the mass graves in the Giełczyński Forest a few kilometres south of the town. Underground conspiracy was highly active in Łomża and its vicinity during WW2. Unable to accept post-war order and marginalized, members of the underground remained in hiding until the mid 1950s. The Red Army entered the town once again on September 13th, 1944, after a three-day battle. The destruction was considerable – as many as 70–80% of the buildings were annihilated. The retreating Germans blew up the larger and more significant buildings, destroying among others the post-Jesuit church that was used by the Protestants. A day after the occupation of the town – on September 14th – the Soviet military authorities ordered the evacuation of civilians, in anticipation of fierce fighting at the Narew line. No one suspected then that the residents would be able to return home as late as January 1945. Upon returning they found their homes looted and devastated. The subsequent reconstruction did not always take into consideration historical tradition, favouring practical aspects over aesthetics. This is manifested by the inappropriate blocks of flats to be found within the very interesting Długa Street. At present the town authorities conduct wide-scale revitalization



Łomża, third town in size in Podlaskie Voivodship,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



In knight costumes...,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

works, aimed at restoring this street its former glory, together with other streets of the Old Town.

For thirty years after the war Łomża remained a county town, and in 1975 became the capital of one of 49 voivodships. This fact obviously accelerated its development. The town began to expand, spreading mostly to the south. The administrative status of Łomża changed once again in 1999, when the town became the city county and the head office of the land county. Today, Łomża is the third biggest town in the Podlaskie Voivodship (after Białystok and Suwałki) with a population of 60,000 and an area of 37 square km. The town is divided into four customary suburbs: The Old Town (this guidebook's main focus), Południe, Łomżyca and Kraska. There is no heavy industry here (Łomża is most famous for a brewery that produces beer named after the town) that can cause discomfort to residents or visitors, on the contrary – its surrounding area is of great environmental value. Łomża's location on the tourist trail heading for Mazuria and Suwalszczyzna regions is also an asset.

A specific character of Łomża

It is Mazovia, not the Podlasie region – it is worth remembering that, if you wish to explore and understand Łomża. True, Łomża

and Northern Mazovia have been a part of the Podlaskie Voivodship for the last ten years; however, in historical times what the former had in common with the latter region – after which the current administrative unit is named – was little more than the border. Until the Partitions of Poland Łomża remained one of the most significant municipal centres of Mazovia, and this situation was disrupted by administrative divisions imposed by the foreign rulers. Prussians and then Russians could not care less about the history or ethnic identity of the appropriated provinces. Before the Second World War the town was already part of the voivodship, its head office located in Białystok, but it was annexed to the Warsaw Voivodship a few months before the war.

Łomża's situation is not exceptional within the region, as only one third of the Podlaskie Voivodship territory is the historical Podlasie. Nonetheless, the identity of the former town of the Mazovian Dukes and its vicinity is different than what is attributed to them – an automatic inclusion of the town into Podlasie, or using a romantic term "today's Kresy [eastern frontier]" feel false to the residents of Łomża. In contrast to Podlasie, Łomża was characterized by a consistent ethnic and religious structure (except for the Jews living in town). North-eastern Mazovia was a centre of petty nobility, who, although not very wealthy, took pride in their



The coat of arms of Łomża

lineage. A distinctive feature of the local dialect, today found only among the elder generation in villages, is the typically Mazovian mazuration, i.e. replacement of 'cz, sz, ż [tch, sh, zh]' sounds with 'c, s, z [ts, s, z]'. Ethnologists would certainly find many traces of this local specificity, visible in religious or political preferences – the Łomżyńskie Voivodship is considered a region that adheres to conservative traditions.

The town's coat of arms – a deer jumping over stones – dates from the 15th century and was granted Łomża by the Mazovian Dukes. It is said to have referred to the town's location then, among the forests and with an abundance of animals. Perhaps the coat of arms came into being together with the town charter; its earliest versions are known from a seal preserved on letters sent in the 15th and 16th centuries from Łomża to Gdańsk. A solid gold deer of Łomża is said to have crowned the tower of the first town hall. It is also found on products manufactured by Łomża craftsmen. Łomża was deprived of its horned symbol in the governorate times. The emblem of Łomża governorate became a Berlinka rivership under sails with a blue background. The deer returned after Poland regained independence, and is today presented

Landscape exploration

in gold before a red background, surrounded by golden mantling and a crown.

Legend has it that the coat of arms of Łomża is a token of remembrance after an incident that befell Duke Janusz I during hunting. A boy participating in the hunt became alarmed by the unusual behaviour of a deer – he suspected an ambush. The duke was warned, took heed of the warning and survived, while ten Teutonic knights lurking in the bushes died. It is not certain how much of this story is true and how much was the author's fantasy. Walentyna Niewińska, who recorded the story, quotes several other legends that are associated with the old Łomża. The old burg in Stara Łomża, still cherished in memory, and the mysterious 15th-century parish church (and the Piątnica fortifications) are said to be joined by a network of forgotten corridors. Another legend associated with the old town, features the saint patron of one of the hills, Queen Bona, who is said to have terrified the residents by haunting them after her death. According to one of the legends, Bona's castle – in another version the castle of an evil queen – was swallowed by the ground together with an enormous treasure. Thus, the queen refused her fortune to her son in response to his misalliance with a poor orphan. Until this day the valuables are guarded by evil spirits. Allegedly, if a mass was said and attended by a ceremonious procession from the Łomża parish church, the devil's guardianship would end. There is one condition, however. No member of the procession can return to town to fetch any object needed in the service. One of such religious processions ended in failure due to a sudden appearance of... a pig dressed in a chasuble. Masses at St Lawrence Mount have also been celebrated in modern times, but nothing of the treasures so far. It seems that attendants always returned to fetch some overlooked mass utensils...



Local delight – *fafernuchy*,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

LOCAL DELIGHTS

The dishes that can be tasted in Łomża will certainly help you carry good memories of the town for a longer time. The most original dishes derive from the Kurpie cuisine. **Rejbak** is a potato casserole baked with grated raw potatoes, large amounts of smoked bacon, fried sausage and onion. Some local ladies' recipes include grits which add density to the meal.

Pampuchy – steamed yeast dumplings – can be served with meat stuffing, no stuffing, or in a dessert version with marmalade. Buckwheat flour pancakes and cabbage cooked with grits and mushrooms on linseed oil are worth trying in the Nowogród open air museum. Recommended beverage – **kozicowe** [goat] beer. Barley malt is not used in the production of this beer; instead the fruit of the common juniper, sugar and honey are added. For dessert we recommend **fafernuchy** – traditional biscuits made of whole wheat flour, carrots (or red beets) and honey. If you like them, you don't have to leave them behind after your departure. They are easy to carry.

Fafernuchy

[traditional carrot and honey biscuits]

Ingredients: 1 kg whole wheat flour, 0.5 kg carrots, ½ cup sugar, ¼ cup honey, 1 vanilla sugar sachet, 10 g baking powder, butter to grease baking tray.

Peel and grate, or process cooked whole carrots, and then combine them with the remaining ingredients. Knead everything into uniform, tough dough. Form the dough into stripes and then cut it into small rhomboid pieces (you can use a bit of flour since the dough is very sticky). Bake on a greased baking tray at a temperature of 190–200°C for 30–40 minutes. The biscuits are fairly tough, so if you prefer them softer, shorten the baking time.

Fafernuchy can also be made from yeast, without baking powder (just add 30 g of yeast to the above ingredients). Carrots are sometimes replaced with cooked sugar beets. When used, the dough needs no further sweetening.

Rejbak

[potato and meat pie]

Ingredients: 1 kg peeled potatoes, 300 g bacon, meat, sausage, 1 large onion, 2–3 eggs, salt, pepper, oil or butter for the baking pan

Fry diced bacon, meat and sausage on a low heat. Sauté the chopped onion in the fat and cracklings in the pan until soft and turning golden brown.

Grate the potatoes on a fine grater, drain off the remaining water and mix with eggs to form a smooth paste. Season generously with salt and pepper, add cracklings with the onion and part of the fat melted from the bacon. Mix the paste again and place it in the well-greased baking pan. Bake for an hour at a temperature of 160°C.

ŁOMŻA

TASTE
THE TOURISM



photo by G. Owizdon

*Practical
information*

Transport

MPK (Municipal Transport Company), ul. Spokojna 9, phone no.: 86 2160162, e-mail: sekretariat@mpklomza.pl, www.mpklomza.pl.

Taxi:

BIS, phone no.: +48 519101030, +48 86 19623, +48 86 2169797, book by SMS: +48 519101030,

HALOTAXI, phone no.: +48 19621, +48 19623, +48 603030303

Łomża Plus, phone no.: +48 86 19626, +48 86 2150222, free-of-charge phone no.: +48 800171718

MPT Radio Taxi, phone no.: +48 19191, +48 86 2163286

Radio Taxi Łomża, phone no.: +48 86 19621, +48 86 2181026, free-of-charge phone no.: +48 800880400

Plus Taxi, phone no.: +48 800171718, +48 86 2150222

Culture, arts and entertainment

ŁOMŻA

Hala Kultury (Culture Hall), Stary Rynek 6, phone no.: +48 86 2156887, e-mail: halakultury@um.lomza.pl. The broad cultural offering includes musical concerts, exhibitions, theatre performances, art workshops, film screenings, and Q&A sessions with authors. The Hall is open to both professional and amateur artists and creators.

Municipal Public Library, ul. Długa 13, phone no.: +48 86 2165481, e-mail: biblioteka@mbp-lomza.pl, www.mbp-lomza.pl, opening hours: main reading room Mon–Fri 10.00 AM – 6.00 PM, Sat 9.00 AM – 4.00 PM, information & bibliography (collection of books on the region and documents on the social life in Łomża, free internet access available) Mon–Fri 10.00 AM – 6.00 PM, Sat 9.00 AM – 4.00 PM.

Library of the Brothers Waga Łomża Scientific Society, ul. Długa 13, phone no.: +48 86 2163256, www.ltn.lomza.pl, opening hours: Mon–Fri 9.00 AM – 3.30 PM.

John Paul II Catholic Centre, ul. Zawadzka 55, phone no.: +48 86 2168905, www.krzyz.lomza.pl, e-mail: krzyz.lomza@gmail.com, opening hours: Mon–Fri 8.00 AM – 9.00 AM and 5.00 PM – 5.45 PM. In the culture centre, you can see Hanka Bielicka's drawing room with the actress' stage costumes, hats, paintings, caricatures and sketches, awards and various memorabilia. The centre also hosts some of the concerts during the Drozdowo–Łomża Music Days festival, and the annual "Joy from Under the Hat" eloquence contest dedicated to Bielicka (March).

Witold Lutosławski Chamber Philharmonic in Łomża, ul. Nowa 2, phone no.: +48 86 2162481, e-mail: biuro@filharmonia.lomza.pl (bookings from 8.00 AM to 3.00 PM), www.filharmonia.lomza.pl. The philharmonic performs classical music and orchestral arrangements of popular songs. Normal ticket: PLN 18, discount ticket: PLN 13, family ticket: PLN 13 for adults, PLN 6 for children; tickets for Large Family Card holders: PLN 6 for adults, PLN 3 for children (free tickets for children under 6).

Practical information



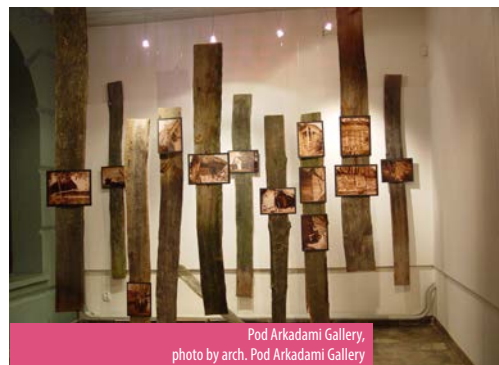
Łomża Diocese Museum,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Pod Arkadami Gallery, Stary Rynek 1, phone no.: +48 86 2162093, opening hours: Tue–Fri 9.00 AM – 5.00 PM, Sat 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM, free entrance; the gallery specialises in photography but also exhibits paintings and other artworks.

Modern Art Gallery, ul. Długa 13, phone no.: +48 86 2164100, e-mail: galeria.lomza@op.pl, www.

muzeum.4lomza.pl, opening hours: Tue–Fri 10.00 AM – 6.00 PM, Sat, Sun and holidays 10.00 AM – 2.00 PM, tickets: normal – PLN 3, discount – PLN 2, museum lesson – PLN 4, tickets for Large Family Card holders: adults – PLN 2, children – PLN 1. The gallery is a part of the Museum of Northern Mazovia.

Millenium Cinema, ul. Wojska Polskiego 7, phone no.: +48 86 2167519, www.kinomillenium.pl.



Pod Arkadami Gallery,
photo by arch. Pod Arkadami Gallery

Municipal Culture Centre – Creative House, ul. Wojska Polskiego 3, phone no.: +48 86 216 32 26, +48 86 216 45 53, e-mail: sekretariat@mdk.lomza.pl, www.mdk.lomza.pl. Broad cultural offering, from rock concerts through events and performances by local artists, to poetry evenings and performances by young creators. The Municipal

Culture Centre includes a number of musical groups, a choir, an art workshop, several musical clubs and art galleries, and a theatre.

Łomża Diocese Museum, ul. Giełczyńska 20a, phone no.: +48 86 2164002, +48 664013803, e-mail: biuro@muzeumdiecezjalne.lomza.pl, lomza@muzeumdiecezjalne.lomza.pl, opening hours: Mon, Wed 11.00 AM – 6.00 PM, Tue, Thu, Fri 9.00 AM – 3.00 PM. The museum has a collection of religious items which are no longer used for worship, but have exceptional historic or artistic value, such as church artwork, and various religious and layman memorabilia.

Museum of Northern Mazovia, ul. Dworna 22c, phone no.: +48 86 2162816, e-mail: mpml@o2.pl, www.muzeum.4lomza.pl, opening hours: Tue, Thu, Fri 9.00 AM – 4.00 PM, Wed

9.00 AM – 5.00 PM, Sat–Sun. 10.00 AM – 4.00 PM. The museum collects and exhibits items made from amber, as well as ethnographic and archaeological items, coin collections, artworks, artistic crafts and regional memorabilia.

Regional Culture Centre, ul. Małachowskiego 4, phone no.: +48 86 2190200, e-mail: rok@4lomza.pl, www.4lomza.pl, www.naszakultura.pl. The Culture Centre has a number of artistic clubs and groups, and organises various cultural events.

Teatr Lalki i Aktora (Puppetry and Actors Theatre), pl. Niepodległości 14, e-mail: sekretariat@teatrlomza.pl, www.teatrlomza.pl, phone no.: +48 86 2165955; tickets available in the Audience Management Office (Biuro Organizacji Widowni). Bookings and group tickets: +48 86 2163193, +48 666383704. Tickets for children:



Museum of Northern Mazovia – the collection features amber products, photo by B. Deptuła



Opening at the "Domek Pastora" (Pastor's House) Tourist and Cultural Activity Centre, photo by arch. UM Łomża

group – PLN 18, individual – PLN 19; tickets for youth and adults: group – PLN 19, individual – PLN 22; theatre classes – PLN 3.

"Domek Pastora" (Pastor's House) Tourist and Cultural Activity Centre, ul. Krzywe Koło 1, phone no.: +48 86 3070044. The centre has pottery, journalism and theatre studios. Conference room is also available. The centre organises workshops on handcraft, music and film, painting and photography exhibitions, historical lectures, book promotional events, as well as various meetings and conferences.

Galeria Kreatywna, ul. Polowa 16, suite 23, phone no.: +48 600552252, iwoswiatkowski@gmail.com, opening hours: Wed, Fri 12.00 PM – 5.00 PM, other days of the week upon prior arrangement. Thematic exhibitions in different fields of art (photography, graphics, painting, mosaics).

Galeria N, al. Legionów 133, phone no.: +48 261385240, kglomza@op.pl, www.naszakultura.pl. Exhibitions displayed from January to June and from September to December; opening hours: Mon–Fri 8.00 AM – 5.00 PM. The gallery is owned by the Military Club in Łomża and the Regional Culture Centre. Galeria N exhibits works of professional and amateur artists.

"Aporia" Robert Sokołowski's Private Art Gallery, ul. Dworna 35, phone no.: +48 608694338, e-mail: robertportrety@wp.pl, www.rs.art.pl, opening hours: Mon–Fri 10.00 AM – 6.00 PM, Sat 10.00 AM – 2.00 PM. The gallery is the first part of the "Multicultural Face of Łomża" historical path, exhibiting ceramic sculptures made by Robert Sokołowski and Ewa Skłodowska, depicting the history of Łomża and its citizens. "Aporia" is located on the site of the Great Synagogue which was destroyed during World War II. In the gallery, which doubles as a

painting workshop, you can see and purchase Robert Sokołowski's paintings, graphics and sketches, and also see the artist at work.

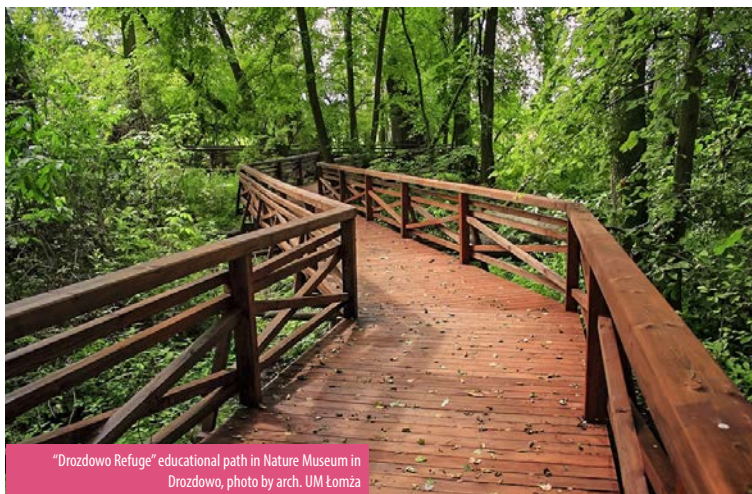
AROUND ŁÓMŻA

Head Office of the Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew River Valley, ul. Główna 52, Drozdowo, phone/fax no.: +48 86 2192175, e-mail: lpkdn.drozdowo@wp.pl, www.lpkdn.wrotapodlasia.pl, opening hours: Mon–Fri 8.00 AM – 4.00 PM. Permanent exhibition "The Nature of the Narew River Valley Between Łomża and Bronowo", and temporary exhibitions. The head office has a Tourist Information Point and the environmental education centre and bird rehabilitation unit.

