

TOURISM AND RECREATION ON INLAND WATER ROUTES IN THE SECOND POLISH REPUBLIC

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Keywords:

- water tourism,
- inland water routes,
- the Second Polish Republic.

Abstract:

The First World War brought destruction to many water devices and means of transport. After Poland regained the Independence in 1918, many have tried to rebuild inland sailing (routes, devices and water units). A great number of organizations and associations arranged water relaxation. Inland tourism in Poland after 1918 was made use of mostly in order to secure the connection between holiday resorts.

The territory of the Second Polish Republic established conditions that facilitated practicing water tourism on main rivers, their basins and inland water regions.

The habits of tourism on inland water routes became the basics of tourism development after the Second World War.

The article was written on the basis of press and literature query. The article includes photography made accessible by National Digital Archives, Henryk Poddebski as well as guide magazines that were published during the 20 year Interwar Period. The author made also use of thematic postcards created between 1919 and 1939. During the query, the author analyzed the sources which were used in creating the description of the issues presented in the article.

The very beginnings of water tourism in Poland are strictly connected to the ability to transport people and goods by the rivers with swimming units that were already known in the Ancient Times. Traveling water routes in Poland was popular since very long time. It took place on following routes:

- Warta, Noteć, through Odra to the Baltic Sea
- the Vistula to the Baltic Sea
- Niemen river



Grodno 1909, harbor at Niemen river

- Dźwina to the Black Sea
- Prypeć through Dniepr
- Dniestr
- Prut to the Danube (through Romania)

At the turn of 18th and 19th century, the traveling took also place through the following channels:

- Bydgoszcz channel that connects the Vistula, Noteć and Odra



Bydgoszcz channel built on the initiative of Prussian king Fryderyk II, the channel was established in 1774.

- Królewski channel, between Bug and Prypeć, and the Vistula and Dniepr
- Augustowski channel, between the Vistula and Niemen through Narew
- Ogiński channel, between Niemen and Prypeć
- Berezyński channel, from Dźwina to Dniepr through Berezyna



Harodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, sygn. 1-G-4252

The turn of 19th and 20th century, Mysłowice

After Poland regained the Independence in 1918, the rebirth of inland sailing started. The First World War brought destruction to many water devices and means of transport. Due to the fact that Polish society joined the reconstruction it was possible to rebuild routes, devices and water units.



The postcard presenting steam boat in Toruń in 1897.

In Poland, passenger and goods water transport started being rebuilt. The motto that was propagated at that time was *work inland, rest on water*¹.

A great number of organizations and associations arranged water relaxation. After 1918 when new borders were set, Poland acquired new water routes.



Haradové Archivum, Cyfrové, sygn. 1-0-4266

1932, sailing boat on Brda in Bydgoszcz.

¹ *Szlakami wodnymi do Bałtyku*, b.r.w. s. 2.

In order to organize cheap water transport as well as passenger connections within water routes, 'the National Sailing on the Vistula' was established. The organization apart from goods transportation dealt with organizing passenger communication which sometimes turned out to be the only means of transportation.

Regaining the access to Odra in the West, Warmia and Masuria it was possible to gain new regular connection for sailing on the Vistula towards north and north-east.

The newly gained water routes were leading through picturesque landscapes which were destined to promote water transportation and most importantly tourism itself.



'Konrad' ship at Bydgoszcz channel.

<http://www.wyszogrod.bydgoszcz.pl/?d=wislaprojekty2>.

Apart from regaining water routes in 1918, alongside with the Independence, the access to water path leading through Mamry, Niegocin and Śniardwy lakes was obtained.

On the route leading through the lakes there was one of the most beautiful landscapes in Europe. During the Prussian annexation (1772–1918) this land drew attention of numerous European, as well as American tourists. It was one of the most visited region in Poland².

