



On the wave
of Masuria's taste

RUSSIA
(Kaliningrad Oblast)

The Great Masurian Lakes District

 2600
lakes

 111 km
of sailing routes

 300 km
of the Masurian Cycling Loop

 29 000 ha
forests

 11
nature reserves

 Culinary Heritage
of Warmia and Masuria





The Great Masurian Lakes 2020 was founded in 2015, based on the belief that „together we can do more“. With the combined forces of local governments around the Great Masurian Lakes, we have been able to make significant changes in the entire region. Our joint activities have accelerated the development of the region. We also play a positive role in creating a good climate for businesses operating e.g. in the area of Regional Smart Specialisations –Healthy Food and Water Economy – by helping to find economic partners or through economic cooperation within the region.

We have undertaken a number of activities promoting the economy of the Great Masurian Lakes. We organize study visits, economic missions, meetings and conferences for local businesses. We have carried out a nationwide campaign “Masuria is Business”, encouraging to invest

in Masuria. We have launched the economic information system www.mazurytobiznes.pl and the Masurian Investor Assistance System, created by municipal employees to support investors. We would like to strengthen the market position of our entrepreneurs, mutual economic relations of existing companies, but also show that Masuria is a good place for an interesting business that fits the climate and conditions of this region.

The mission and task of the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020 is, on the one hand, to support the development of Masurian communes so that they meet world standards and provide residents, businesses and visitors with everything they need and wish, and on the other hand, to protect the natural environment, landscape and waters, because the nature of Masuria is for us – the inhabitants of the region – the eighth wonder of the world.



NATURAL SOURCES OF MASURIAN BUSINESS

Despite the rapid development of civilisation, innovative technologies and globalisation, which to a large extent bridge cultural differences, each region has its own unique character – an identity resulting from its geographical location and history. These and other local factors also influence regional business, which understandably seeks to take advantage of them. The inexhaustible resources of Masuria are undoubtedly the Great Masurian Lakes and agriculture, which has been practiced here for centuries and produces abundant, high-quality crops every year.

The Regional Smart Specialisations is a support tool dedicated to the businesses that use the potential of Masuria. The resulting privileges are a way of rewarding those of them that draw on the natural resources of the region and fit into the natural landscape. In this way, we designate areas that are particularly attractive to investors who want to make their money grow in Masuria.

One of the Regional Smart Specialisations that stimulates the Masurian business is Water Economy. Water covers 1/3 of the region's area and is unique Europe-wide.

Next to Water Economy, an equally important Regional Intelligent Specialisation is Healthy Food. The agricultural traditions of the region, clean air and favourable natural conditions are the advantages that encourage investors to invest in this area. From small food processing plants, agritourism and restaurants cultivating the culinary heritage of Warmia and Masuria, to large-scale food industry; everyone benefits from the crops of the land while taking care of it with gratitude. There are currently 136 food-related businesses with a Culinary Heritage certificate in the entire province most of them located in Masuria.



CULINARY PEDIGREE OF MASURIA

We can safely say that the culinary history of the region has come full circle since the middle of the 20th century. Ecological crops, traditional recipes, and relying on local crops are values that return to favour, and are especially cared for in Masuria. The revival of old traditions is facilitated by such events as the Culinary Heritage Festival or the Cittaslow Festival, and the number of consumers who value high quality organic food is growing every year. Therefore, the natural trend of the region is the establishment of new orchards, apiaries, milk processing plants, development of farms and fishing activities.

26 thousand businesses benefit from favorable conditions for growing plants, breeding animals and access to clean lakes. 25 Warmian-Masurian products have been recognized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development as traditional and regional.

The map of the region features many processing plants that have operated for generations, such as the Mark company in Giżycko, which bakes the famous Masurian Sękacz, showered with many awards for 30 years, including The best product of Warmia and Masuria or the Polish Quality 2017 badge. Maślanka Mrągowska, a product of Mlekpól, also boasts a long tradition. It is the most-bought buttermilk in Poland. It has been present on store shelves for over 20 years and is constantly expanding its fan base.