Fort Museum, Piątnica, ul. Stawiskowska 57a, fort no. III, rifleman pavilion, phone no.: +48 600039532, e-mail: ludwikzalewski@gmail.com,

opening hours to be arranged by phone at +48 600039532, guided tours upon prior booking of the date, in groups up to 10 people; tickets: PLN 5/person. A small exhibition of military equipment and memorabilia related to the military history of the Łomża region.

Nature Museum in Drozdowo, ul. Główna 38, phone no.: +48 86 2192081, e-mail: muzeumdrozdowo@wp.pl, www.muzeum-drozdowo.pl. Exhibitions presenting the natural environment of the Narew and the Biebrza rivers, healing plants, the collection of butterflies and other insects and the local minerals. There are also thematic exhibitions "Hunter's Trophies" and "A Mansion Drawing Room" (dedicated to the Lutosławski family). In the basement, you can see the aquatic exhibition "Underwater World of the Five Continents". In the historical park, you can take the "Drozdowo Refuge" educational



"Drozdowo Refuge" educational path in Nature Museum in Drozdowo, photo by arch. UM Łomża



The Adam Chętnik Kurpie Open Air Museum in Nowogród, photo by arch. Museum of Northern Mazovia

path. The museum also offers accommodation (11 beds in double and triple rooms, PLN 50 per person for a night). You can also have a bonfire in the pavilion in the park (PLN 70) or organise an incentive event. Tickets without guide: normal – PLN 9, discount – PLN 7; guided tours: normal tickets: groups up to 10 – PLN 15, groups larger than 10 – PLN 10; discount tickets: groups up to 10 – PLN 13, groups larger than 10 – PLN 8; discount tickets for groups attending museum lessons – PLN 12; tickets for group minders – PLN 1 (1 minder for 10 persons); tickets for pre-school children in organised groups – PLN 5/person. Opening hours: summer season 1 May–30 Sep Mon–Fri 8.30 AM – 5.30 PM, Sat, Sun 9.30 AM – 5.00 PM; winter season 1 Oct–30 Apr Mon–Fri 8.30 AM – 3.30 PM, Sat, Sun 9.30 AM – 3.30 PM.

Adam Chętnik Kurpie Open Air Museum in Nowogród, branch of the Museum of Northern Mazovia in Łomża, ul. Zamkowa 25, phone/fax no.: +48 86 2175562, e-mail: skansen-kurpiowski@op.pl, www.muzeum.4lomza.pl, opening hours: 8.00 AM – 4.00 PM – guided tours; the museum is open until 6.00 PM. Tickets (on Mondays, entrance to permanent exhibitions is free): PLN 8/person, organised groups (at least 10 people): 11 PLN/person; outdoor ticket (without entering buildings): PLN 3. Guided tours for organised groups (at least 10 people, ticket price per person): PLN 9, discount tickets PLN 6; individual tours (up to 10 people): PLN 70. The "Karczma Kurpiowska" restaurant on the premises is open from May to October, 10.00 AM – 6.00 PM. We recommend visiting the Open Air Museum during the Kurpie Culture Days (June) and the Saint Roch

Sunday (first Sunday after August 16th) – see Periodic Events (page 39 and 37)

Periodic Events

“Sacrum et Musica” International Chamber Music Festival (September – October)

Organiser: Witold Lutosławski Chamber Philharmonic in Łomża, ul. Nowa 2, phone no.: +48 86 2162481, e-mail: biuro@filharmonia.lomza.pl

One of the most prestigious cultural events in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, “Sacrum et Musica” has grown into an exceptional artistic experience, enjoyed by even the most demanding music enthusiasts.



“Walizka” (Luggage) International Theatre Festival, photo by arch. TLJA

The ultimate goal of the festival is to reach the inhabitants of rural areas and small towns who have little access to high culture. The concerts are held in churches, music halls or municipal culture centres. The repertoire is very diverse, from Baroque through Classicism and Romanticism to modern music, creating a unique atmosphere in church interiors. The festival invites accomplished conductors, choirs and musicians from Poland and abroad.

“Walizka” (Luggage) International Theatre Festival (May – June)

Organiser: Teatr Lalki i Aktora w Łomży (Puppetry and Theatre in Łomża), pl. Niepodległości 14, phone no. +48 86 473 55 67, e-mail: sekretariat@teatrlomza.pl, www.teatrlomza.pl

One of the most important and most prestigious theatre festivals in this part of Europe, and also the oldest theatre festival in Poland, “Walizka” is one of Łomża’s key brands. The festival has its unique style and character, and its relevance and range grow with every successful edition. One of the key tasks of the festival is to promote theatre, exchange experiences, show the most valuable performances and support young talents, and bring cultures closer by bringing the artists together. Every year, Łomża hosts acclaimed puppetry and theatre companies from around the world.

Aside from the performances, the festival includes various concerts, exhibitions and meetings with prominent figures in the theatre community from Poland and abroad, as well as promotion of publications on theatre. The festival is traditionally accompanied by street performances which promote the event, combining intergration with interaction. For the audience, the festival is a true celebration of theatre and art.



Saint Roch Sunday, photo by arch. UM Łomża

Saint Roch Sunday (August)

Organiser: Museum of Northern Mazovia, ul. Dworna 22c, phone no.: +48 86 2162816, e-mail: mpml@o2.pl

A periodical folklore event showcasing the cultural treasures of the Kurpiowska Forest region as compared to other ethnographic regions. The programme includes performances of folk ensembles and singing bands from the Kurpie region and other parts of Poland. The celebration of the region’s ethnographic roots underlines the unique character of the region and reinforces the identity of the locals, but also shows unity in diversity.

The festival also includes presentations of traditional folklore crafts: amber crafting, papercutting, weaving, pottery, smithing, embroidery, lace making, wood carving and sculpture.

The presentations are accompanied by sampling and sale of regional products, traditional games of skill, and folk art fair.

Summer outdoor cinema (July–August)

Organiser: Łomża Town Hall, “Domek Pastora” (Pastor’s House) Tourist and Cultural Activity Centre in Łomża, ul. Krzywe Koło 1, phone no.: +48 86 3070044, email: kalendarz@um.lomza.pl

A proposition for summer weekends for moviegoing citizens of Łomża and tourists. Enjoy a variety of films, including musicals, romantic comedies or best known works of selected directors, while lounging on a blanket or a deck chair on a summer evening.

The films are shown in the garden of “Domek Pastora” at number 1 Krzywe Koło street. Admission is free.



"Zasmakuj w Łomży" (Taste of Łomża) Inn,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Cafe Kultura (August)

Organiser: Municipal Culture Centre – Creative House, ul. Wojska Polskiego 3, phone/fax no.: +48 86 2163226, +48 86 2164553, e-mail: sekretariat@mdk.lomza.pl

A proposition for summer weekends to infuse energy into the oldest quarters of Łomża through meetings with various artists – musicians, vocalists or writers – in a small, outdoor cultural cafe. You can enjoy free concerts, dances, and also get to know new musical styles and new artistic projects.

"Zasmakuj w Łomży" (Taste of Łomża) (August)

Organiser: Municipal Culture Centre – Creative House, ul. Wojska Polskiego 3, phone/fax no.: +48 86 2163226, +48 86 2164553, e-mail: sekretariat@mdk.lomza.pl

The largest outdoor event in Łomża, complete with performances of the largest names in Polish pop music, such as Maryla Rodowicz, Edyta Górnia, Doda or Michał Szpak, which attract audiences from the whole region. The concerts are accompanied by



Variety Market,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



Łomża Days
photo by arch. UM Łomża

the performances of young artists from the Town Culture Centre – Creative House, and contests for audience members, e.g. for the most impressive headwear or the largest potato babka in the world.

Variety Market (April – Septembers)

Organiser: Łomża Town Hall, Stary Rynek 14, phone no.: +48 86 2162463, ratusz@um.lomza.pl

The market is organised every month, starting with the Easter Market. Organised every month, starting with the Easter Market, the Variety Market is a place where you can purchase homemade products, baked goods, cold cuts, cheeses, honey, but also the works of local artists and craftspeople, such as paintings, sculptures, leather products, jewellery, lace, embroidery, etc. The purpose of the market is to promote local food, healthy lifestyle and regional products.

Łomża Days (June)

Organiser: Municipal Culture Centre – Creative House, ul. Wojska Polskiego 3, phone/fax no.: +48 86 2163226, +48 86 2164553, e-mail: sekretariat@mdk.lomza.pl

A series of events commemorating the anniversary of granting municipal rights to Łomża, including various concerts, exhibitions, performances, markets, festivities and contests.



Podlaskie Voivodeship Light Aircraft Championships,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

"Joy From Under the Hat" Hanka Bielicka tribute eloquence contest (March)

Organiser: Parish of the Holy Cross, ul. Zawadzka 55, phone no.: +48 86 2168905

The youth contest is a tribute to Hanka Bielicka, a great Polish theatre, film and cabaret actress. Its purpose is to nurture the love of the mother tongue and underline the need to cultivate the culture and purity of the Polish language, and to showcase Hanka Bielicka as a mistress of monologue.

Kurpie Culture Days, Nowogród (June)

Organiser: Regional Culture Centre in Łomża, ul. Małachowskiego 4, phone no.: +48 86 2190111

Kurpie Ensembles Competition at the Narew River Two days of celebration of the Kurpie folklore with folk music, storytelling, dancing and singing. The Kurpie ensembles perform near the Adam Chętnik Kurpie Open Air Museum in Nowogród. The competition is accompanied by a fair and demonstrations of folk arts and crafts.

Podlaskie Voivodeship Light Aircraft Championships (September)

Organiser: "Kontakty" weekly, al. Legionów 7, phone no.: +48 86 2164243

Gyrocopters, microlights, ultralight airplanes, paragliders – the annual event brings all those types of aircraft to the skies above Łomża.

Other events: A Star from the Sky (January), Children's Literature Days (April), Long Night of Museums (May), J. Kulka Poetic Competition (May), The One Poem June Competition culminating in the final event named Poets' Afternoon (February – June), Long Night of Libraries (June), Jan Stypuła Polish Community Youth Games in Łódź (June), "Juwenałia" Student Culture Week (June), Soundtrack Festival (September), "Wirująca Strefa" All-Poland Dance Contest (October), Ms Hania's Friends (November).

Sports and leisure

MOSiR (Municipal Sports & Leisure Centre), ul. Zjazd 18, phone no.: +48 86 2150605, www.mosir.lodz.pl

Water sports and leisure complex

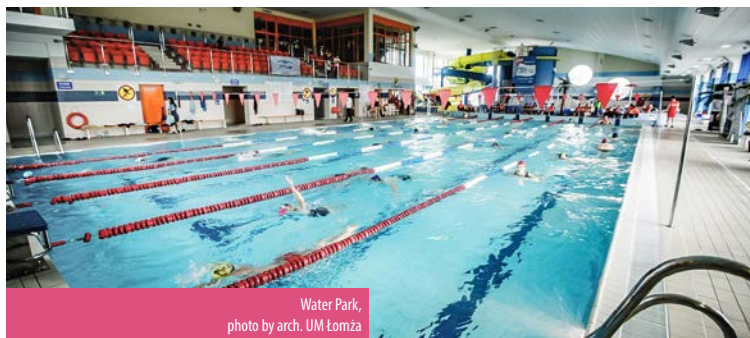
Water Park, ul. kard. Stefana Wyszyńskiego 15, phone no.: +48 86 2180692, e-mail: plywalnia2@mosir.lodz.pl. The water park includes a swimming pool, two water slides, water jets, a waterfall, hydro massage, jacuzzi, a sauna, a whitewater river and several underwater

geysers. On the first floor, you will find table football, table tennis, a playroom, and SPA with dry and wet sauna, a salt cave, a graduation tower and jacuzzi. The complex is fully accessible for guests with disabilities. Water park opening hours: Mon–Fri 6.00 AM – 10.00 PM, Sat–Sun and holidays: 8.00 AM – 10.00 PM SPA zone opening hours: Mon–Fri 4.00 PM – 9.45 PM, Sat–Sun 12.00 PM – 9.45 PM.

Municipal swimming pool, ul. Niemcewicza 17a, phone no.: +48 86 2160108, e-mail: plywalnia1@mosir.lodz.pl. The swimming pool complex includes swimming lanes with a stand for spectators, a recreational pool with a water slide, a fountain, a waterfall, a bench with water jets, jacuzzi and a sauna. The complex is fully accessible for guests with disabilities. Opening hours: Mon–Sat 8.55 AM – 8.55 PM. Sauna opening hours: Mon–Sat 4.00 PM – 8.55 PM.

Sports and leisure complex

Port Łódź, ul. Żydowska 10, phone no.: +48 784001446, +48 86 2237267, e-mail: port@mosir.lodz.pl. Port Łódź is a sports and recreation area at the Narew river. The port has a harbour



Water Park,
photo by arch. UM Łódź



Park of John Paul II – The Pilgrim Pope,
photo by arch. UM Łódź

for fishing boats and sailboats, water equipment rental, bike rental, a boat lift, an outdoor gym, bike and walking paths, a camping site with full sanitary facilities, a children's playground and a barbecue site. Opening hours: Mon–Sun 7.00 AM – 8.00 PM.

Park of John Paul II – The Pilgrim Pope in Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego street is one of the most popular recreation sites in Łódź, with

alleys with benches and playgrounds among diverse greenery, where everyone can have a good time regardless of their age.

Municipal stadium, ul. Zjazd 18, phone no.: +48 86 2150012, e-mail: stadion@mosir.lodz.pl. Football and track & field stadium with two stands with 3,500 seats (one stand has a roof) and training facilities. At the stadium, there is a hotel and tennis courts.



Municipal Stadium,
photo by A. Babieli

Sports and leisure area in Osiedle Konstytucji 3 Maja, ul. Konstytucji 3 Maja, phone no.: +48 86 2150605. The area has a skate park and a ramp, providing one of the best roller-skating and skateboarding spots in Poland. There is also a public climbing wall, a multi-purpose sports field, several cycling paths, a large children's playground and a backlit fountain.

Skate Park, ul. Księżnej Anny. Sports facilities complex with tennis courts, a squash court, a football pitch, handball, basketball and volleyball

courts, table tennis, chess tables, a gym, a miniature golf course, a children's traffic park, playgrounds, a roller-skating ramp, bike paths and a small amphitheatre. You can also see a sculpture commemorating the landing of Pope John Paul II in 1991.

"Biały Orlik" seasonal ice-skating rink,

ul. Katyńska 2, phone no.: +48 728998317, e-mail: stadion@mosir.lomza.pl. The ice-skating rink is open in winter from December to March. There is a skates and skating aids rental shop, and changing room. Opening hours: 9.30 AM – 9.30 PM.

Ski resort in Rybno (10 km from Łomża), Rybno 16, phone no.: +48 608526676, e-mail: rybno@jda.pl, www.rybno.pl. The ski resort can be reached by municipal bus line no. 4. Five ski lifts and five pistes. The pistes have lighting and snow machines. The resort has a ski rental and service shop, a ski school and a bar.

Tourist Information

Tourist Information Points

Hala Kultury, Stary Rynek 6, e-mail: pitlomza@um.lomza.pl

Łomża Landscape Park of the Narew River Valley, Drozdowo, ul. Główna 52, 18-421 Piątnica Poduchowna, phone/fax no.: +48 86

2192175, e-mail: lpkdn.drozdowo@wp.pl, www.lpkdn.wrotapodlasia.pl, opening hours: Mon–Fri 8.00 AM – 4.00 PM.

Useful addresses

In case of emergency: Regional Ambulance Station, Szosa Zambrowska 1/19, phone no.: +48 86 2166215, operator: +48 86 2162116, fax no.: +48 86 2163063, open 24/7

Łomża City Police Headquarters: ul. Wojska Polskiego 9, phone no.: +48 86 4741212 (duty officer), 997,112, office of the Łomża City Police Commander phone no.: +48 86 4741100, fax no.: +48 86 4741215

City Watch: ul. gen. W. Sikorskiego 176a, phone no.: +48 86 2156756–58, working hours: Mon–Fri 07.30 AM – 3.30 PM

State Fire Brigade City Headquarters: ul. Sikorskiego 48/94, phone no.: +48 86 2161365, fax no.: +48 86 4741363, press officer: phone no.: +48 86 4741365

Medical care: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński Voivodeship Hospital: al. Piłsudskiego 11, phone no.: +48 86 4733900, operator: +48 86 4733900, fax no.: +48 86 4733624

ŁOMŻA

TASTE
THE TOURISM



photo arch. UM Łomża

*A walking tour
through the town*

Route 1. Around the Old Market Square

pl. Pocztowy – ul. Dworna – pl. Jana Pawła II –
ul. Sienkiewicza – ul. Dworna – ul. Giełczyńska – Old Market
Square – ul. Farna – ul. Woźniowska – ul. Krzywe Koło –
ul. Zjazd – pl. Kościuszki – pl. Pocztowy

The exploration of Łódź begins at Pocztowy Square. Though it is not the heart of the town, it is easy to find a parking spot here and set off sightseeing. The square was an important resting stop a century and a half ago – this is where carriages stopped en route along the Kaunas route from Warsaw to Petersburg. The visitors, just like tourists nowadays, headed for the town centre from here. The heart of the town is submerged in greenery from spring onward. Łódź residents are accustomed, but visitors will find the wooded squares and well-maintained, colourful flower arrangements distinctly pleasurable.

Pocztowy [Postal] Square is named after the building located in the south-western frontage of the square, which, of course, houses a **post office** ①, built in the years 1843–44. The neo-classical building had initially only one floor, the additional storey being added in 1912. It is worth emphasising that it has continued to serve its

original purpose – that of a post office – until now. Once, the building also housed guest rooms that offered accommodation for visitors.

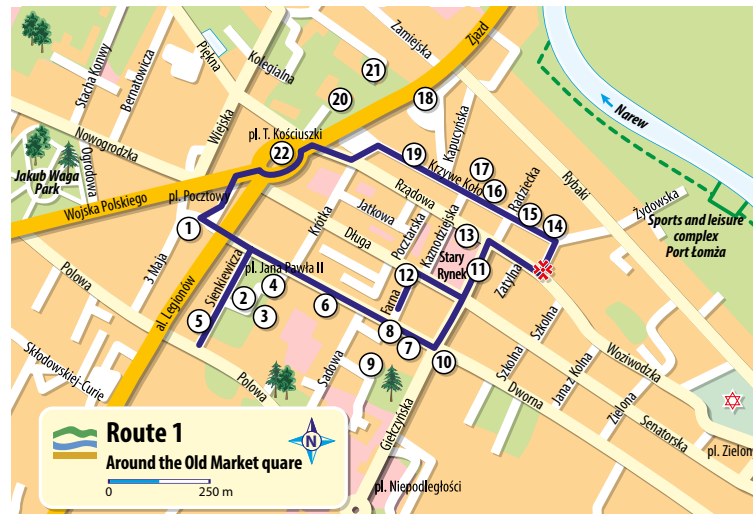
The square itself was laid out a few years before the construction of the post office, in 1838. As one can easily imagine, it had a different name then. It was called Correctional Square, after the architecturally dominant Correctional Police Prison of the Łódź Department (the building was dismantled in the interwar period). When a more representative building was erected in the area, the square was renamed Pocztowy Square.