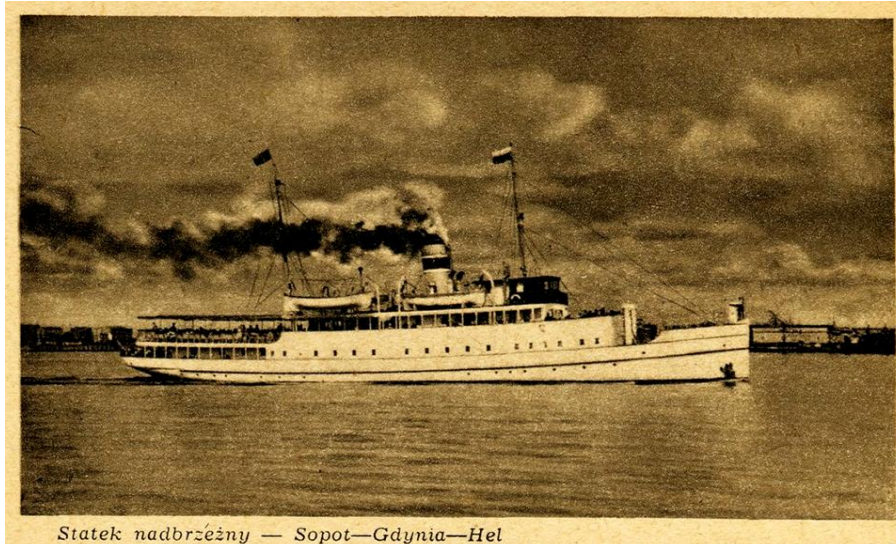
Inland tourism in Poland after 1918 was made use of mostly in order to secure the connection between holiday resorts. Shortly after Poland regained the Independence the passenger transportation on the Vistula was taken over by steam boats. Slowly the store of steamers was expanded by motor boats. Among the steam boats cruising through the Vistula, two boats were worth mentioning, namely 'Polska' and 'Francja' built in Warsaw shipyard.

Inland sailing between 1922-1927 was composed solely of steam and motor boats. The number of passenger transportation units swimming through Polish rivers between 1922-1927 grew from 21 to 36 (the lack of data that could present the number of passengers). In 1927 marine inland passenger sailing transported 76 thousand passengers and in 1928 the number reached 100 thousand.

The passenger transport was mostly led by foreign companies. The Polish companies that constituted minority were owned by national enterprise called 'Żegluga Polska' which was established in 1927³.

² Tamże, s. 4.

³ Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów z dnia 13 maja 1927 r. w sprawie wydzielenia z administracji państwowej przedsiębiorstwa „Żegluga Polska”, Dz. U. Nr 49, poz. 440; M. Rybczyński: *Drogi wodne [w:] 10-lecie Polski Odrodzonej*. Wydawnictwo "Ilustrowanego Kurjera Codziennego" Kraków-Warszawa 1928, s. 461–472; Tenże: *Żegluga [w:] 10-lecie Polski Odrodzonej...*, dz. cyt., s. 473–478.



The inland sailing passenger ship cruising: Sopot-Gdynia-Hel.

The water communication in Poland during the 20 year Interwar Period was liable to the minister of communication. The water route bureau was in charge of maintenance on behalf of the minister.

The passenger water transport as well as other water services, according to the regulations, obliged the owners of water units to have documents that would approve the condition of their equipment. The documents were issued on the basis of annual control of technical condition⁴.

The obligations that were imposed on owners required, apart from technical documentation, announcing the transport price list as well as cruises schedule⁵.

In north-east parts of Poland six provincial water administrations were operating. Five of them were subjugated to Polesie provincial administration and the remaining one to Wilno provincial administration. The regular passenger transportation was taking place on the following routes:

- Grodno – Pyszki on Niemen,
- Grodno – Łunne on Niemen,
- Wilno – Werki on Wila,
- Pińsk – Stare Konie on Strumień and Prostyr,
- Pińsk – Dawidgródek on Strumień, Prypeć and Horyń,
- Pińsk – Telechany on Pina, Jasiołga and Ogiński channel,
- Pińsk – Lubieszów on Stochoga and Prypeć,
- Dawidgródek – Rzeczyca.

The continuity of communication was sometimes suspended, mostly due to low or high water level. The passengers were obliged to check how the particular lines functioned⁶.

Owing to the rivers and water channels that were abounding in Poland it was possible to travel, among others:

- from Warta and Noteć to Odra and Łaba through Hamburg and through German channel (Mittelland-Kanal) opened in 1938, up to the Rhine and the North Sea,
- Dźwina, Niemen and the Vistula to the Baltic Sea,
- Prypeć and Dniepr to the Black Sea,
- Dniestr to the Black Sea,

⁴ Dz. U. Nr 37, poz. 335.

⁵ Tamże, § 122 ust. 1.

⁶ *Komunikacja wodna* [w:] „Przewodnik po Polsce” t. I. Polska Północno-Wschodnia, Warszawa 1935, s. 17–18.