In addition to processing plants with a family background that produce culinary showpieces of Masuria, there are large plants in the region, whose production is on a large, sometimes international scale. Wild Polska – bought by a New York stock exchange company – has been sending its fruit preparations to all continents of the world for over twenty years, while the roots of the Giżycko dairy – OSM Giżycko – go back to the post-war times.



DEVELOPMENT IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Sustainable business development is an idea close to Masurian locals and investors. Examples of huge enterprises implementing the concept of sustainable development can be found in almost every commune. The aforementioned branch of the Mlekpól Dairy Cooperative consists of three production departments producing huge amounts of dairy products. The largest cheese line in Poland produces over 30 thousand tons of cheese every year, and the new powdered milk factory is the largest dairy investment in Poland, with an estimated budget of PLN 500 million, and its processing capacity will be 3 million litres of milk per day.

Masuria is a region where many environmental regulations are stricter in comparison to the rest of the country and it is very good, because clean air is a great asset of the region. That is why we have



equipped our new facility with a modern gas-fired boiler house that does not pollute the air, says Marcin Piwowarczyk, director of the Mlekpól branch in Mrągowo.

The self-governments of Masurian communes also support sustainable development. Thanks to the successful dialogue between the locals and the businesses, more and more companies are introducing innovative ecological solutions, such as the biogas plant on the farm in Upały Małe, which, apart from being self-sufficient, also supplies some of the inhabitants of the Giżycko commune with electricity.





DELICIOUS LIKE AT HOME

Masuria cuisine is undoubtedly a magnet for tourists not only from Poland, but also from Europe. In the last decade, many agritourism facilities have appeared in the region; they attract with their individual charm and healthy, local, home-cooked food. In many leisure facilities, the owners produce their own food, offer specialties from regional producers or from neighbouring farmers. The food offered is tasty, natural and often vegetarian. A signpost for gourmets of regional dishes can be the Certificate of the European Network of Regional Culinary Heritage.



The awarded producers include: Kraina Miodu Beekeeping Farm, Mikołajki Fishing Farm, Smaki Mazur Farm and Pod Czarnym Łabędziem Inn.

It is worth remembering, however, that behind healthy local food served by intimate accommodation facilities or restaurants in the region, there is usually a much broader philosophy of living

in harmony with nature, with full respect for the gifts of our planet.

We do not use chemical cleaning agents, disposables, we do not spray our apple trees, and we have our own herbarium and homemade preserves, says Karolina Puzio, owner of the guest house and bistro „Przechowalnia Marzeń” in Mikołajki.

It is said here that tourists who want to know the authentic character of a place, real people, look for what is local, growing out of a given land. At the same time, they look for what is consistent with their values.

Small local producers often form informal support groups, recommending their products to one another, selling them to their guests. They are also happy to organize small events promoting ecological lifestyle and nutrition, such as the „Beautiful and delicious” and „On Saturday in the orchard” festivals. For these producers, scale is not the top business priority. Their success is living and earning money in full harmony with each other and the environment.



WIDE WATERS

It is no secret that there is no region in Poland with such a wide surface of inland waters as Masuria. In addition to the huge tourist potential, water is a source of income for many businesses. The tourist infrastructure on the lake shores, water equipment rentals, water sports schools, fishing farms, but also shipyards – all these businesses need water. We live on water – this is our workplace, hence the respect for nature is deeply rooted in our minds, declare Masurian business people.

We use mainly sails to move on water, we use a renewable energy source, environmentally friendly impregnations, and we co-organize the event „Do not litter into the water- Music Festival”, says Marek Makowski, founder of the Gertis sailing school.

And although the face of the Great Lakes is undoubtedly changing – more and more comfortable marinas, water fuel stations, luxurious sanitary facilities and a wide accommodation base are being created, everyone unanimously says: *We want development, but... without harming the water!*



NEW TRAIL

The Great Masurian Lakes Trail was designed first at the end of the 17th century. The works began only half a century later and consisted in digging six canals with a total length of only 8.6 km. In the 1840s, the existing system was expanded with new canals and sluices, primarily with a view to using them to float timber. It was only in the last twenty years of the 19th century that the tourist interest in the Great Masurian Lakes began to increase. The constant increase in the number of yachts, which continues to this day, creates many challenges related to the safety of navigation, environmental pollution and the preservation of the natural values of this region of Masuria.