Wojska Polskiego Street, which was laid out around 1817, penetrates the square from the north. At the time it was part of the Warsaw-Petersburg route, also called the Kowieński route. The route, connecting east and west, was one of the most important European transit arteries. Naturally, numerous celebrities reached Łódź via this route, such as the Russian tsars. From the 1840s onwards, visitors arriving to town would pass a well-maintained municipal garden, the present Jakub Waga Park (see page 68). Half a century later, Fort IV became the landmark signalling the town's proximity (see page 75). Its embankments, overgrown with trees, have been preserved. Today, a tall and entirely modern church tower attracts the attention of the arriving visitors. The saint patron of the church – St Bruno of Querfurt (see box page 19) – is closely associated to the ancient history of the town.

Back to Pocztowy Square. In the past, it extended beyond the border of Wojska Polskiego Street and also comprised the square on its opposite side. The first cinema in town was built at this square a century ago. Unfortunately, the building, with its original architecture and a promising name – Mirage – did not survive to our times. A pity since it was indeed unique. Its Art Nouveau style, with two towers flanking the main façade was nothing like contemporary boxy multiplexes. Nowadays,



Mirage Cinema,
photo by arch. UM Łódź



- | | |
|---|--|
| ① Neoclassical post office | ⑫ Hanka Bielińska's monument |
| ② Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary | ⑬ Market Hall (Culture Hall) |
| ③ John Paul II monument | ⑭ Stone steps |
| ④ Governor's Palace, now a Catholic seminar | ⑮ Napoleon's Gate |
| ⑤ The Śledziwski Mansion, 19 th –20 th century | ⑯ Former Saint Fidelis College |
| ⑥ Historic town houses at Dworna Street, 19 th –20 th century | ⑰ Capuchin Monastery and the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows |
| ⑦ Cathedral of Saint Michael the Archangel, 16 th century | ⑱ Amphitheatre |
| ⑧ Primate Stefan Wyszyński Monument | ⑲ Pastor's House |
| ⑨ Bishop's Palace | ⑳ Former Male Grammar School |
| ⑩ Museum of Northern Mazovia | ㉑ Dormitory |
| ⑪ Town Hall, 19 th century | ㉒ Monument devoted to Tadeusz Kościuszko |

the corner of Wojska Polskiego and Nowogrodzka Streets, features a monument of Stach Konwa (see page 69), near the square.

In order to see the most interesting historical part of the town, you need to head in the opposite direction to the busy Legionów Avenue that borders the square. You go down the stairs near the post office, reach the avenue, cross it, and

turn in the direction of **Dworna [Courtly] Street** (sometimes also called Court Street), which unfolds from the stairs. Previously, the street used to lead to the castle (see page 60), hence its name. In 1820 the street was widened, and even though the castle had ceased to exist, its name remained. Being more than adequate, the street continued to be filled with elegant (courtly) buildings that



Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
photo by G. Gwizdon

housed financial and banking institutions. The cobble-stoned street goes uphill (attention! – it is a one-way street and you cannot enter it from Legionów Avenue), and since it is one of the handful that partially survived war destruction, a few magnificent buildings can still be admired (see below). First, however, several dozen metres farther, you reach the green **Jana Pawła II [John Paul II] Square**. It was laid out in 1877 during the construction of the Orthodox Church and was called the Synod Square. In accordance with the tsar policy, the Orthodox Church had to be located in a visible spot in Łódź, which was then the capital of the Russian empire's governorate. The square was supposed to serve merely as a representational background for the church. The



Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary – the altar...

Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity – the present **Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** ② – was built in a Byzantine style that was foreign to the Polish land. It was crowned with five towers and domes, the sixth dome being placed on the bell-tower added from the front after 1913. The Orthodox Church was mostly used by incoming Russian officials; otherwise, there was no Orthodox population in Łódź and its vicinity. When Poland regained independence, the church became a military church for the 33rd infantry regiment stationed in Łódź (a monument placed on the square commemorates the unit). Even though the corner towers and domes were liquidated during the reconstruction, the interior has preserved several elements of the Orthodox Church. They include, for instance, wall paintings in the side naves described in the Church Slavic language (e.g. *Uspenie*, i.e. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or Saints Peter and Paul) that were revealed during the conservation works. The tiles on the floor are also authentic. The present altar is a reference to the stylistics of iconostasis, absent from Catholic Church design.

In 1989 the square was renamed after **John Paul II**. His **monument** ③, made by well-known sculptor Gustaw Zemła was placed here. Another representative building of the tsar Łódź is visible behind the Pope's back – **the Governor's**



...and a fragment of wall paintings,
photo by R. Zubkovic



A beautifully renovated Śledziewski Mansion,
photo by G. Gwizdon

Palace ④. It was built after 1866 and was made adjacent to the mansion previously erected on Dworna Street (it is worth noting the date carved in stone from the street side). After the

First World War the palace was purchased by the Catholic Church and turned into a seminary. In 1925, shortly before the seminary students moved in, the building was expanded. Another

Romeo and Juliet of Łódź

This is the title of Maria Kaczyńska's book (Łódź, 2008) which tells a tragic love story that is well-known in Łódź. The title's Romeo is Leon Kaliwoda, commander of the Polish Military Organization, Juliet – Halina Jarnuszkiewiczówna, was a student at the Łódź commercial school. Both happened to be raised in the last years of the partitioned Poland, and became involved in the liberation movement, having gained previous experience in scout teams. Leon was merely 20 years old when in 1917 he was sent from Warsaw to Łódź in order to take command over the 10th District of the Polish Military Organization. Here he met Halinka, five years his junior. Passionate times of forging independence brought them equally passionate love, however, fate did not favour them. On November 11th, the day we now celebrate the regained independence, Leon died from one of the last bullets to be fired in the battle. Although the Germans left town that evening, it was a dark day of despair for Halinka. Several weeks later, she took her own life with a gun at the grave of her beloved. She was buried in the family grave, but that same night, her body was secretly transferred to Leon's.

The residents of Łódź founded a monument at Kaliwoda's grave in 1933; however, the tragic fate of the girl did not stir their sympathies. At a modest tombstone, adjacent to the monument, lies a brief statement which reads: "Halinka Jarnuszkiewiczówna, daughter of Adela and Wacław, died on January 21st, at the age of 16".



Still charming – the gate and the balcony at 5 Dworna Street,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

reconstruction took place in the 1980s. The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which the residents of Łomża describe as a 'youth church', is also associated with the church university.

Before you continue along Dworna Street and exit the square, it is worth taking a look at **Sienkiewicza Street**. Cobble-stoned and pleasantly shadowed by a lane of lime trees, the street invites you for a stroll. It features two distinctive, renovated mansions: nos. 8 and 10. Both are an example of a very successful reconstruction. The **Śledziewski Mansion** is located closer to Polowa Street (no. 10) ⑤. The building, erected at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, was seriously damaged by a fire a century later. Now renovated, it inspires awe as one of the most elegant mansions in town. A **plaque commemorating Leon Kaliwoda**, a commandant of the Polish Military Organization who died here, is placed on the ground floor (see box page 47). The memory of the meritorious officer cadet, who greatly contributed to the scout

movement, is still alive in Łomża. Further on, at Polowa Street, the Square named after Kaliwoda, features a monument commemorating the scouts who died for their motherland.

It is time to return to Dworna Street and have a closer look at its architecture. The ornamented gate to house no. 5 guards the entrance to an interesting, picturesque yet rather neglected long annex. It feels like time has stopped here. The **stately façades** on the right side of **Dworna Street** ⑥ present a completely different image from Jana Pawła II Square to Sadowa Street. The appearance of mansions reflects the metropolitan aspirations of the town at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Behind the building of the present seminary, we find the admirable **Kowalski Mansion** (no. 8). It was built in the years 1909–10 and belonged to wealthy carpenters who had their workshops in the annex. Other elegant buildings (nos. 10 and 12) belonged to the **Trade and Industry Bank** before the Second World War. The institution was established in 1926 by Romuald Bielicki, father of the famous actress, Hanka Bielicka. He must have had a flair for business, since before the war the bank boasted the considerable – at the time – capital of 2.7 mln zł (according to gold prices of 2009, it would have been about 40 mln zł). The neighbouring mansion (no. 14) also owes its appearance to a financial institution. It used to



A representative building of District Court,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Dworna it is

Dworna Street not always carried its historically neutral name throughout the 20th century. It was first renamed in 1934 after Bronisław Pieracki, a general and the minister of interior affairs, assassinated that year. In 1940, a time in which the Soviets felt at home in Łomża, they named the street 'Soviet Street' in order to honour themselves. In 1949 the initiative went a step further, and for seven years the street was named after the Generalissimo Stalin himself. In 1956 during the Thaw period after Stalin's death, the date July 22nd was added to the street name plaques. It was only in 1989 that the name Dworna [Courtly] Street duly returned to the map of Łomża.

house a branch of **Russian State Bank**. The inside features stuccos and woodwork from the time of the building's construction (1910–12), which can be found near the staircase where one of the bank is located. In front of the mansion, slightly indented in relation to the street, stands a **bust of Bohdan Winiarski**, a professor associated with Łomża and banking. During the Second World War Winiarski was head of Polish Bank in Exile, and in the years 1961–64 he became the chairman of the Hague Court of Justice.

Nonetheless, the most representative mansion at the street is the building constructed in the years 1907–09 by the **Łomża Industrialist Loan**



The oldest landmark of Łomża – the cathedral,
photo by G. Gwizdon

A walking tour through the town

Bank (no. 16). The institution was established in 1885 and offered loans for economic enterprises, thus, it had an impact on the town's development. Although the interest rates on the loans were not high, the bank could still afford to build a three-storey, elegant main office building. At present the building houses a District Court. It was carefully renovated, with great attention to detail. Iron circles harnessing horses, attached to the rusticated stones at the ground-level, are worth attention. This representative row at Dworna Street ends with the **1909 corner mansion** (no. 18). It used to house the Commercial School and the Szymon Goldlust Jewish Grammar School.

A spacious 1879 **cathedral house** is located behind the intersection with Sadowa Street. Until the construction of new buildings in the beginning, it was the most magnificent mansion in Dworna Street. Passing it by, you enter a square which features the most important historical monument of Łomża – the **Cathedral of Saints Michael the Archangel and John the Baptist** ⑦. The church, erected in the years 1504–25, was founded by Duchess Ann the Mazovian and her sons. Thus, it is not only the oldest historical monument in town, but it is also the oldest monument in north-eastern Poland (in addition, the building has never been significantly damaged). The church is a pseudo basilica, i.e. the main nave is not sufficiently tall in relation to the side naves to feature its own windows.



Unusually beautiful vaults of the main nave,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

Approaching the cathedral from the west, you first notice the upper part of the pediment, which, despite the substantial late Gothic features of the church, has a Baroque appearance. It dates from a reconstruction conducted towards the end of the 17th century. During the latter reconstructions of the building, a choir (mid 18th century) and a neo-Gothic sacristy were added, while the bell-tower vault was turned into the Chapel of Saint Casmir (19th century).

The spacious church is 53 m long. Artistically ornamented tombstones attract attention inside. It is worthwhile to start sightseeing from the southern (right hand-side) nave near the main entrance. Its first pillar is ornamented with a 16th-century tombstone of the parish priest Jan Wojslawski, from the time when the church construction was completed. A 6-metre **tombstone of Andrzej**

Modliszewski, starost of Łomża and Kolno, and his wife, Elżbieta, is embedded in the wall of the nave. The Modliszewskis had a chance to see their post-mortem effigies, since they were completed in their lifetime – in 1589. The founder wished to be dressed in armour, while his wife is presented in long gowns and a coif. Cartouches with the family coat of arms together with allegorical reliefs of virtues are located next to the lying figures. A noteworthy **tombstone of Anna and Hieronim Modliszewski** is placed in the rear part of the northern nave. Their son, Andrzej, whose aforementioned tombstone is situated on the opposite wall, made sure his parents were deservedly commemorated. In 1591 he founded a magnificent tombstone for them, with the former tombstone of Hieronim embedded in the grave. You might recognise the son among the three children kneeling near his armoured father. Another member of the Modliszewski family is also commemorated nearby – Jan, son of the starost of Łomża who died in 1588. He is presented as a half-naked child with symbols of the passage

How the bishop saved the cathedral

Upon their retreat in 1944 the Germans decided to blow up the cathedral – the tall building could be used as a reference point for the Soviet artillery. In an attempt to prevent this, Bishop Stanisław Łukomski suggested to the officers who came to inform him that they should only blast the tower and the roof. The officers refused, so the bishop requested a moment of prayer in the cathedral. When he returned he was carrying two rosaries in his hands. He handed them to the soldiers and said that they would return home safe and sound if they left the church intact. The officers, who the bishop knew were Catholics, grew stern. The faith in the bishop's words turned out to be stronger than their faith in the victory of the Third Reich. They thanked the bishops for the rosaries and left. The church survived.

time – an hour-glass which he holds in his left hand and a scull that he leans against with his right shoulder. The Modliszewski tombstones were made of sandstone, unlike the **monument of Nikodem Kossakowski** that was carved in dark marble. The deceased was a cup-bearer and starost of Łomża, Ostrowa, Kolno and Kupiska, Colonel at the battle of Kirchholm and the delegate to the Tatar Khan. After his death (1609) his wife founded his tombstone. The walls of the church are covered with other less magnificent epitaphs of noteworthy characters of the history of the town and the region. Let us mention the tombstones of Adam Chętnik, indefatigable enthusiast of the Kurpie region and founder of the open air museum in Nowogród (see page 52); priest Kazimierz Lutosławski of Drozdowo, member of Polish Parliament and co-founder of the Polish scouting; or the aforementioned Bohdan Winiarski (see page 49).

The church became a cathedral in 1925 when Łomża became the seat of the diocese. A grand moment in the history of the church and the



Bishop's Palace,
photo by G. Gwizdon

town was John Paul II's visit, which took place on June 4th–5th, 1991. During the visit, the painting of the Madonna of Łomża was crowned and moved to a chapel adjacent to the southern nave – also consecrated at the time. This oil painting dates from the 16th century; it was painted on wooden board by an unknown artist. Also noteworthy in the cathedral are altars dating from the 17th century (in the chapel of Madonna of Łomża, Saint Casmir's altar at the pillar on the right hand-side, and Saint Joseph's altar right next to it), and other altars from the 18th century.

One cannot miss the **Primate Stefan Wyszyński Monument** ⑧ in the vicinity of the church. Its presence here has a significant meaning – the future head of Catholic Church in Poland attended grammar school here in Łomża. The south and west of the cathedral is surrounded with curia buildings. Among the most representative is the **Bishop's Palace** ⑨, built in 1925 after the establishment of the diocese. In order to get a full view of its neoclassical façade, it is best to stroll into Sadowa Street. Continuing along Dworna Street, behind the cathedral and the intersection with Giełczyńska Street, you reach a three-storey mansion with a truncated corner. It was built in the end of the 19th century. Before the diocese of Łomża was established, the future priests would study here in the years 1919–25. When the seminary was transferred to the expanded Governor's

A walking tour through the town

Palace (see page 46), a school was established in the building. The students moved out from here in 2005, and 22 Dworna Street was transferred to the **Museum of Northern Mazovia** ⑩. The museum has exhibitions on amber, ethnography, archaeology, coin collections, arts, artistic crafts and local history. The most popular exhibition is "Amber in the Narew Basin". The collection documents the lesser known phenomenon of fossil amber existence in the Kurpie region, and its presence in the folk culture. The collection boasts both specimens of fossil tree resin and the traditional tools used to process it, as well as amber products manufactured by the Narew region's amber jewellers. The visitors will most certainly see an exhibition devoted to the town's history and a collection of kerosene lamps. The museum staff also plan to exhibit a collection of folk sculpture. The museum owes its existence mostly to Adam Chętnik, the aforementioned region enthusiast, an amber expert as well as founder of the open air museum in Nowogród. When the open air



Museum of Northern Mazovia,
photo by B. Deptuła

Adam Chętnik

A person like him could be dubbed a “Titan of work”, or a one-man institution. Adam Chętnik was born in 1895 near Nowogród, and he worked as a journalist and social activist already in his teenage years. When Poland was on the verge of regaining independence, he became involved in the liberation movement. He became a member of parliament but soon abandoned politics, convinced he could achieve more in the field of ethnography. He opened the Kurpie Museum in Nowogród in 1927, and a few years later successfully established the Scientific Research Station of the Middle Narew Basin. In the interwar period he published dozens and dozens of scholarly research publications and nearly 500 press articles devoted mostly to the Kurpie region. They are of considerable value due to their substantial field work. He died in 1967 and was buried in his beloved Nowogród.

museum burnt down during the war, Chętnik moved to Łomża where he revived the Scientific Research Station of the Middle Narew Basin. The institution was called the North-Mazovian Institute, one of their objectives being to create a regional museum. It was opened in 1948. Thus in 2008, after a fourth move to a more spacious building, the museum celebrated its 60th anniversary.

The **Old Market Square** is not far away from the museum. Giełczyńska Street will take you there. This vast (100 x 120 m) and representative square existed as early as the 15th century. Although it has changed greatly throughout the centuries, it has always been dominated by the **Town Hall** ⑪. It is not, however, the seat of town councillors which was known to have been situated in the middle of the square. The present town hall dates from the years 1822–23. It is a neoclassical symmetrical

building, with a tower over the entrance to the office building serving as its main axis. After the recent renovation (2005–06) the building was restored its former glory and the crowning dome was reinstalled on the tower – it was present in the original design of Aleksander Groffe (chief



The Old Market Square is dominated by the town hall, photo by G. Gwizdon

Amber from the Narew

How did it get here? A legend, recorded by Adam Chętnik, who initiated the Łomża amber collection, says it came from human tears. People used to find it on the surface of the ground, or unearthed it while digging out wells and ploughing the fields. They could have not known that it is in fact Baltic amber that travelled to north Mazovia in glaciers. Nonetheless, they appreciated the qualities of the fossil tree resin and learnt how to search for it e.g. they extracted from the bottom of rivers and ponds by means of nets or shovels (apparently, amber was well visible at night at the light of a torch). *Jantar* [another Polish term for amber] became a permanent feature in the Kurpie region's ornamental tradition. Local amber jewellers manufactured diverse ornaments out of it, using hand lathes or specially adapted spinning-wheels. A truly fashionable woman of Kurpie had to have at least three strings of amber beads. It wouldn't hurt if she could also boast amber buttons, earrings, even an amber rosary... Fossil tree resin was also used as a medicine and functioned as an informal monetary currency.