- it was also planned to connect Prut and the Danube to the Black Sea. The Polish landscape alongside with the unique in Europe natural lands with fauna and flora, natural heritage, historic tokens (churches, palaces and castles) constituted the perfect destination for water cruises. In particular regions of Poland water route cruises gathered still growing number of lovers.



The harbor with boats used for local transport near Tarnopole.

The ships of 'the National Sailing on the Vistula' (Polish PŻW) led the passenger and tourist communication at the distance of 1300km. It was possible to start the cruise in Sandomierz and then through the Vistula to Gdańsk to finally reach Elbląg.

From Elbląg the ships of 'the National Sailing on the Vistula' could reach: the first Elbląg line through Zalew Świeży to picturesque place called 'Krynica Morska' situated on Kuroński sandbar and then to Tolmicko⁷. The second line called 'Warmińska' started in Elbląg and led towards Ostróda through Warmiński channel up to beautiful natural land of Warmia through numerous lakes connected to each other with channels until it reached its destination in Iława⁸.

The water routes allowed tourists to reach the Baltic Sea and to lands which nature and historic legacy guaranteed relax and strong cultural experiences.

Tab. Passenger lines of national sailing on the Vistula.

	Direction of water routes	Length in km.	Time of cruise	3rd class ticket price (zl)	2nd class ticket price (zl)	Cabin ticket price	Comments
1.	Kraków – Nowy Korczyn Nowy Korczyn – Kraków	90 “	8 13	300,- 300,-	-	-	Started in Cracow on Sunday and Thursday. Started in Nowy Korczyn on Tuesday and Friday
2.	Sandomierz – Warszawa Warszawa – Sandomierz	245 “	23 30	400,- “	600,-	900,-	Cruising daily

⁷ Tamże, s. 5.

⁸ Tamże, s. 6.

3.	Warszawa – Gdańsk Gdańsk – Warszawa	444 “	36 48	630,- “	950,-	1400,-	Cruising daily, every ship was provided with sleeping cabins in 2nd class, 5 ships had restaurants on board.
4.	Gdańsk – Elbląg Elbląg – Gdańsk	72 “	7 “	140,- “	-	-	Cruising daily
5.	Gdańsk – Nowy Dwór Nowy Dwór – Gdańsk	53 “	5 ¼ 5 ½	120,- “	-	-	“
6.	Elbląg – Krynica Morska Tolkmicko – Tolkmicko – Krynica Morska – Elbląg	40 “	3 ¼ 3 ½	150,-	-	-	“
7.	Elbląg – Ostróda Ostróda – Elbląg	80 “	12 ¾ “	250,- “	-	-	Started in Elbląg on Tuesday and Friday. Started in Ostróda on Monday and Wednesday.
8.	Giżycko – Węgorzewo Węgorzewo – Giżycko	26 “	1 ½ 1 ½	120,- “	-	-	Cruising daily
9.	Giżycko – Mikołajki – Ruciane Ruciane – Mikołajki – Giżycko	64 “	6 “	260,- “	-	-	“
10.	Ryn – Mikołajki – Pisz Pisz – Mikołajki – Ryn	52 “	5 ½ “	220,- “	-	-	“
11.	Ostróda – Iława	50	7	160,-	-	-	Temporary traveling route

‘the National Sailing on the Vistula’ introduced price discounts in 3rd class in order to popularize and facilitate the access to water transportation. The discounts were 33% and 25% according to the type of ticket.



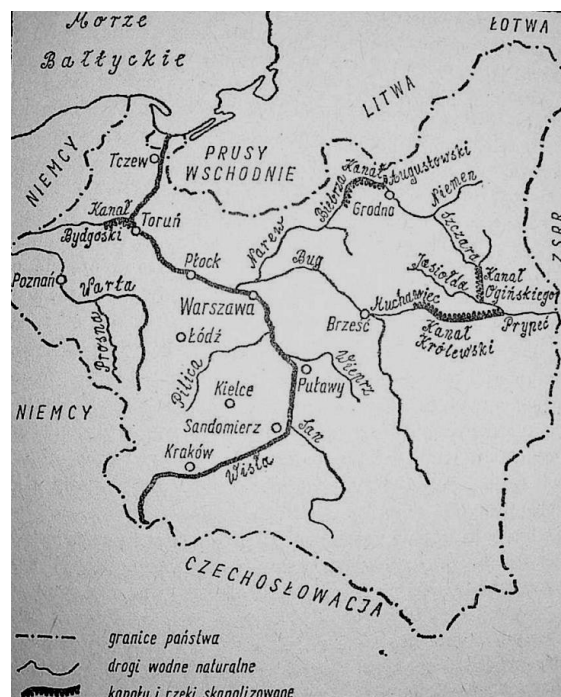
River harbor in Pińsk (20s of 20th century).