Therefore, the Great Masurian Lakes Association 2020, together with the communes around the Great Lakes, the Polish National Water Management and with the support of the Provincial Self-Government and the European Commission, is modernizing the Great Masurian Lakes Trail through various advanced construction and renovation works.

The project included such investments as:

- Yacht port in Pisz and reconstruction of the mouth of the Pisa River
- Effective footbridges in Mikołajki on the isthmus of the Mikołajskie Lake and the Tałty Lake, or in Giżycko on the Giżycko canal,
- Modernization of promenades in Ryn, Mikołajki, Ruciane-Nida and Giżycko
- A new sluice in Masuria in Ruciane-Nida
- Modernization of all canals on the Great Masurian Lakes Trail

The works are being carried out gradually, and the completion is planned for 2023.





CARING FOR WATER

When it comes to water, the water that flows from the taps and is discharged into the treatment plant must not be forgotten either. For a modern water and sewage infrastructure and an even better protection of the Masurian Lakes, an extensive project called Masterplan for the Great Masurian Lakes was developed in the 90s. In the following years, it was consistently implemented and updated. Today, it also includes investment priorities for the coming years.

All municipalities of the Land of the Great Masurian Lakes, thanks to the enormous amount of work of local governments, have wastewater networks and facilities. In this respect, Masuria stands out across the country. The municipalities have their own well-functioning sewage treatment plants or transfer sewage to their neighbours within the agglomeration. There is no shortage of modern biological treatment plants, also adapted to the removal of biogenes. Masurian cities are getting ready to modernize their treatment plants in the near future, but local governments

will also focus on smaller towns and scattered buildings. A number of smaller, local water and sewage projects are planned, and there are also investment plans for water supply networks.

An extremely important priority is to protect the Great Masurian Lakes from the negative impact of water tourism, especially considering that at the peak of the tourist season, about 70,000 people rest every day in the waters of the Masurian lakes.

The common system of collecting waste and sewage from users of the navigation route of the Great Masurian Lakes is a challenge. Here, not only investments and legal measures are needed, but also education, which increases the ecological awareness of people using the gifts of Masurian nature. Currently, the first in Masuria free pumping station for collecting sewage from yachts is located in Mikołajki. In the period from May to October, you can have sewage removed from your vessel free of charge.



WATER-POWERED BUSINESS

Holidaymakers from all over the world come to the Masurian lakes every year, so tourism is the branch that develops the fastest here. More and more demanding tourists require comfortable accommodation by the water, local specialties, water sports equipment, an attractive entertainment and cultural offer, and many other attractions that are the foundation of Masurian businesses. Some entrepreneurs are joining forces to cater to all visitors' needs. A good example is M2System – a project of four consortium members related to tourism, each of whom has extensive experience in various branches of this industry. Together, they create a comprehensive and coherent offer of key places on the Great Masurian Lakes Trail.

The consortium includes a long-standing leader of the catering industry in Masuria – Grupa Amax, organizer of active tourism and owner of Camp Pisz and the Joseph Conrad hotel, the „Róża Wiatrów” sailing school and the Robert's Port Hotel, with accommodation and a fleet of passenger ships, cruising along the route of the Great Masurian Lakes. Together, all four can offer more than a single entity.

But Masuria offers more than water tourism. There are several shipyards of global significance here, whose yachts and motor boats enjoy high popularity also abroad. For instance, Bast Boat – a boat building company in Mrągowo, owned by Sebastian Jurkiewicz, started with a single boat model 10 years ago and today its Cortinas are found in charter fleets in many countries. You can easily find them on world yacht exchanges too. In turn, the Northman shipyard in Węgorzewo, which has been operating for several years, opened its Research and Development Centre in 2019. It includes a laboratory section, specialist facilities and rooms for qualified scientific staff and an additional hall with a modern five-axis CNC milling centre.

As you can see, the Great Masurian Lakes are more than a phenomenal landscape and a great tourist attraction. It is a region with a huge business potential and at the same time a significant employer of the people living in the communes located along the waterway.



 **Great Masurian
Lakes 2020**
Association

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