A walking tour through the town

architect in the Kingdom of Poland). The corner of the building features a plaque commemorating long-term president of the town (1918–34) Władysław Świdorski. A neoclassical mansion – erected about 1860 – can be found on the left side of the authorities' abode, and on the right side – a modern building created on the site of the town hall's annex that was dismantled in the 1980s. The main entrance to the town council is located here.

Despite their unquestionable charm, the arcaded houses in the southern frontage of the square do not deserve the status of historical monuments. They were built in the 1950s and their façades fashioned in a pseudo-Baroque style. One of the buildings houses the **Pod Arkadami Gallery**, showing works of local photographers and painters.

Behind the houses, it is worthwhile turning for a moment to **Farna Street**. It is not very long and has the character of a promenade – free



The always smiling Hanka Bielicka, photo by G. Gwizdon

from car traffic. This is one of the oldest streets in Łomża – as of the 16th century it connects the parish church with the main square of the town. In the recent years, Farna Street was ornamented with cobble stones, stylish lamp posts and benches, with the participation of the residents. In such pleasant surroundings you are greeted by **Hanka Bielicka** (see box), i.e. a **monument** of the famous actress ⑫ who spent her youth in Łomża. Bielicka sits on a bronze bench and looks

Miss Hanka's Hats

“My name is, ladies and gentlemen, Hanka Bielicka. I come from the town of Łomża, I was born there in nineteen hundred...” – this is how Hanka Bielicka started her song “We’re from Łomża”. In fact, the artist was born in the territory of the present Ukraine (1915), to which her parents were evacuated during the First World War. However, she was attached to Łomża from beginning to end. Hanka's father was the founder of the Trade and Industry Bank, but also (and perhaps above all) he was a member of the liberation movement, a member of the Polish Parliament and a meritorious social activist. His famous daughter graduated from the Łomża Grammar School, and then graduated before the outbreak of the war from the Romance philology department and the State Institute of Theatre Arts in Warsaw. She had her stage debut in a theatre in Vilnius, Lithuania, although she herself admitted that her first performances took place in the Łomża Rowing Club. After the war she became affiliated with the Siren Theatre in Warsaw. She was known for her temperament and her love for broad-brimmed hats. She won the hearts of spectators with her performance in “Tea at the Microphone” as Dziunia Pietrusińska, “a city-country missy with a seriously disturbed sense of her roots.” She captivated audiences with her humour and distance to herself, despite her old age. This is best illustrated by her last television appearance in the Szymon Majewski show. She then said, “Today's evening will be under the title – Play, children, play, before grandma flies away”. It was to be few days before her death (she died on March 9th, 2006).

The monument at Farna Street proves that the residents of Łomża love their compatriot. How could one not love a person who sang, “We’re from Łomża, and Łomża is a pearl among the towns, it is the most beautiful star, among the stars”?

smilingly towards the market square from under her broad-brimmed hat.

Almost nothing survived of the historical buildings on the western frontage of the market square extending from Farna Street. The town walls, salvaged from the war damage have been covered by new elevations. The northern frontage of the market is overshadowed by a building erected in the 1920s – **the Market Hall 13**. It was constructed in order to organize the commerce that once flourished in the market square. It was rebuilt after the war and is still used by merchants today. Only two mansions survived the war devastation (nos. 8 and 10), and are hidden by the hall in the northern frontage of the market. Both date from the 19th century.

The north-eastern corner of the market square extends into **Radziecka Street**. The name may



Stone steps Krzywe Koło Street,
photo by arch. UM Łódź

Where did Woźniowka [Water-Carrier] Street come from?

The answer to that question can be found in a passage from the 1930s memoir by Jerzy Smurzyński (*My Łódź*, in: *Ziemia Łódzka* [“Łódzka Land”), vol. 7, Łódź, 2003) “And the water-carrier? You cannot picture my Łódź without him. Although a handful of houses had local water supply systems, the main supplier of water was the water-carrier. His one-horse cart had a large barrel installed horizontally – instead of the regular side boards – which was most often painted green. The bottom of the barrel had a wooden tap with an – usually – also wooden bucket hanging from it. The water-carrier filled his barrel with crystal clear spring water and distributed it all day around the town, carrying the buckets himself to the apartments”.

evoke associations with the former Soviet Union; however, it is much older. The street used to lead to the town hall where the town councillors debated [*rajcy radzili*], hence the name of the street.

The name of the next street – **Woźniowka** – is less controversial. In the old days, water was brought into town via this road. The street goes downhill. After a hundred or more metres you reach a viewpoint that overlooks a vast panorama of both the Narew valley and the town of Piątnica located on the opposite shore. Where the undeveloped area begins, concrete stairs lead down the slope of the ancient river valley. You go down the stairs unto cobble-stoned **Krzywe Koło Street**. It is divided into two parts – the lower in the Narew Valley and the upper on the high river bank – that are picturesquely connected by **stone steps 14** which recall the early 20th century. Following the steps you reach another elevation. Above, on the right side the characteristically arched **Napoleon’s Gate 15** can be observed. The French emperor himself,

during his sojourn in Łódź, is believed to have stayed overnight in the house behind the gate. Whether this is true or not is hard to tell, yet another historical figure is positively known to have lived at Krzywe Koło Street. The one-storey building near the steps used to house a private boarding school dormitory. One of its residents in the years 1915–17 was Stefan Wyszyński, the future primate of Poland who, on his 1966 visit to Łódź remarked that “It was here, in Łódź, where my priesthood calling was shaped”.

The surface of the street ceases to be cobble-stoned after several dozen metres. The tall building of **Saint Fidelis College 16** emerges on the right side. The college, nationalized after WW2, currently houses the Jański College (Uczelnia Jańskiego). The magnificent building was attached to the adjacent **Capuchin Monastery and the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows 17** in 1925. The order itself arrived in Łódź in 1764. The monks’ first settlement was then called Popowa Mount. A three-wing monastery was built there in the years 1770–72. In a sense it is even older, since the bricks for its construction came from a dismantled Gothic church in Stara Łódź (see page 84). The modest church was constructed in the years 1788–89. The interior is small, with four Baroque altars segmented by pillars with



Capuchin Monastery,
photo by arch. UM Łódź

arcades leading to the sacristy and chapel (added in the mid 19th century). The monastery buildings surround the church from both sides, together with an oval wall form a church courtyard, where, during the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of baptism of Poland, a figure of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa was placed.

Strolling along Krzywe Koło Street, you pass the steep, downhill Kapucyńska Street. Its higher portion still features historical cobble stones. Previously, the street led to the port and the bridge at the Narew. In the **amphitheatre 18** located below, open air events are held with audiences sitting at the naturally shaped Narew slope. A noteworthy **Pastor’s House 19** i.e. the former Protestant vicarage, is located behind the intersection with Kapucyńska Street. The 1889/1890 building was erected for the pastor of no longer existent Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession. For several years it housed the Museum of Northern Mazovia (see page 51). Today, it is the lively Center for Tourist and Cultural Activity (Centrum Aktywności Turystycznej i Kulturalnej) where people who are passionate about culture, arts, history and science meet and operate.

Protestants arrived in Łódź mainly because it was part of Prussia. In 1853 they received a former Piarist (and previously Jesuit) church from the authorities, to be turned into an Evangelical church. The church does not exist any more – it was blown up by the Germans in 1944. It is worth mentioning that Józef Piłsudski signed his act of conversion to Lutheranism in this very church. He did so in 1899, eager to marry Maria Juszkiewiczowa (see box page 56). Piłsudski visited the town once more – on August 23rd, 1920 – this time as a Catholic. He returned to the Catholic Church in 1916 when the Legions fought at the eastern front. His second visit to the Narew town was associated with a counteroffensive against the Soviets.

Dmowski, Piłsudski and a beautiful lady

Everyone knows that Roman Dmowski, who spent the last years of his life in Drozdowo near Łomża, was a political opponent of Józef Piłsudski. It is far less mentioned that they both adored the same woman – Maria Juszkiewiczowa. Some more courageous historians claim that it was the rivalry for her affection that caused unfriendly relations between the politicians.

Juszkiewiczowa was a divorcee. Her first marriage, which she entered at the age of 17, did not last long. After her divorce she moved to Warsaw, and since then became involved with conspiring activity. After one of her arrests, she was ordered to return to her birthplace – Vilnius. Her house became the centre of meetings, conversations and debates. Finally, among the guests of the beautiful lady's (as Maria was called by her friends) salon, appeared Józef, who also lived in Vilnius, and then Roman, who visited the town in the years 1893-95 – during his political exile in Latvian Yelgava (then Mitava). Nothing came out of Dmowski's love (although according to Roman Giertych, whose grandfather was a good friend of the author of *Modern Poles' Thoughts* [Roman Dmowski]; "Dmowski had an affair with this woman"), Piłsudski on the other hand married Juszkiewiczowa. In order to marry a divorcee, he had to convert to Protestantism. He did it, signing the appropriate act in the Evangelical church in Łomża on May 24th, 1899. On July 15th Maria and Piłsudski got married in the Evangelical church of Paproć Duża, 35 km south of Łomża (the church does not exist anymore). The beautiful lady did not remain happily married for a long time – in 1907 Piłsudski became involved with another woman.

Behind the magnificent Gromada hotel, adjacent to the pastor's house, is **Zjazd Street**, perpendicular to Krzywe Koło Street. It was laid out in the 1850s in order to facilitate the town's access to the river passage. The street became a part of the Warsaw-Petersburg route. The former alternative transit through Łomża was rather tortuous and, as it turned out, dangerous. In 1844 the

future Russian successor to the throne Alexander II, while travelling with his wife in a carriage, had a serious accident at the steep Kapucyńska Street. According to preserved records, it promoted the modernization of the access to the Narew passage. Some buildings were demolished and the main route was connected – via the New Market Square – to a levee leading to the bridge,



The view of Łomża from the direction of Piątница,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

and thus, the ensuing route came to present the least complicated course.

In order to minimize the gradient of the slope, the first part of Zjazd Street led through a trench. The noteworthy building of the **Male Grammar School** (20) is located on the top of the slope, high above the road. This neo-Renaissance building has been, since its construction (1900), affiliated with education – currently, it houses High School no. 2. Some students live in the nearby **dormitory** (21). It is located in the house built at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries by photographer Tyburcy Chodźko, who fought in the January Uprising and upon return from exile settled in Łomża, actively participating in the town's life (more information at www.bs3.lomza.pl).

Next, turn in the opposite direction from the river and you will soon reach **Kościuszki Square**, i.e. the New Market Square. It was laid out in the 17th century when the town expanded eastwardly. A Jesuit church and college were built then at the river slope near the New Market Square. Being made of wood, they both burnt down in the same century. They were replaced by brick buildings. The church, built in 1732, did not survive WW2. The Łomża College (1754), one of the best schools of the King Stanisław II August Poniatowski epoch, was liquidated and dismantled even earlier – at the beginning of the 20th century. One of the most famous representatives of the Jesuit order in Poland, Saint Andrzej Bobola was affiliated with the college for a few years (1638–42). He was the dean's advisor and preacher. A remnant of the non-existing college building – a fragment of the wall – is incorporated into a historical fence of the high school, as the plaque informs.

After the Warsaw-Petersburg route was laid out through the New Market Square, new buildings were erected from scratch. However, they did not survive the last war. Nowadays, the centre of the market is

A walking tour through the town

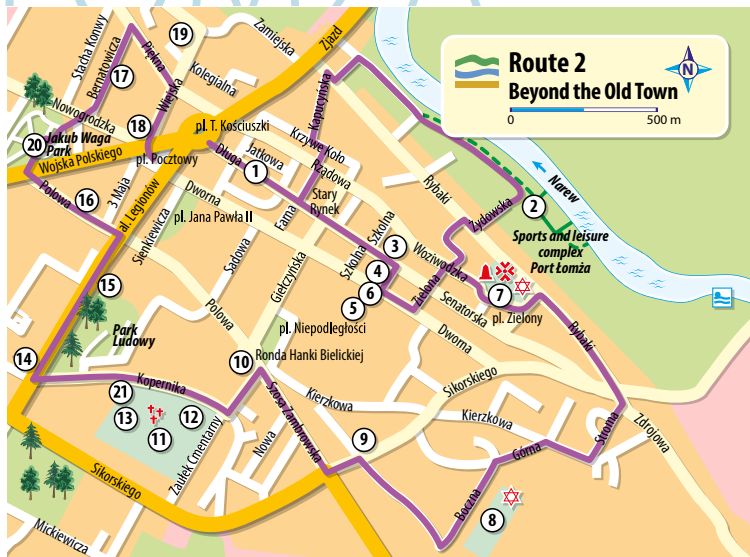
a square around which a rather busy roundabout was situated. A commemorative stone **monument devoted to Tadeusz Kościuszko** (22) was placed among the greenery on the 100th anniversary of his death (1917). The square was also given its present name at that time.

Pocztowy Square is not far from the roundabout. If the post office is open, you can send postcards here or you can set off to explore places located further away from the Old Market Square.

Route 2. Beyond the Old Town

ul. Długa – ul. Kapucyńska – ul. Żydowska – ul. Zielona – ul. Senatorska – ul. Jana z Kolna – ul. Dworna – ul. Zielona – ul. Woźniowska – ul. Rybaki – ul. Stroma – ul. Kierzkowa – ul. Górna – ul. Boczna – ul. Wąska – ul. Sikorskiego – Zambrowska Road – Hanki Bielińskiej roundabout – pl. Niepodległości – Zaulek Cmentarny – ul. Kopernika – al. Legionów – ul. Polowa – ul. Bernatowicza – ul. Piękną – ul. Wiejska

Until the outbreak of the Second World War, Długa Street was the most refined street in Łomża. A commercial-service artery, it connected the main points of the town – the New Market Square (the present Kościuszki Square) with the Old Market Square. Nowadays, a stroll along Długa Street makes you aware of how much destruction the war brought to Łomża. Nonetheless, the image of the street changes – revitalization work conducted by the local authorities has restored it to its former glory. Długa Street finally obtained a new road surface – basalt stone that integrates nicely with the commercial character of the promenade. Fitting, since Długa Street continues to remain a commercial street and leads to the Old Market Square, which houses the most important municipal institutions of Łomża.



- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Mansion at Długa street number 13 | 12 Mausoleum of the Śmiarowski Family |
| 2 Port Łomża – sports and leisure complex | 13 Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre |
| 3 Former Jewish hospital | 14 Music school |
| 4 Advertising column | 15 Folk House |
| 5 Church of the Holy Trinity and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary | 16 Former military hospital |
| 6 Benedictine nuns' convent | 17 Former Female Grammar School |
| 7 Old Jewish Cemetery | 18 Former Hospital of the Holy Spirit |
| 8 New Jewish Cemetery | 19 Stach Konwa monument |
| 9 Water tower | 20 Jakub Waga monument |
| 10 Puppetry and Theatre | 21 Lapidarium |
| 11 Old cemetery | |

The first historical mansion at **6 Długa Street** was built in 1892. The three-storey building, with greatly detailed ornamentation is eclectic in style. The second mansion, at **number 13** 1, attracts attention with its bright elevation festooned with six intricately wrought iron balconies. The building houses three important municipal institutions. The upper floors are taken up by the **Municipal**

Public Library, which dates from the 19th century. About 100 square metres of the ground floor are used as an exhibition space by the **Modern Art Gallery**. This is a significant site on the cultural map of the town. From 1992, when the gallery became part of the Museum of Northern Mazovia (earlier it was part of the Artistic Exhibitions Bureau), it has hosted nearly 500 individual and



The renovated, historical "Number 13" at Długa Street, photo by G. Gwizdon

group exhibitions. **The Brothers Waga Łomża Scientific Society** was named after brothers Antoni and Jakub Waga, born in Łomża, who were famous 19th-century naturalists is also located on the ground floor of "number 13". The organisation promotes regional culture and supports scientific research through lectures and seminars. It collects materials about the Łomżyńska land and the Kurpie region, and is also a publishing company (among others, it publishes a scientific journal *Studia Łomżyńskie* ["The Łomża Studies"]). The library of the association boasts nearly 15,000 volumes – the richest collection of the publications about the region. A special emphasis should be placed on the Piotr Bańkowski library (1,900 books), which the professor, historian, archivist, cofounder of the association left to the association in his will. In addition, the association inherited a valuable collection of china, paintings and furniture. In 1993 the Bańkowski collection was registered as a historical monument.

The most popular spot in the city for locals and visitors **Port Łomża** 2, a green sports and recreation area, popularly referred to as "bulwary". It can be reached from the street Kapucyńska or Zjazd, where for a parking area for 48 vehicles has been arranged. This charming green site is visited not only by those interested in sports activities, but

A walking tour through the town

also strollers eager to observe wildlife or enjoy the meandering Narew from the deck of a gondola or kayak. Pay attention to the unique location of Łomża on a high slope and the site of the historic location of the town a few kilometers away.

The recreational area is one of the three stages of a development project and their great potential for tourism is conducive to extend the tourist season in the city and in the region. You can return to the center of the Old Town along Żydowska and Zielona Streets.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War, the synagogue of Łomża was located in the corner of Giełczyńska and Senatorska Streets. It was a magnificent, eclectic building, designed by



The commemorative plaque dedicated to the Jews of Łomża, photo by R. Zubkowicz

Jews in Łomża

Until the outbreak of the Soviet-German war (1941), Jews were almost half of the population of Łomża. The first records mention Jewish presence in town in 1494. Half a century later, more precisely in 1556, Jews were prohibited residence within the town, this prohibition being repeated toward the end of the 16th century. The *de non tolerandis Judaeis* privilege, implemented in the royal towns was designed to protect Christian merchants against competition. Since they were not allowed to reside in Łomża itself, Jews settled in its vicinity, e.g. in the village of Rybaki (today a street within Łomża). The foreign administration issued formal permission for the Jewish return to national towns (the former royal towns) only in 1822. From that time onwards, the Jewish population in Łomża grew rapidly. In the first decades of the 20th century, the Jewish community had at its disposal a magnificent synagogue, yeshiva, hospital and a few schools, and published a few newspapers. Jews also had their own political parties. This all ended when the Germans invaded Łomża in June of 1941. Immediately after their arrival in town, the Nazi Germans established a ghetto and by September they murdered several thousand Jews in the nearby forests, e.g. near Giełczyn and Ślawiec. The liquidation of the ghetto took place in November 1942 – the Jews who were still alive were shipped to the camp in Zambrów, and then to the death camp of Treblinka.

The roots of Israel's former president, Chaim Herzog (1918–97), who visited the town in 1992, are well worth mentioning. His father, Isaak Herzog, was born in Łomża. Isaak, still a toddler and his parents left Łomża for Great Britain. He then became the chief rabbi of Ireland and in 1937, when he moved to Palestine – the chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi community.

Enrico Marconi, a famous 19th-century architect. Adjacent to the synagogue was a yeshiva, a rabbinical school. One of its students for some time was Icek Farbarowicz, native of Wizna, notorious prewar criminal and author of detective stories. He began writing when imprisoned, under the literary pseudonym, Urke Nachalnik. Persuaded by Melchior Wańkowicz, he published his autobiography *A Criminal's Curriculum Vitae* (postwar edition: Łódź, 1989), he also published in American magazines. His literary career was interrupted by the war: he was shot dead by Germans in 1939 for rescuing the Scrolls of the Torah from a burning synagogue in Otwock.

A **commemorative plaque dedicated to the Jews of Łomża** is placed several dozen metres behind the site of the former synagogue, on the right hand side of the street. During the war the main gate of the ghetto was – approximately – located here. This was when Nazi Germans established the ghetto between the following

streets: Woziwodzka, Żydowska, Senatorska and the Old Market Square, excluding the town hall. The bronze plaque's shape resembles a Jewish tombstone. In the upper, semicircular section, the Star of David is surrounded by a Hebrew inscription: "To the Eternal Memory of the Jews from Łomża Land".

Another building associated with the Jewish community is located at Senatorska Street, behind the intersection with Szkolna Street – namely, the **Jewish hospital** ③, which is currently used by High School no. 3. The place is a significant site on the historical map of the town – this is where the **royal castle** was located. The street ended at its main gate and led to the courtyard. The southern periphery of the castle, located on the slope of the Narew Valley, extended to Dworna Street. The castle was built by the Mazovian Dukes; then it was expanded in the 16th century and turned into a royal castle and the abode of the starosts. Unfortunately, the residence was demolished in the

It seemed like it was the end of the world

The memoirs of Sister Alojza Piesiewiczówna (*The Chronicle of the Benedictine Sisters of the Holy Trinity Abbey in Łomża (1939–54)*, Łomża, 1995) contain a description of the convent bombing. It happened on September 8th, 1939: "At about 2 pm numerous aeroplanes, like a flock of black birds hovered over our convent. There were 17 of them. Suddenly a terrifying explosion was heard – a crash of broken beams, a horrifying stench and dust storm filled the air. The convent was being bombed. The moment was horrible, difficult to describe. Five devastating bombs fell on various sites of the convent. Almost the entire roof collapsed. The nuns, until now scattered throughout the convent, began to flee in panic and terror from the hail of the falling bombs, beams and bricks of the collapsing buildings. It seemed like it was the end of the world". In addition to the bombs that fell on the convent buildings, thirty more bombs exploded in its territory. A few-day-long bombing devastated the entire vicinity. One nun was killed.

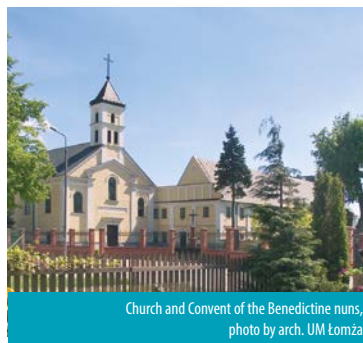
17th century – a tragic period for Łomża. The brick treasury lasted the longest, until 1824; regrettably, it was also dismantled.

Turning behind the high school building into Jan z Kolna Street (named after a half legendary figure, a sailor who is said to have reached America before Columbus and to have come from a town 30 km from Łomża) you soon reach Dworna Street. Its corner features a characteristic **advertising column** ④ crowned with a dome. Starting from the second half of the 19th century, the town authorities posted decrees containing the most important regulations as well as posters with information about the coming cultural events on such columns. Three columns of the sort have

been preserved in Łomża, the other two being located at Pocztowy Square.

The Church of the Holy Trinity and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary ⑤ and the buildings of the **Benedictine nuns' convent** ⑥ are located on the other side of Dworna Street. The Benedictine Nuns of Perpetual Adoration arrived in Łomża in 1628. Initially, they lived in wooden buildings adjacent to the church at the so-called Popowa Mount. In the 18th century, however, they sold their property to the Capuchin monks (see page 55) and moved to their present location (which at the time was a convent farm on the so-called Stokowa Mount). The brick church was erected in the years 1857–63. At the same time, the brick, western wing of the convent was built, while the other two remained wooden. In September of 1939 all these buildings were destroyed.

After the war, the convent complex was rebuilt and all the buildings made of brick. The church itself is oriented eastward, rectangular in design with an isolated presbytery. The reconstruction of war damages was finally completed in 1997, when the tower crowning the pediment was reconstructed. The interior does not have an antique character. Nonetheless, there are a few objects worth mentioning, among others, a Baroque **crucifix**



Church and Convent of the Benedictine nuns,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



A view of Narew river near Łomża,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

in the main altar, which dates from the first half of the 17th century. Pride of place is taken by the **painting of Our Lady of the Snows** (circa 1630). The Benedictine nuns brought the painting from their mother convent in Toruń. The image, located in the side altar of the nave on the left hand side, was greatly worshipped, this being manifested by the numerous votive items and the dress made out of them. Until the outbreak of the Second World War, great ceremonies in honour of Our Lady were held in the church, and the July 16th (Feast of Our Lady of the Scapular) services were

attended by numerous pilgrims from the Kurpie and Mazovia regions.

It is worth it to take a stroll from the convent to the **Old Jewish Cemetery** ⑦ (turn left from Dworna Street into Zielona Street, cross Senatorska Street, then turn right into Woźniowska Street – the cemetery is several dozen metres). It was most likely established in 1820, even before the Jews obtained formal permission to settle in Łomża. It is located on the slope of the Narew valley, which gives it a particularly enchanting quality and makes it one of the viewpoints within the

Our Lady of the Snows

In the Holy Land, on the territory of present-day Israel, snow is a rarity. Why then such a description of an image of Our Lady? It is associated with a legendary event that took place in the 4th century in Rome. Pope Liberius was given an order in his sleep to build a basilica dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The building was supposed to be located on the site indicated by snow, which in the Eternal City was almost as rare as in the Middle East. On the night of the 4th to the 5th of August, the snow covered Esquilin Hill, one of the Seven Hills of Rome, indicating the location for the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore. The legacy of the story is illustrated by the tradition of pouring white rose petals from the ceiling of the basilica on August 5th on the church Feast of Our Lady of the Snows.

How to read the grave symbols

Jewish religious tradition forbids the representations of human figures, and the prohibition extends to graves as well. In order to present the deceased person, the tombstones were covered with symbolic reliefs, usually of biblical origin. **Hands raised in a blessing gesture** refer to a **Cohen**, a person from the priestly tribe. A **water jug** is a symbol of the Tribe of Levites who served in the Temple, and e.g. washed the hands of the priests. **A hand throwing a coin into money-box** symbolizes a person who supported the poor. **Candles** (often broken as the sign of the broken continuity of life) or a **menorah** (seven branch candlestick) ornament the graves of women, whose main religious duty is to light the Sabbath candles. Other ornaments of female graves include a **sheep, pig-geon or bird**, which indicate female names: Rebecca, Taube (or the masculine Yonah), Feygl. A **lion, deer, bear or wolf** refer to male names – Leyb, Hirsch, Ber and Wolf. **Grapes** symbolize the people of Israel. The meaning of **the scrolls and books** is easy to deduce – they refer to Torah and Talmud scholars. Similar significance is attributed to the **crown** – in synagogues it is placed on the scrolls of the Torah. Placed on a tombstone, it indicates the deceased person's love for the Torah.



One of the tombstones at the Łomża Jewish cemetery,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

town. The present cemetery is a result of the reconstruction carried out in the 1980s. The preserved tombstones were reinstalled vertically, in three groups, and a path was laid out through the cemetery. This is one of the most interesting Jewish necropolises in north-eastern Poland, considering the number of the preserved tombstones (about 150) and their characteristics – they were made

from the local material, glacial erratic stone. Relief letters and sculptures on the tombstones are another characteristic feature.

You leave the cemetery and walk downhill along **Rybaki Street**, located at the bottom of the Narew slope. Its name comes from the name of a village which was annexed to the town in 1832. There is a reason why the Jewish cemetery is located in this neighbourhood: at the time when Jews were not allowed to reside in Łomża, they lived in the suburban village of Rybaki. The remnant of that time is Żydowska [Jewish] Street that intersects with Rybaki Street (extending from Krzywe Koło Street), which leads to the former passage and port at the Narew river.

Nowadays, Rybaki is connected to Łomża by two bridges. You walk in the direction of Sikorskiego Street, which leads to the so-called



An enchantingly located old Jewish cemetery in Łomża,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

new bridge. The **public beach** on the Narew is located in its vicinity. Now, you need to manoeuvre among the small streets leading through the calm neighbourhoods of single-family houses, in order to get to the eastern outskirts of the town (you cross Sikorskiego Street, head towards Stroma Street, then into Kierzkowa, Górna and Boczna Streets). A **New Jewish Cemetery** ⑧ is located at the back of the estate at **Boczna Street**.

The cemetery was established in 1892. About 500–600 tombstones and their fragments have been preserved. The tombstones are under the care of both the town authorities and the Foundation for the Jewish Cemetery in Łódź, established in the United States. In the recent years the territory has been cleaned up and the collapsed tombstones stood up. Therefore, despite the previous destruction, the current condition of the cemetery (and the old cemetery at Rybaki Street) is good. The former funeral house

is located on an unenclosed part of the terrain on the opposite end of the cemetery. A small street leads to the house from Wąska Street, which used to also lead to the cemetery (the address of the cemetery is at Wąska Street).

Wąska Street leads to Sikorskiego Street, where another characteristic structure is located – a **water tower** ⑨. A water tank is located in its upper part and covered with bricks. The tower was erected on one of the highest points in town, and therefore dominated it (it is particularly visible, when you look at Łódź from the opposite shore of the Narew). Thanks to such location, the water pumped into the tank could then be distributed gravitationally. The tower was built in 1954, and until 1992 it served its purpose as the municipal water supply system.

From the water tower, head in the direction of a roundabout at the intersection of Sikorskiego Street and Zambrowska Road, and leave the tower behind. You turn right and see important local government institutions located at the section toward Niepodległości Square, such as the County Administrative Offices and a branch of the Podlaskie Voivodship Office, as well as the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Social Insurance Company. The street leads to **Hanki Bielickiej Roundabouts** – two subsequent intersections dedicated to the memory of the famous actress (see page 53). The artist is commemorated not only by the name, but also by the make-up of the site: the roundabouts resemble her favourite piece of clothing – hats ornamented with flowers (the roundabouts have shaped, floral arrangements that are carefully tended to by the municipal services).

Honouring Bielicka has been doubly successful. Not only because there are two roundabouts, but because a key institution of culture in Łódź – **the Puppetry and Theatre** ⑩ is located between them. The theatre was established in 1987 and until today it holds a key position in European



Water tower,
photo by G. Gwizdon

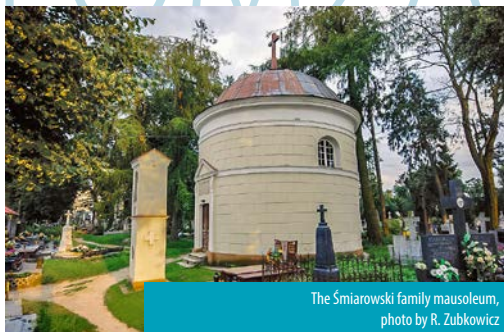


Flowerbed shaped like one of Hanka Bielicka's famous hats,
photo by arch. UM Łódź

puppetry, which is manifested by its numerous artistic tours and awards. The repertoire always offers several plays for children. The performances are usually based on high quality dramatic texts (often commissioned by the theatre) and are created in cooperation with the most distinguished directors, set designers and musicians. The International "Suitcase" Theatre Festival takes place annually here, in June. The theatre also features a café and a set design gallery. The building is dominated by a **tower**, a good viewpoint which recalls the building's prior purpose – a fire brigade station.

The theatre is located at **Niepodległości Square**, although it is separated from its main part by a green square. In the beginning of the 20th century when the square was laid out, it was called New America. Perhaps it was associated with its commercial nature (although the present Kościuszki Square also had such a name); since, when in 1928 the market hall was established on the Old Market Square, all the stall-keepers

and vendors moved to New America. What one could find in the sellers' stock is suggested by one of the names once used – Pig's Market (it was also called Zambrowski Square). After the war, in the 1960s the town authorities established the PKS bus station on the square, and then an **honorary pulpit**, from which – according to the spirit of the time – speeches were delivered – for instance during the May Day Parade. The pulpit still stands on the square, so with some imagination one can feel like a dignitary from an earlier epoch. A few historical mansions from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries are also worth mentioning. The building on the northern frontage of the square was once a mill (the mill was located in the courtyard). The commercial traditions of the place are illustrated by a row of market halls from the 1920s. The so-called **bishop halls** were built for Polish merchants, who at the time strongly competed with Jewish retailers. In recent years, the town authorities have organized an **ice rink** in



The Śmiarowski family mausoleum,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

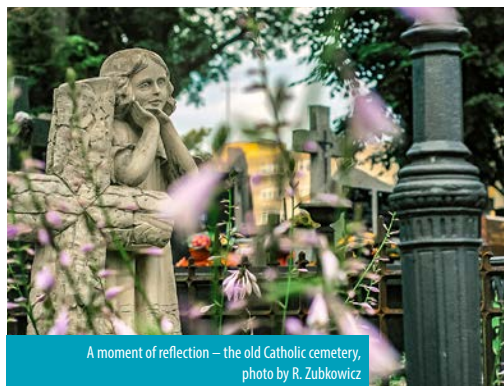
the square. A flowery composition in the shape of the coat of arms of Łódź and a large inscription with the town's name are an original ornament of the place in spring and summer.

You return to the theatre and head towards *Zaułek Cmentarny* [Cemetery Alley]. It leads – in accordance to its name – to an **old cemetery** 11, one of the most enchanting and treasured necropolises in Poland. It contains as many as 560 historical tombstones of various types. The initiative of establishing a cemetery here, “half a verst” beyond the town at the time, came into

sections were discontinued in the first half of the 20th century and in 1977 their area was taken over by the communal cemetery.

First of all, the cemetery is beautifully wooded with centenary trees. The lime tree alley, cutting through the Catholic part is particularly enchanting. Three gates lead to the cemetery from Kopernika Street. The most representative is a neo-Gothic **main gate** dating from 1879. Further on, a funeral house from the mid 19th century is embedded into the cemetery wall. The **Mausoleum of the Śmiarowski**

Family 12, founded in 1838, is located in its vicinity. The building, shaped as a rotunda is adjacent to a more recent bell-tower and the gate in the cemetery wall. Another, neo-Roman gate with a small tower leads to the former Protestant cemetery. In 1844 Protestants built a cemetery chapel whose roof span faces Kopernika Street. Its original form has faded away as a result of numerous reconstructions, and it currently houses the



A moment of reflection – the old Catholic cemetery,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

being in 1798. It is therefore one of the oldest entities of the type on Polish land (the famous *Warsaw Powązki Cemetery* was consecrated in 1792). Technically, it should be considered a cemetery complex, since in addition to the largest Roman Catholic section, there are also Protestant and Orthodox sections located in the north-western part. The burials at the non-Catholic

A walking tour through the town



Music school, a prison complex legacy,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

funeral house. The 1910 neoclassical **Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre** 13 is the Orthodox legacy. Nowadays, it is used by the Catholics for funeral services. An **Art Nouveau metal chapel**, located in the north-western corner is particularly interesting. A **lapidarium** 14 established next to it features Orthodox tombstones and their

fragments, deposited here, since the Orthodox cemetery encompassed a larger section of the necropolis.

A stroll around the cemetery shows how much emphasis was once placed on the sepulchral art. Artistic tombstone figures, details which the sculptor's chisel took out of the sandstone and cast iron crosses have an entirely different feel than the contemporary graves. Perhaps due to artistic aspects of the

cemetery, Łódź residents generously support the collection for the renovation of the historical tombs. Many noteworthy people that contributed to the history of the town and its vicinity are buried here, such as Jakub Waga (1800–72), a botanist from the vicinity of Łódź, author of *Polish Flora*, or writer Feliks Bernatowicz (1786–1836).

Bruzda's escape

Captain Jan Tabortowski, pseudonym *Bruzda*, commanding officer of the Łódź Home Army Inspectorate was one of the inmates of the Łódź prison. His escape from prison is recalled in Jan Orzechowski's book *Lest Memory Be Lost* (Rajgród, 1997): “In the month of November we learnt that *Bruzda* (Major Jan Tabortowski), together with the commandant of the Łódź district *Lipiec* and several other Home Army soldiers were arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in the Łódź prison. He told us about his rescue at a meeting in the end of January of 1943. The rescue was carried out as follows: a contact was established with the imprisoned through a prison guard named Górski. Górski and his daughter delivered the weapons and the forged prison cell keys to the arrested soldiers. On the night of the 12th to the 13th of January, 1943, the inmates left the cells, terrorized the prison staff and got through to the external side of the prison wall. For the sake of *Bruzda's* safety, the commandant of the district, *Mścisław*, sent him to a new post – inspector of the 4th Suwałki Inspectorate”.

After the war Tabortowski participated in numerous military actions, e.g. 200 men under his command besieged Grajewo in May of 1945. Despite the amnesty (1947), he was still wanted by the authorities and in 1950 went underground once again. He was in hiding with others at the Biebrzańskie Swamp. He is considered the last Home Army soldier to have died in action. It took place in Przytuły in the present Łódźski County.

From Kopernika Street you enter the main artery of Łomża – Legionów Avenue – and you see a red-brick building hidden behind the trees. Nowadays, the sounds of musical instruments flow from its windows, since the building houses a **music school** (14). Decades ago however, the atmosphere of the place was quite different. The building is a remnant of a large prison complex that the tsar authorities erected in the governorate town. The prison was used during and immediately after the Second World War, when members of the underground conspiracy were kept here. This is commemorated by a plaque in the wall and a monument dedicated to the Home Army soldiers in the front. The former prison complex also houses state archives.

The 1905 **Folk Park (Park Ludowy)** stretches on the opposite side of Legionów Avenue. In the first decades of the 20th century, it was a popular destination for Sunday entertainment among the residents of Łomża, who came here to listen to Łomża's orchestras. The park was established in the vicinity of the **Folk House** (no. 9) (15), which the tsar administration built in an attempt to promote Russian culture. The one-storey building lost its original style after additional floors were added in the 1920s, but it gained additional space for the students of the surveying school. The building houses a Lumber School Complex, which will shortly leave the historical monument and be taken over by the National Education Committee.

An interesting mansion from the mid 19th century is located at the intersection with Polowa Street. A former **military hospital** (16) from the end of the 19th century can be found further down



the street (no. 22). According to the plaque placed in the wall, when in 1975 Łomża became one of the 49 voivodship towns, the voivode had its main office in the former medical institution. Nowadays, the Association of Łomżyńska Land Enthusiasts has its offices here. The hospital at Polowa Street is not the only institution associated with the army. In the tsar times, the garrison Orthodox Church was located in the same street. It was later dismantled, giving way to the Soldier's House in 1929, which does not exist anymore. The building opposite the hospital itself housed the headquarters of the 18th infantry division in the interwar period, a fact commemorated by the plaque. Today the building belongs to the Podlaska Foundation for Regional Development. A few other historical mansions are located down Polowa Street, e.g. a corner mansion at the intersection with Wojska Polskiego Street.

Jakub Waga Park, located between the following streets: Wojska Polskiego, Ogrodowa, Nowogrodzka and Glogera, was established in 1842 as the municipal garden. It was fenced and well-maintained, with paths, floral arrangements and a cricket field. People in love would sit on the benches or in one of the romantic bowers. Much has changed since that time, but one can still

The scale of Waga [scale]'s work

Jakub Waga (1800–72), a botanist born in the vicinity of Łomża is most famous for his work titled: *Polish Flora of the Flowering Plants Species, i.e. Botanical Descriptions of Both Wild and Outdoor Flowering Plants of the Kingdom of Poland Systematized According to an Artificial Scheme and Preceded by a General Introduction to the Significant Natural Relations of the Vegetation Kingdom*.

Two volumes with almost 1,500 pages were published in the years 1847–48. It took him many years to complete the work, which was the first of such vast and systematized description of the Polish flora. The author worked in Łomża as a teacher and it is here that he completed his work, as he wrote in the foreword, "At long last, for the duration of the 60 regular excursions carried out with my students in the years of 1833–1839 in the environs of Łomża, I added, expanded or corrected things previously overlooked, or for dearth of sufficient evidence of fresh samples, inadequately described. This is how the present work hath come into being. Considering it completed, I hereby bequeath it to the enlightened audience of thine judgment. It encompasses over one thousand species of the flowering plants".

enjoy time here. As of 1967 the central part of the park features the **Jakub Waga monument** (20). The famous botanist is buried at the old cemetery (see page 66).

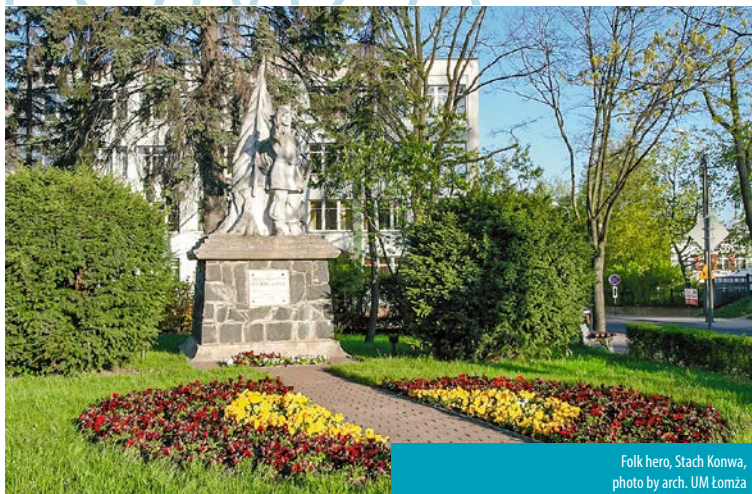
Bernatowicza Street, which turns away from Nowogrodzka Street in the vicinity of Jakub Waga Park, is also named after another historical figure associated with Łomża. Novel writer **Feliks**

Bernatowicz (1789–1836) often visited his brother who was a judge in Łomża. He portrayed the town and its vicinity in the novel *Madonna or a Mute Lover*, which is set in times of the Swedish wars. After his death, the writer was buried in the old cemetery. In 1892 an orphanage was established in the street – a red-brick building with a double pitched roof. Another famous place is the Secondary School

Stach Konwa

It is not certain whether he existed at all; nonetheless, he became a legendary figure of the Kurpie region. A peasant, allegedly born in Nowogród, he first became famous after his courageous participation in the 1708 battle against the Swedes near Myszyniec. When the Kurpie people supported Stanisław Leszczyński in the succession war, he commanded a division of Kurpie marksmen. At Jednaczewo, a few kilometres west of Łomża, Stach's division was defeated and he was captured. The supporters of August III Sas suggested he joined them, but he refused. He was hanged.

Konwa appeared in literature thanks to Adam Zakrzewski, the researcher of the Kurpie region. Historians suspect that Zakrzewski made up the character, since there are no documents confirming his existence. Another dubious fact is that his last name Konwa does not appear in the region – although, it could be a pseudonym assumed in fear of family persecutions. In the times of partitioned Poland and the liberation movement Konwa embodied the myth of a free and fighting Kurp, a folk leader. In the interwar period the figure became popularized by Adam Chętnik. At his initiative Stach's grave was erected in 1922 in the forest near Jednaczewo. It was destroyed during the war and then reconstructed in the Nowogród open air museum (see page 91).



Folk hero, Stach Konwa,
photo by arch. UM Łomża

Complex, that is, the former government **Female Grammar School** (ul. Bernatowicza 4) ⑪. The early modernist building was completed shortly before the First World War, and after its end, housed a Male Grammar School for a year (see page 57).

At the intersection of Wiejska and Nadnawiańska streets, you can see the historic building of the **Hospital of the Holy Spirit** ⑫ (opened in 1886) which today is used by the **Academic High School and the Medical Simulation Centre of the Łomża State University of Applied Sciences**. The former **police polyclinic** located at the corner of Kolegialna Street is also interesting. In this section, Wiejska [Country]

Street, as suggested by its name, is cobble stoned. Heading in the direction of Pocztowy Square, you will pass several mansions from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Unfortunately, their current condition does not meet the former governorate aspirations of the town.

At the end of the street we find the **Stach Konwa Monument** ⑬, in honour of the folk hero of the Kurpie region. The monument was established in 1958 during the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the town. A short man in a traditional hat with a rifle waves his fist in the eastern direction – it is easy to guess how this gesture was interpreted during the communism.



photo by arch. UM Łomża

Hikes
in the vicinity

Route 1. To Fortifications in Piątnica

Łomża – Piątnica – Łomża

You can explore the tsar's fortifications in Piątnica during a few-kilometre hike lasting two, to three hours. Zjazd Street, in the centre of Łomża, leads to the village – crossing to the other shore of the Narew River by the so-called 'old bridge'. The village is currently at a junction where national routes to Białystok and Augustów intersect.

PIĄTNICA boasts a rich history. The parish of the Transfiguration of Jesus was established here in 1407. Part of the village belonged to the Łomża parish church, hence its name Piątnica Poduchowna [Clerical] (in contrast to Piątnica Włościańska [Peasant] located in the eastern part of the village). At present, Piątnica is a municipality, famous for its local dairy plant. The village is dominated by a two-towered **church** built in the 1930s, repaired from the war destruction in 1953.

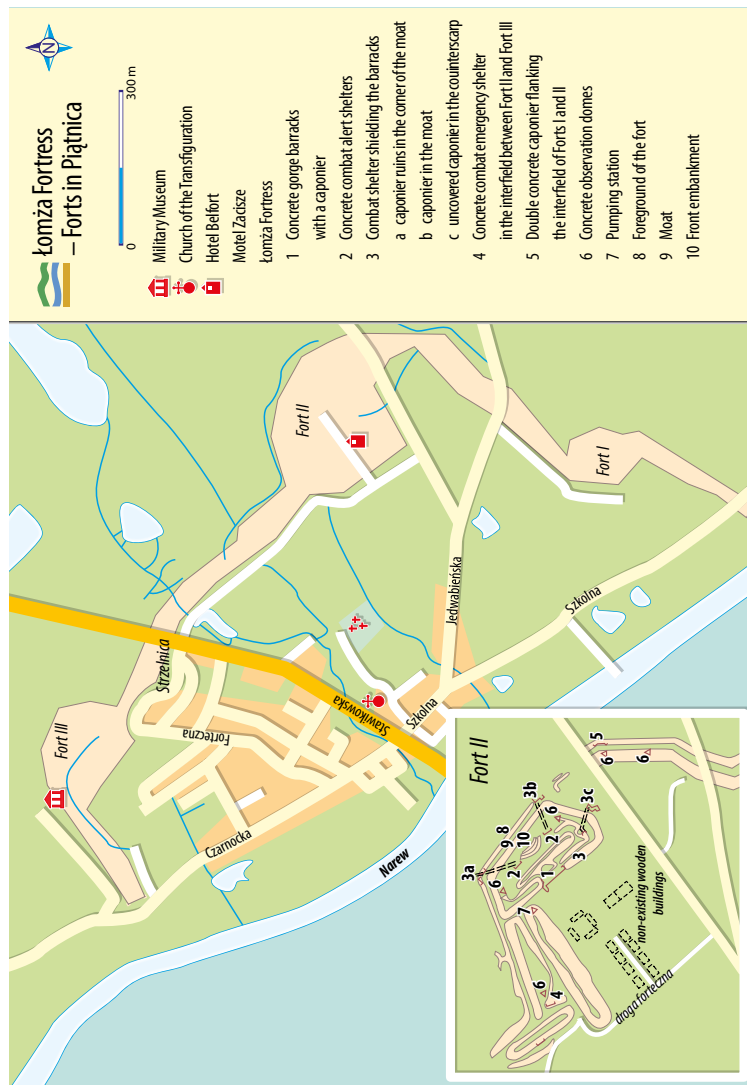
Since the beginning of its existence, Piątnica has been closely linked to Łomża. Its name is believed to have come from the five bridges that used to connect the Narew town with the opposite shore of the river. Although the bridges have not survived, the passage was considered significant enough to be fortified in the 19th century. Łomża was after all the governorate capital, and the Eastern Prussian border was located only 30 km away. In the late 1870s Russia



A church towering over Piątnica,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

seriously considered going to war with Germany. Łomża's first defences (a ring surrounding the town with five earthly-wooden fortifications) date from 1889. The 1900 modernization only affected three units on the right Narew river bank in the vicinity of Piątnica. The forts were connected by an earth embankment, located about 1.5 km away from the passage. In reality, Łomża did not become much of a fortress, but it gained a modern fortified bridgehead. The fortified design was similar to other projects implemented at the time in Russian Empire; e.g. a similar construction was built in Vladivostok. No wonder, since both fortifications were designed by the same architect and were located within the same country at the time.

The Russian army under command of General Aleksandr Samsonov set off from Łomża in 1914 and was then crushingly defeated at Tannenberg (the present Stęgbark). The fortifications enabled the Russian counter-offensive in the winter of 1915. However, when the German army attacked with great force in the summer, the tsar's crew abandoned the fortifications without a fight. Later, Poles defended themselves in the fortifications



Hikes
in the vicinity

Visiting the forts

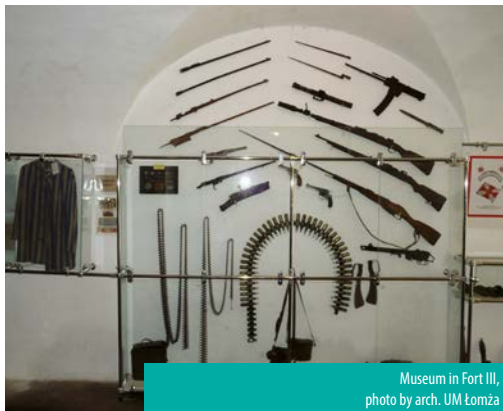
Forts are a rather specific landmark and it is best to visit them with an expert guide. It is worthwhile to contact Colonel Ludwik Zalewski, who conducts very interesting tours both in the area and in the small Military Museum (tel: 600039532, e-mail: ludwikzalewski@gmail.com). The museum is a private initiative that collects objects related to the history of the region – the oldest objects recall the time of the Swedish wars. The owner can also organize a trip to other fortifications at the Narew banks, e.g. defence structures built by Poles, Germans and Russians in the vicinity of Nowogród. In July, the Fort Club, an association of fortification enthusiasts, stages the 1920 fights against the Soviets which took place in the Piątnica.

In July of 1920, withholding the Soviet invasion for five days. The forts were once again used in the 1939 September defence. Before the outbreak of World War II, the fortifications were expanded with nine additional bomb shelters on the left Narew river bank and twelve smaller bunkers on the fortified embankments of Piątnica. The 33rd infantry regiment, the fortification squad, fought here from the 7th to the 10th of September. The Polish heroics inspired admiration even among their enemies. When the Narew defence line was broken in Wizna and Nowogród, the crew, facing a siege, withdrew. Fights over Łomża took place once more in the autumn of 1944.

Let us begin with **Fort III**. You turn left from Stawiskowska Street (direction: Augustów), opposite the Belfort hotel (following the "Klub Fort" road sign). You enter an old fortification road which used to connect parts I, II and III. Fort III is the most devastated one – a section of the gorge barracks was blown up. The existent, visible remains consist of huge, crushed concrete blocks. The preserved parts include the fort courtyard, surrounded

by military embankments, two shelters of the combat emergency units, a counterscarp gallery and a double caponier. The fort territory also features a recreational rifle range (www.strzelnicaforty.pl), and **Fort Museum** (see box), located in one of the emergency shelters.

To get to the largest **Fort II**, you need to cross Stawiskowska Street. The fort contains three counterscarp caponiers. One of them has been entirely exposed after the earth embankment of the fort's gorge and the eastern embankment were levelled. The gorge barracks have survived in the central part. Zigzagging lines of rifle holes made in the 1930s are visible



Museum in Fort III,
photo by arch. UM Łomża



A well-preserved Fort I in Piątnica,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

in the embankments. Fort II is private property, but it can be visited and some units have been renovated.

Various points on the fortification embankments offer great views of the Łomża and Piątnica panorama, all from diverse angles. Unfortunately, the embankment connecting Forts II and I has not survived at the section leading to the road to Jedwabne. On the other hand, it is well preserved on the opposite side of the road, with a bunker flanking the space between both forts and two small triangular domes belonging to the 1939 observation shelters (in total there are twelve shelters scattered around the embankments). Down the road to Białystok, the embankment is crossed perpendicularly by an old, cobble-stone road inside the internal side of the embankment, leading to **Fort I**. The fort, located between the roads to Białystok and Drozdowo, is the best preserved one. It was built as a mirror image of Fort III. The fortification road soon splits into two, its left branch running along the internal side of the embankment leads to

Hikes in the vicinity

the gorge barracks. The gates in the barrack section lead to the courtyard, where two emergency shelters can be found. The two counterscarp caponiers are also well-preserved. The embankment heading towards the Narew is almost intact, but the caponier embedded in it was destroyed. The fortification road that accompanies it from the inside leads to Piątnica Włościańska. 200 m further from an intersection on the left opens a road that

leads to the new bridge. This will take you back to Łomża.

For a complete fort experience, you can search for **Fort IV** on the other side of Łomża, about 500 m beyond the town's compact structure (ul. Wojska Polskiego, direction: Ostrolęka, on the road's left side). Overgrown with trees, the fort was not modernized in the previous century.

Fortification admirers can attempt to look for the **1939 Polish shelters** in town. There were nine of them, the peripheral ones built in the vicinity of Nowe Kupiski and Stara Łomża. Some of them were blown up or are located on private properties. An unfinished shelter is located beyond the western boundaries of the town (exit Nowogrodzka Street and then right into the road to Mątwa, about 120 m behind the petrol station). An open field bunker, used as a flanking fire exchange line is well visible north of Nowogrodzka Street (behind the intersection with Sikorskiego Street, access from Kanarkowa Street). The bunkers guarding access to the Narew bridge are located at Zamiejska and Zjazd Streets.

Route 2. Along the Narew and Biebrza Rivers

Łomża – Kalinowo – Drozdowo – Rakowo-Czachy – Rakowo-Boginie – Bronowo – Wizna – Ruś – Burzyn – Brzostowo – Jedwabne – Dobrzyjałowo – Kisielnica – Łomża

The route is about 80 km and travels through – with small exceptions – asphalt roads. It is recommendable as a whole day car/bicycle ride (though riders must be in good shape). Parting from Łomża, the best way to reach the opposite shore is across the so-called new bridge (Sikorskiego Street), leading to Piątka.

The first stop on the trail – **KALINOWO** – offers above all great views of Łomża. North of the village the valley ridge rises 60 m above the river level. In order to reach the viewpoint, you will have to walk 2 km along a road departing from the main asphalt road at a straight angle in the village centre. It is also worthwhile to get to the valley meadows, following the gravel road behind the fire brigade station. It almost reaches the Narwica River, a stream of the Narew separating the village from the main river bed.

The forest behind the village on the left side of the road comprises the **Kalinowo Nature Reserve** (see page 17). The forest communities



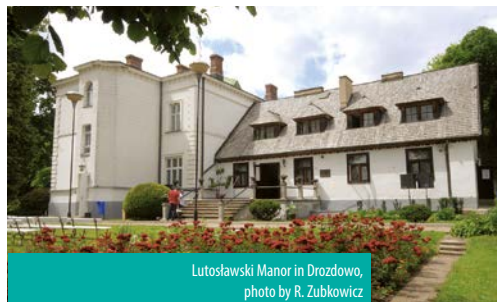
An idyllic landscape at the river,
photo by Podróżniczek

growing on the slopes of the river valley are protected here – an area of almost 70 hectares. Two nature trails cross the reserve, both being accessible from the road. Path II starts at the entrance to the forest at the beginning of the reserve (1.5 km long with three thematic stops), Path I (1 km with four thematic stops) starts about 300 m from the site where Path II ends. Towards its end, Path I takes you out of the reserve to the other side of the road, from which you can admire the open Narew Valley. Both paths run from **DROZDOWO**, where the offices of the **Head Management of Łomżyński Landscape Park of the Narew Valley** are located (ul. Główna 52). The building also houses the exhibition "Nature of the Narew Valley from Bronowo to Łomża". Temporary exhibitions on natural themes are also on show here.

The view of Łomża is magnificent

A poetic description of the river and its landscape can be found in Wacław Świątkowski's book *In the Narew Basin* (Warsaw, 1927): "Having absorbed the waters of the Biebrza, the Narew begins to flow vividly. Its descent grows steeper, the current is faster and the diverse shores are high and low. Its navy blue ribbon beautifully strains and bends in the green frame of the wide valley, flanked in the Kingdom of Poland by the high slopes on which Wizna, Łomża and Nowogród lie. ... The Narew flows in the narrow river bed among the vast valley like a dark-finned snake. It twists among the green carpet of the huge pastures. A view of Łomża from the river is magnificent. The town appears like an amphitheatre in the thicket of trees and gardens that rise from the sea of greenery with its towers and tall church roofs".

Hikes in the vicinity



Lutosławski Manor in Drozdowo,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

It is worthwhile to sojourn for a while in Drozdowo itself and visit the **Lutosławski Manor**. It houses the **Museum of Nature**. The building dates from the 18th century but its present appearance is a result of 19th-century renovation. The Lutosławski family appeared in Drozdowo in the late 18th century. In the same century, after Franciszek Saryusz Lutosławski's death, the estate was divided into Drozdowo Dolne (belonging to the Godlewskis, a family related to the second husband of the widowed Antonina Lutosławska) and Drozdowo Górne (property of the Lutosławski family, the manor itself has not survived). Franciszek Dyonizy Lutosławski (1830–91), who in 1866 bought Drozdowo Dolne and the manor back, contributed to the estate's growth. In addition, he

established a brewery, built a church and in his prime owned up to 2,500 hectares of land. He had six sons. Among them were: Wincenty (1863–1954), philosophy professor and a well-known writer; Stanisław (1864–1937), founder of the Commercial School in Łomża (1906) and of the Agricultural Syndicate which headed the Łomża branches of both the Gentry Bank and the Gentry Association, and Kazimierz (1880–1924), doctor, priest, member of parliament, cofounder of the scouting movement in Poland and the creator of the Scout's Cross. Famous composer Witold Lutosławski (1913–94), who spent his childhood in Drozdowo, was Franciszek's grandson and Józef Lutosławski's son.

Due to financial problems, the estate was auctioned and in 1937 the lower manor was bought by Maria Niklewiczowa (née Lutosławska). Mieczysław and Maria Niklewiczowie were closest friends with Roman Dmowski (see the box below), and they persuaded Dmowski to spend the last months of his life in the Narew manor. He died there on January 2nd, 1939. The funeral services began on January 5th in

Dmowski and Niklewiczowie

One can say that it was Roman Dmowski that made the match between the Niklewiczowie. The leader of the National Democrats was a close friend of Maria's parents – Sofityna and Wincenty Lutosławski of Drozdowo, and had political connections with Mieczysław (Mieczysław edited the *Gazeta Warszawska* [the "Warsaw Gazette"], which Dmowski was in charge of in the years 1910–16). The politician visited Drozdowo for the first time in 1911, when he was godfather to the oldest daughter of the Niklewiczowie (he was later asked to be the godfather to their son). Later on, he visited the Drozdowo estate several times and often stayed in the Niklewiczowie apartment in Warsaw. When in 1934 he sold his Greater Poland estate, he moved in to their Warsaw place for good. In June of 1938, critically ill after a stroke, he came to Drozdowo where he would die several months later.

the cathedral and streets of Łomża, and on January 7th, at least 100,000 people bid him farewell in Warsaw.

Upon visiting the Museum of Nature, it is worth mentioning that Roman Dmowski, Polish nationalism ideologue and an honorary president of the All-Poland Youth, received the title of natural science candidate for his thesis on ciliates. The plaque on the building's wall commemorates the

politician, whereas the exhibition "The Manor Salon" features e.g. his death mask. Portraits of the Lutosławskis hang in the interior, arranged in the style of the epoch. Nonetheless, the museum exhibition relates mostly to the Biebrzańska Dale, its flora and fauna (e.g. it boasts a collection of about forty ruffs, stuffed in their breeding plumage). The staircase is filled with a collection of hunting trophies, whereas the cellar of the house is used for temporary exhibitions. The museum also features aquaria with both exotic and local fish from the Narew River. The manor is surrounded by a 19th-century **park** that is great for a stroll. The manor and its vicinity became the scenery for the Music Days of Drozdowo – Łomża Festival that is held here in July. The park additionally offers an educational trail for children. It runs among century old poplars and wind-fallen trunks. Kids will enjoy puzzles, stamps and molds of wild animal tracks and the multimedia board with "the birds' clock". The trail is adapted to the needs of disabled persons and the educational aids have features useful to the blind: reliefs and Braille alphabet descriptions.

While in the village, it is worthwhile to visit the **Church of Saint Jacob the Apostle**,



Stylish museum interior, i.e. "The Manor Salon" exhibition, photo by R. Zubkiewicz

designed by Witold Lanci in 1878 and founded by the Lutosławskis. It has a neo-Roman style with a bell-tower adjacent to one of the corners. The original form of the vault inside is worth noting. There is also a plaque commemorating Roman Dmowski. The cemetery is towered by another sacred building associated to the Drozdowo estate owners – the mausoleum of the Lutosławskis, where e.g. priest Kazimierz Lutosławski and the Niklewicz couple are buried (Maria lived in the manor until 1978).

The Narew River constantly flows on your right hand side. In the vicinity of **RAKOWO-CZACHY** it reaches the edges of farms, placing the meadows of local farmers on the other side of the river. In order to get to the opposite shore, the farmers use the **ferry** located at the road behind the village. The vast Narew landscapes can be admired from the **viewpoint platform** (right at the road) behind the village of **RAKOWO-BOGINIE**.

The following village on the way – **BRONOWO** – is located on the two shores of a small Narew tributary, called the Łojewek River. A large **watermill** was built at the river in the 1920s and was then expanded in the 1950s. The building and the sluice gate have been preserved and can be accessed by

turning into the land road leading to the northern edge of the village – opposite the cemetery. The Szymański family, associated with Bronowo, were local folk activists in the first decades of the 20th century. The best-known Franciszek Szymański was a member of the Legislative Parliament (the first parliament elected after Poland regained independence) and member of the main board of the Polish Peasant Party "Wyzwolenie" [Liberation]. After his death (1924) he was buried at the local cemetery and commemorated by a plaque placed in the school building.

Although the route continues in the direction of Wizna, it is worth heading towards the Narew River in Bronowo. A gravel road leads to the **bridge** (about 1.5 km from the southern edge of the village). The Narew valley on the left side is wide and differs from the water gap section witnessed so far. The valley can be admired from the bridge level or from the **wooden observation tower** placed several hundred

metres behind the bridge. The Bronowo–Koty nature exploration path runs here (6 km along an unmarked land road), as does a bicycle trail that takes you to Łomża (it joins Route 3 in the village of Gać). The Path takes you through the low river land and is of great interest – especially to nature lovers. In spring you can observe the water and swamp birds (the area is home to the aquatic warble); however, during high water season it may be hard to access the path.

Wizna is a village with a long lineage; it is mentioned in records as early as in the 11th century. Looking at the map and examining the topography of the site, it is easy to comprehend why the burg had strategic significance. The castellan castle of Wizna, mentioned in 1170, guarded the eastern boundaries of Mazovia and the trade routes leading to Lithuania, Russia and Prussia. Wizna was then ruled by the Mazovian Dukes, who fought the Teutonic Knights over control of the town. The Teutonic Knights burnt



The view is much better from such a tower, photo by A. Babieli

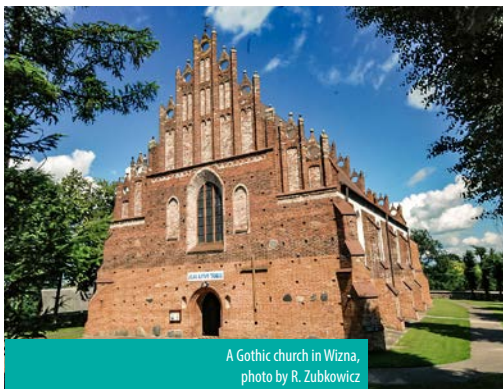
The Polish Thermopylae, that is 40 : 1

In the Second World War Wizna gave its name to the fortifications stretching on the eastern shore of the Narew and Biebrza Rivers. Between the 7th and 10th of September, 1939 the invading German army of 42,000 soldiers fought here against... 720 Poles occupying the military bunkers. The Germans stormed the separate buildings and blew them up. The last element of resistance was the command bunker near the village of Góra Strękowa. Captain Władysław Raginis, the commander of the bunker (and of the entire defence area), went on to become a legend. When they ran out of ammunition and the commander of the German invaders, General Heinz Wihel Guderian threatened to shoot the prisoners of war, the Polish defence of the bunker surrendered. However, Raginis remained in position. He committed an honourable sacrifice by throwing himself on the grenade. This defence is referred to in Polish history as the Polish Thermopylae, and the heroism of the soldiers is still awe-inspiring. In recent years, the legend of the battle captivated members of the leading Swedish heavy metal band, Sabaton. The Battle of Wizna is popularized by their song "40 : 1" (the title renders the ratio between the armies. The band, who visited Poland several times, was invited to Wizna for the 70th anniversary of the battle.

it down in 1294, but the burg was rebuilt and from 1379 to the Third Partition of Poland (1795) it was the capital of the Wizna land. In 1435 Wizna was granted a town charter, and towards the end of the century it was annexed to the Crown of the Polish Kingdom. The strategic location of the small town was not very fortunate for its residents. Like the Teutonic Knights before them, the Swedes destroyed the settlement in the 18th century. The town was greatly damaged during the Tadeusz Kościuszko Insurrection and then in both world wars.

The fierce fights in September of 1939 brought immense destruction. The most treasured historical monument in town – a **Gothic church** from the early 16th century – was turned into a ruin. Nonetheless, the three-nave church can be admired now thanks to the reconstruction carried out in the years 1951–58. The ribbed vaults and their lace-like structures were reconstructed inside. A Baroque **bell-tower** from the mid 17th century, with bells dating from the 16th and 18th centuries is adjacent to the church. The church cemetery features fragments of Renaissance

tombstones. The cemetery now in use is located on the southern peripheries of the town. It is located on the edge of the river valley slope and boasts a 1929 cemetery chapel. You can reach Góra Zamkowa [**Castle Hill**] through a path at the end of the cemetery. The remnants of the castle – where Wizna castellans and starosts resided – were dismantled in the 19th century. Nowadays, the mount is a **viewpoint** over



A Gothic church in Wizna,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

the Wizna Swamp that stretches for kilometres behind the Narew. A noteworthy cannon and a plaque commemorating Lieutenant Stanisław Brykalski, artillery commander at Wizna in 1939, are located in Cmentarna Street.

Wizna has retained the **urban structure**, although it was deprived of municipal rights in 1870. A vast market square in a form of park is located in the centre. It features an **obelisk** commemorating the soldiers of the Narew Independent Operational Group who perished in 1939. Seven streets exiting from the market square are partially paved with field stones. Most of the buildings are small **wooden houses** that look particularly charming on such streets.

The route goes on along the Narew River. Continuing along the asphalt road which envelopes Wizna from the north, you arrive to the vicinity of the bridge across the river. Right before the bridge, you turn into a gravel road. The old **burg** behind the village of **Rus** is an excellent viewpoint. The

The Witch of Wizna

The Wizna market square witnessed a dramatic execution. In 1664, Adam Jeziorkowski, tax collector of the Wizna land testified under oath that some Barbara Królka "had put a spell on me and my property in the manor". Other accusations against the woman ensued. She was accused of wicked practices, remote both in time and space. Tortures helped the judges to establish the truth. The *Geographical Dictionary* (vol. 5, Warsaw, 1884) describes the matter as follows: "As soon as the town began rising from the fall, the 1624 bubonic plague claimed the lives of 5,021 victims in two months. ... The town attributed this misfortune to a well-known witch called Barbara Królka who was said to have put a spell on King Sigismund August and to have killed two queens: Elżbieta and Barbara Radziwiłłówna. She was burnt at the stake in Wizna by the town's mayor".

Hikes in the vicinity

The town at the mouth of the Biebrza River

This place was described by Zygmunt Głogier in his book *In the River Valleys* (Warsaw, 1903): "Half a mile above Wizna, exactly opposite the place where the Biebrza River flows into the Narew, there is a small burg above the village of Sambory. It was an important guarding site in a time when savage pagans – who lived in the wilderness near the sources of the Narew and Biebrza Rivers that then flow to Mazovia – used the waterway to attack the farmers whose land lied at the high Biebrza shore and near the Narew, in the vicinity of Tykocin".

view from here is worth recommending, as of the Narew and Biebrza Rivers confluence in front of it; the rivers are considered two natural treasures of north-eastern Poland. This site on the other shore of the Biebrza River marks the beginning of the **Biebrzański National Park** (see below). The low, flat and swampy Biebrza Valley is visible from the higher Mazovian shore. The territory on the opposite shore is the Giełczyńska Cluster. Count Ludwik de Fleur's Manor – a somewhat eccentric admirer of the Biebrza River and a friend of folklorist Zygmunt Głogier – stood here in the 19th century. In 1881 the two gentlemen set off – in a boat drawn by horses! – to Osowiec where they started the Biebrza rafting. In 1884 the count hosted his teenage cousin – Maria Skłodowska, the future double Nobel Prize winner in chemistry.



The Biebrza and Narew confluence...,
photo by R. Zubkowicz

Ahead of you is the Biebrza section of the hike. In the vicinity of Wierciszewo the road becomes almost impassable by car, so as an alternative the parallel asphalt road (with occasional cobble stones) can be used. The next **viewpoint** is located in the village of **Burzyn**, in the vicinity of church. The view of the endless Ławki Swamp in the Biebrzański National Park is beautiful. The park itself, established in 1993, embraces almost the entire Biebrza Valley – 155 out of 165 km of the river valley – starting about 5 km from the border with Belarus. This is one of the largest Polish national parks. The geomorphological division of the Biebrzańska Dale divides it into three basins. From Burzyn you can see the southern (lower) basin – the most natural and primeval part of the dale. The unregulated Biebrza River creates a lot of meanders, bifurcations and dead arms. Its characteristic features include high spring water rising – from the viewpoint you can then see infinite backwater – and the so-called summer-autumn low waters (the valley has the largest retentive potential in Poland). The floodplains and the old bed rivers are home to plant communities that are typical to such environments – reed beds, reed fields and water soldier communities. Vast sedge fields stretch further away from the river bed – they are flooded for most of the year. These specific



Across the river to the opposite shore....
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

Village of Swimming Cows

In 2018, Katarzyna Trzaska's documentary feature *Village of Swimming Cows* was released, a warm and often humorous story of three young Berliners who move to Brzostów to get closer to wild nature and experience the „real rural life”.

conditions are conducive to the formation of one of the largest peat bogs in Poland, encompassing nearly half of the Biebrzańska Dale area. The Biebrzański Swamp is the area of greatest natural value in the park – wild, empty, monotonous and barely accessible to humans.

The villages at the lower Biebrza River could have been established only at the edge of the Kolneńska Plateau, along which you now travel. Another convenient site on the opposite shore, in the Biebrzańska Dale, appears only several kilometres later. However, the local farmers have for centuries used the meadows located at the other side of the river. You can see how they did it in the village of **Brzostowo**. It is famous for swimming cows – the large herds of cows swim across the river to reach the pastures on the left of the Biebrza.

Time to part from the river and head back to Łomża. The route takes you through the small town of **Jedwabne**, which was established in the early 15th century, but only received its town charter in 1736 – when the Łomża master of the pantry, Antoni Rostkowski, became the owner of the village. In the 2nd half of the 18th century the small town was purchased by Stanisław RembIELIŃSKI, the cabinet secretary of King Stanisław II Poniatowski, for a sum of 20,000 zł. The new owner contributed to the town's growth, establishing cloth factories and weaving workshops. In the 19th century the town was famous for its market days, reaching the peak of

its glory in the end of the century. Unfortunately, when the WW1 front moved eastward in 1915, the town was almost completely destroyed. In 1939, Jedwabne, like the entire Łomża region, was invaded by Soviets who sent many residents into exile. A strong underground resistance movement of the area used the Biebrzański Swamp as their base. In the summer of 1941, after the Germans invaded Łomża, several hundred Jews, who had constituted a large percentage of the population until the WW2, were murdered in Jedwabne. This story, recalled in the 1990s in *Neighbours* (Sejny, 2000), a book by Jan Tomasz Gross, created great controversy and opened a national debate.

The town is dominated by the two towers of a magnificent Baroque Revival **Church of Saint James the Apostle**. It was built in the years 1926–35 at the vast **Market Square**, which is now the town centre. The market square, which used to fill up with stalls, is more of a park today. A **Monument to the Exiled to Siberia**, in its middle, has the shape of a railway track with



In memory of the murdered Jews,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

Hikes in the vicinity



A neo-Roman church in Dobrzyjałowo,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

ties climbing up to the cross on the top. The square is surrounded by one-storey, occasionally two-storey houses. There used to be stores in these houses. The **manor** built by the aforementioned Stanisław RembIELIŃSKI is located south of the market. Rajmund RembIELIŃSKI (1775–1841), a social and political activist, chairman of the Mazovian Voivodeship Committee, commemorated with the plaque in the façade, commissioned a thorough remodelling of the building was thoroughly remodelled according to the original design, created by a distinguished architect of the time – Enrico Marconi. The initiators and designers of the 1959 modernization were far behind their famous predecessor, as a result of which the manor has lost numerous stylish features. Nowadays, it houses a Cultural Centre and the police station. The remnants of the several-hectare park remain around the manor. Two **cemeteries: Catholic and Jewish** are located in the north-eastern part of town (exit in the direction of Radziłowo). Rajmund RembIELIŃSKI's grave can be found in the Catholic cemetery. The Jewish cemetery (at the end of the side Krasickiego Street) has been recently fenced from the front with stone blocks. A memorial stone, stylized as a **matsevah** is located at the entrance, and about 20 preserved tombstones are located inside. The monument marks the



The remnants of the manor in Kisielnica,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

1941 site of the Jewish execution.

The straight connection between Jedwabne and Łomża (20 km) allows a quick return to town. However, a more interesting route crosses the village of **DOBRYJAŁOWO**. The 1860 neo-Roman **Church of Saint Stanislaus the Martyr Bishop** is located in the centre of this large village. Next to it is a brick presbytery dating from 1886. Dobrzyjałowo, with its cobble stoned streets and regular farms still resembles a traditional village.

For drivers **KISIELNICA** is above all a traffic junction (the Łomża – Augustów route joins the road from Mazuria). The village is divided into two parts, separated by a river valley of the small Penza River. The southern part features remnants of the **Manor Complex of the Kisielnicki Family**, who – this is worth emphasising – managed the estate from the first half of the 15th century until 1944. A Park and some of the farm buildings have been preserved. The most splendid is the **granary**, which is now used as a stable by the Horse-Riding Rehabilitation Centre of the Łomża Voivodship Hospital.

Narcyza Żmichowska (1819–76) worked in the manor as a private governess. The writer, who is considered one of the Polish precursors of feminism, published her first poetry at the time. Kisielnica is also intriguingly associated

with the very famous artistic Kossak family: the twin brothers, Wojciech and Tadeusz Kossakowie married Maria and Anna Kisielnickie. The famous novelist Zofia Kossak-Szczucka was born to the second couple.

Route 3. To Stara Łomża and beyond

Łomża – Stara Łomża – Pniewo – Gać – Puchały – Wygoda
– Giełczyn – Łomża

The route is a 45-kilometre loop. Most of the time, it goes along rather quiet asphalt roads and tracks. This is a great cycling route. At the Łomża – Gać section you are led by the green tourist and bicycle trail (to Olszyna Pniewska and from Gać to Puchały), and at the Wygoda – Giełczyn section – by the blue tourist trail. You can extend the outing by adding the 8 km along the Landscape Park's tourist trail in Pniewo Utrata – Pniewo Dziedziniec, or on the other hand, shorten it and plan a return along a different route.

STARA ŁOMŻA is only 4 km away from Łomża (exit from the town centre along Rybaki and Zdrojowa Streets). You do not need to be a specialist to guess that the mediaeval **burg** was located on the high hills on the right hand side of the road. Archaeological records date the place from the 9th century, when a settlement was established on the elevations towering over the Narew valley. In subsequent years it was fortified and grew in significance thanks to its strategic location. The burg was located at the hill currently called Queen Bona Mount. The remnants of the earth embankments surrounding the fortified settlement have been preserved, and are visible from the highest sites on the river valley slope. The neighbouring hill, Saint Lawrence Mount, is

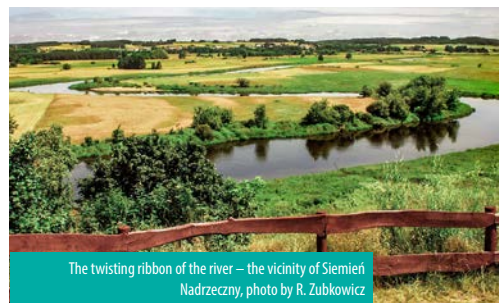


Stara Łomża – a view of the town and the Narew meanders,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz

said to have been the location of a church built around 1000 CE by missionary Bruno of Querfurt. It would have been the first Christian church in northern Mazovia. Archaeological research conducted in the recent decade did not find one-hundred-percent confirmation of its existence, e.g. in the form of distinct foundations. But it did not exclude the possibility – traces found during the excavations indicated that three churches were successively built on the hill (the evidence of the oldest church is a stone circle pavement cemented with clay with a diameter of 11 m,

which, according to the author of the finding, is an imprint of church walls on a circular plan). Records indicate with certitude that a Gothic church stood on this hill, that it was dismantled in the 18th century and that it was used as building materials for the Capuchins' Monastery in Łomża (see page 55). Some of the bricks were used for the construction of a shrine dedicated to the saint patron of the hill, which remained on the site for many years. The wooden sculpture in the shrine eventually ended up in the collection of the Museum of Northern Mazovia (see page 51).

A commercial settlement was also located on the Saint Lawrence Mount. However, the hilly area did not offer wide prospects for settlement development. When the threats from the east weakened and the military assets of the place lost significance, the town moved to a new location. It took place in the late 14th century, long before



The twisting ribbon of the river – the vicinity of Siemięń
Nadrzeczny, photo by R. Zubkiewicz

At My Azure Narew River ...

...the meadows with colours quiver
The trees whisper lovingly,
A nightingale sings charmingly
At the river that is mine,
Sacred houses stand just fine,
In them pious simplicity
And golden serenity.

Wiktor Gomulicki, *My River*

the church was dismantled. The parish was also moved in 1410, and when Łomża was granted the town charter (1418), it began referring to the town as its present location.

One of the most beautiful views of the Narew River at its Łomża Water Gap spreads out from the hill. The river meanders here and at one moment even flows in the south-eastern direction, opposing its regular course. If the meanderings of the river, so beautifully visible from this (40-50 m) elevation, were straightened out, the river would have been twice as long as the section it occupies

nowadays. Here and there you may encounter information boards stating that this is a private property and that access is forbidden. One cannot argue with the owners' will, however, it needs to be emphasised that the boards were placed as a reaction to vandals on quads and cross motorcycles, and people who organised loud parties.

Dandy from the swamps

The breeding plumage of the male ruff suggests that among birds, the beautiful sex is male. The colourful plumage – the large ruff among the neck with its head tuft erected during the mating display – evokes admiration among the motley coloured females. Two identically coloured males have yet to be spotted! The breeding dance – which can be watched at the backwater shores from mid April to mid May – has seductive power over not only ruff females, but also bird lovers. After the breeding period ruffs fly off to the northern hatching areas.



Old wooden barn and its tenants,
photo by R. Zubkiewicz



Only that and so much... – the remnants of the First World War cemetery, photo by R. Zubkiewicz

The subsequent three-kilometre-route offers many viewpoints. The road runs in close vicinity to the river, and any fragment of open space or elevation is enough to get a great view of the Narew Valley. A truly wide panorama opens up next to the intersection in **SIEMIEN NADREZCZNY**. An observation umbrella roof was placed here by the Landscape Park staff. Here the river bed moves from the right edge of the valley to its left periphery.

In the northern part of the village of **PNIEWO**, also called Utrata, starts the 8-kilometre **nature exploration path** of the Narew Valley's Łomżyński Landscape Park. You can return to the route in Pniewo Dziedzinek. The Path is not marked and features three stops. You can hike, ride a bicycle or drive along the path, but only after the spring backwaters withdraw. It is especially recommendable during bird migrations and hatching season (April–June), although its vegetation is always interesting. In spring you can encounter e.g. the black-tailed godwit, the redshank, the common snipe and at the nearby old river beds, wild ducks: mallards and garganeys. Among small passerine birds you can see e.g. the sedge warbler, the reed bunting and the meadow pipit. Early spring offers you the chance to watch **ruffs**.

Hikes in the vicinity

Pniewo itself is a large village with numerous old, wooden constructions. Two adjacent barns located near a sharp bend in the middle of the village are exceptionally picturesque – both are thatched and have stork's nests on the roof ridges. The asphalt road ends behind the village and a land track penetrates the Pniewska alder forest. Part of this wet forest is under protection from the **Wielki Dział**

Nature Reserve (see page 17). It embraces wet riparian forest and begins a kilometre away from the track. This barely accessible terrain was the Home Army base during the Second World War (a witness of the times is a centenary oak tree with a relief commemorating the partisans).

The road leads to an open space – 1.5 km onwards, on the left, a group of tall maple trees is visible. They surround a **First World War Cemetery**. The tombstones have not been preserved. The only remnant is a stone gate with two cast iron crosses. The borders of the cemetery, resting place for some 55 German soldiers, are marked by an earth embankment. The road ahead leads to the village of **GAC**, ending on a ford and a pedestrian bridge across the river with the same name. On the right hand side, 150 m away stands a **wooden mill**, once propelled by water. It still grinds wheat but now uses electric propulsion. Parts of the sluice structure remain in the river.

It is best to enter the village of **PUCHAŁY**, the next stop on the route, from Milewo – on a hot summer day, at least part of the route runs along a shaded **lime tree lane** created in the late 18th century. This centenary lane has the status of nature monument. Originally, it was supposed to ornament the road



Trees and centenary tombstones – an old cemetery in Puchały, photo by R. Zubkowicz

connecting the farms that belonged to the manor in Milewo (the manor does not exist any more), namely Puchały and Pniewo (in the 19th century both became separate estates). The tombstones of the Milewo owners – Helena, Ignacy and Mikołaj Modzelewski – can be found in the **old historical cemetery** in Puchały. Unfortunately, the church that saw them worship in the 19th century has not survived. The present church dates from the years 1975–81, and was designed by famous architect Professor Wiktor Zin. The monumental lime and chestnut tree lane goes on to Pniewo, passing a new cemetery with a brick neo-Gothic chapel from the early 20th century. However, you head west towards the villages of Wyrzyki and **WYGODA**. The blue tourist trail (13.5 km) starts in the latter village and runs through a forest complex

called **Czerwony Bór [Red Wood]**. The trail was demarcated through the summit of the moraine ridge, overgrown with mixed (mainly pine) forest. At first you arrive at the Czerwony Bór railway station, no longer in use. It used to serve a military base with a range located among the woods. It was established before the war and was at the time one of the largest artillery ranges in Poland. It operated until the 1990s. After the soldiers left, Łomża Forest Management started working on its reclamation. The terrain stretches south of the railway line and is overgrown among others by moors. This mosaic-like land is also home to the extremely rare black grouse. Czerwony Bór was also a battle arena several times in history: In September 1939, as well as in 1944 when the Red Army retook Łomża from German hands. In its final section, the trail runs along the edge of the forest, and at the same time at the edge of **Dębowe Góry Nature Reserve** (see page 18). A considerable part of the 100-hectare area is covered by a rare forest community – xerothermic oak forest.

The village of **GIELCZYN** is not far from the nature reserve. The village surroundings comprise the largest cemetery and the most tragic **martyrological site** in the vicinity of Łomża. Gielczyński Forest, more precisely forest department no. 66, was used by Nazi Germans as an execution site from 1941 to 1944. There were periods when transports of innocent people were brought here from Łomża on a daily basis. The corpses were buried in the most diverse places; therefore, it is hard to specify the area of the cemetery with precision. Some of the victims were exhumed after the war; however most of the corpses were incinerated by the Germans in 1944. According to surviving documentation about 5,000 Poles and 7,000 Jews were murdered in the forest near Gielczyn. Walking along the edge of the forest, you encounter monuments commemorating these

tragic events. The main monument, erected in 1963, has the following inscription: "The site of the execution of twelve thousands residents of the Łomża land, murdered by the fascist Nazi Germans [Hitlerites] in the years 1941–1944". Two other monuments and a stone with a commemorative plaque have been placed nearby by the citizens of Israel. This forest necropolis is the largest, but unfortunately not the only one in the vicinity of Łomża – similar sites are located in the vicinity of Podgórze and in Jeziorko, behind the Narew.

Following the forest edge you reach Gielczyn, which is about 6 km away from the centre of Łomża. If you are driving and cannot return to the forest trail, you can return to Łomża from Wygoda or turn to Gielczyn in Podgórze and visit the village.

Route 4. To the Kurpie Nowogród

Jednaczewska Levee – Jednaczewo – Szablak – Nowogród

The route is about 17 km long. At first, it runs along a bicycle path, then along hard surface and asphalt roads. You are led both by the tourist hiking and bicycle trails. The hike starts in Łomża at Zamiejska Street where the bicycle trail starts.

The Jednaczewska Levee is one of the favourite weekend hiking and bicycle trails for Łomża residents. A modern and convenient bicycle path runs along the levee. The levee leads to the **Jednaczewski Forest**, at the edge of which a resting area has been arranged with benches inviting you to rest. In the interwar period, popular open air events took place here. The **Rycerski Kierz Nature Reserve** (see page 17) also starts at the forest brim. The site has a historical significance which is underscored by the symbolic **grave of**

Hikes in the vicinity

Stach Konwa, the aforementioned folk hero of the Kurpie region (see box page 69). Konwa, a succession war participant who supported Stanisław Leszczyński, was captured in the Jednaczewski Forest and hanged here. The first monument on his alleged grave was erected in the interwar period at the initiative of Adam Chętnik. The present one was placed here after the World War II (identical to the one in the Nowogród open air museum).

The green hiking trail (from Gać through Pniewo, Łomża to Nowogród, 18 km total) bypasses **JEDNACZEWO** and runs through the forest. A bicycle trail on the other hand crosses the village at the roadside shrine, located at the intersection with the road to Kupiski Stare. The two trails merge again behind Jednaczewo.

Before the war, the army built a **line of military bunkers** on the left bank of the Narew. The bunkers are scattered around – starting from the vicinity of Wizna (several can be found on the properties in Łomża). The most easily accessible – though devastated – **bunker** in the vicinity is located several metres from the road, about 2 km behind the village of **SZABLAK**, after a sharp turn left. However, the most interesting construction – a **two-dome bunker** which housed the headquarters – is located less than 800 m further south, in a pine grove. The easiest



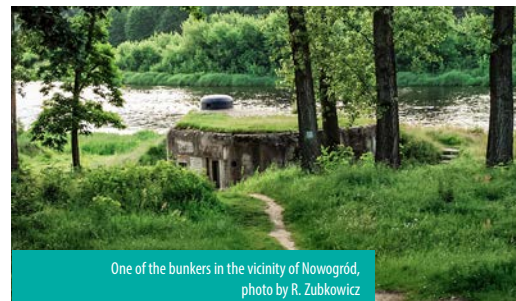
A roadside shrine, Jednaczewo, photo by R. Zubkowicz



way to get there from the Nowogród – Łomża route is to turn left in Mątwa Dworek, 2 km behind Nowogród, and after 600 m turn left again into a ground road. 1 km ahead of you, you will see a smaller bunker. There you turn towards the forest and walk left along the tree wall for 100 m until you should see a large bunker between the pine trees. The vicinity of Nowogród also features **bunkers**

of the Soviet Molotov line that ran along the occupation border with Germany (one of such bunkers can be found 2.5 km behind Nowogród, on the left side of the road to Śniadowo). The German fortifications are located on the other side of the Narew.

Nowogród, famous for its open air museum, lies in an unusually picturesque location – on



the high Narew bank opposite the mouth of the Pisa river. The fortified burg – from which the town emerged – was located at the bifurcation of both rivers, but in the 13th century it was moved to its present location. Here, at the high Narew bank, on the peripheries of Mazovia, one of the oldest brick castles in the region was built. Written records mention Nowogród in 1355. An (35-year) older Nowogród stamp has been preserved, confirming the existence of a castellan abode. The settlement was granted the town charter in 1427, nine years later than Łomża. Until the Swedish wars the town developed prosperously, thanks to its convenient location – at the intersection of waterways. In 1939 the nearby fortifications at the Narew



Hikes in the vicinity

line received the impact of the German invasion. The defence fought with great bravery; nonetheless, the battles almost wiped the town from the face of earth.

The famous **Kurpie Open Air Museum** is named after its founder – Adam Chętnik (see page 52), meritorious ethnography researcher from

the nearby Mątwa. The first building was placed here in 1923 on the square purchased by Chętnik; therefore, the open air museum is one of the two oldest museums of this kind in Poland (the open air museum in Wdzydze Kiszewskie is older). Unfortunately, during the defence war of 1939, almost all objects on this territory were destroyed – except for two wild beehive logs and an entrance gate from the side of the Narew. One may say that the open air museum was reborn in 1958, and thanks to Chętnik's indefatigable fervour the historical objects were once again placed at the Narew. At present the entity is part of the Museum of Northern Mazovia in Łomża, and is distinguished from other open air museums

in Poland by its excellent wild beehive and beekeeping department.

Archaeological excavations confirm that the open air museum is situated on the site of the former castle. Walking around, one can appreciate the strategic location of the no longer existing fortifications from the time of King Casimir the Great. The open



Praise the Lord... – a folk roadside shrine in the open air museum, photo by R. Zubkowicz

air museum has collected 21 historical buildings from the Puszcza Zielona forest, the wooded territories stretching between the Narew and former Prussia. The entrance is ornamented with a 1923 Kurpie house from Łyse, and tickets can be purchased in the 19th-century manor from Brzózki (which also features an exhibition devoted to Adam Chętnik). A 19th-century watermill from Dobrylas, with a wheel with huge board blades is also extremely interesting. Kurpie houses e.g. from Baranowo, Gawrychy (18th century), Kadzidło, Myszyńiec – and other farm buildings are crowned with *śparogi*, the ornamented crossed ends for rafters or wind beams in roof gables that are so characteristic of



Cultivating the tradition, photo by arch. UM Łomża

the region. Among the smaller exhibits (wells, gates and roadside shrines) worth mentioning is the 19th-century roofed tread-wheel and a farm windmill. If you are tired of hiking, you can refresh yourself in the inn (obviously a historical one, from the 19th century), serving traditional cuisine and seasonal, juniper beer.

The town itself boasts a **neo-Baroque church** that has unfortunately needed renovation many times (last time in the 1950s). At the Narew River bridge stands a **bunker**, fiercely defended by the Polish soldiers in 1939. A **tank monument**, commemorating the clash of fronts against the Germans that lasted several months at the turn of 1944 and 1945, is located several metres higher, on the north-western slope – with a T-34 tank cannon aiming up into the sky. A **Jewish cemetery** is located on the way to the bridge on the right hand side. The cemetery contains several tombstones that were transferred from their original location in 2007 (the tombstones had been discovered a few years earlier in the foundations of a ruined house in Nowogród). **Adam Chętnik's grave** can be visited in the Catholic cemetery. His tombstone resembles a folk shrine, carved in a tree trunk.

Route 5. The Narew Kayak Trail

An interesting kayak trail runs along the Narew River flowing at the foot of the slope where Łomża lies. It is a great idea to leave town for a short one-day rafting trip to Nowogród. You can also drive to **Krzewo**, rent a kayak there (recreational and nature club Centrum Przyrodniczo-Rekreacyjne "Wodniczka") and reach Łomża via waterways. This trip also takes one day.

In the vicinity of Łomża the Narew is an easy and safe river. It also has another asset, namely, it meanders heavily (at the height of Stara Łomża it makes several 180-degree bends), keeping you well away from boredom. Also, the Water Gap section of the river implies that the edges of the ancient river valley rise several dozen metres above the water, guaranteeing amazing views. The river landscape from the border of

The Narew River

The name comes from the Proto-Indo-European term "*nur*" which means water or river. The river is 484 km long, out of which 448 km belong to Poland. The sources of the river are located in Belarus (on the eastern boundaries of the Białowieża Wilderness). It is a lowland river which creates vast swamp and peat bog areas. Its unique character is illustrated by the fact that it is the only anastomosing river in Europe, and one of three such rivers in the world. In other words, its course is a network of branching and then confluent river beds. This feature can be encountered above all within the Narwiański National Park.



Kayaking on the Biebrza, photo by R. Zubkowicz

the Narwiański National Park to Wizna is quite different – the river is regulated here (you have to go through six weirs), and the area rather flat and monotonous.

If you have more time, you could plan a longer rafting trip, taking advantage of the nearby Biebrza River and the picturesque qualities of the Biebrzański National Park. A four-day trip (for example, on a long weekend) can be planned along several diverse routes, such as from Brzostowo to Wizna (16 km); from Wizna to Krzewo (22 km); from Krzewo to Łomża (24 km), and then from Łomża to Nowogród (25).

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