The discounts, after previous application, were designed for ...*military people, war veterans, workers and pensioners of state offices and institutions that had identity card with stamp which entitled them for rail discounts as well as students and children between age of 4 and 10*⁹. The 50% discounts were also designed for the members of school trips composed of groups consisting of more than 20 people. However, the members of trips organized by nation institutions were entitled to 33% discount on 2nd and 3rd class tickets¹⁰.



‘Zbigniew’ ship at Elbląg channel.

In norther Poland the magnificent landscape rich in lakes, forests and hills was formed after the meltdown of icebergs. Moreover in the region of numerous lakes, the rivers which were made use of were those with the strongest current, namely Brda, Czarna Woda, Drwęca, Czarna Hańcza and Wilia. The beauty of landscape was completed by forests and lakes, among others: Kartuzy, Wilia gorge and numerous lake districts.



The map of water routes in Poland before 1939.

⁹ Szlakami..., dz. cyt., s. 16.

¹⁰ Tamże.

The cultural diversity of residents of Belarus and Kaszuby was also something that drew attention and was interesting for tourists. During the 20 year Interwar Period the range of great valleys was very diverse in terms of cultural contrast. It was very transparent when comparing particular districts, from highly organized and wealthy Poznań district with thousands of lakes to rather monotonous yet with interesting sights Mazowsze and Polesie districts. At the frontier of this last region there was Białowieża forest and in the south – thousands of rivers among swamps.



1919, 'Pan Tadeusz' steam boat during the cruise on Niemen.

Among forests and mountain ranges, divided by rivers and water reservoirs, interesting fauna and flora could be found as well as symbols of Polish culture such as churches, castles and channels. Determining numerous water routes in the valleys made developing water communication possible, which in turn facilitated visiting these rich and beautiful lands. Already during the Interwar Period, Polesie was one of the most interesting regions in Poland and even Europe.

Southern region of Poland with its uplands spread through Kielce district and further towards agricultural region of Lublin and Wołyń with its architectural sights.

In 1929, on the initiative of water company the building of channel that was supposed to connect Bug river with the Black Sea started. The channel was also built in order to regulate natural channels and to drain Polesie by lowering the water level in lakes. The entirety of this building undertaking would cost 2,3mln zloty and was supposed to finish in 1933. As a result of reconstruction of government structures and development of railway, the water transportation was no longer as crucial as it used to be. It was possible to build merely short segment that connected Bug river to small water reservoir near Koszary village¹¹.

The natural beauty of Dniestr was enriched by its tributaries of two rivers, namely Strypa and Seret. In Dniestr basin, the attention of tourists was undoubtedly drawn by magnificent castles, manors, churches and very interesting and significantly diverse folklore¹².

In 1938 the ships of Polish inland sailing transported 0,7 million of tonnes of cargo and 991 thousand passengers. At the same time, France transported 49,5mln of tonnes whereas Germany 101,4 tonnes. During the Interwar Period lots of projects of new regulations were created, also concerning the Vistula. However, the railway built in 1926-1933 from Silesia to

¹¹ *Kanał widmo*, „Tygodnik Powszechny”, Onet.pl. dostęp 16.06.2014.

¹² A. Heinrich: *Podręcznik kajakowca*, Warszawa 1933, s. 262–267.

Gdynia foredoomed the development of sailing on the Vistula. It was undoubtedly beginning of the end. This railway line is even sometimes called 'new Vistula'¹³.



1936, the press advertisement of 'Ludzie Wisły' movie.

The most important factor connected to tourism movement on the Vistula are, and always have been, people. It is somehow impossible to imagine the lack of people in direct activities. It is also necessary to include the contribution of private investors and mass of engineers and architects to the development of passenger transportation. The endeavors connected to the development of transportation on the Vistula were included in the movie titled 'Ludzie Wisły' directed by Aleksander Ford and Jerzy Zarzycki.

The communication through water routes has its organizational beginnings alongside with the beginning of building Polish state. The water routes were made use both in traveling as well as transporting goods. When it comes to tourism purposes the water routes were used alongside with the development of companies dealing with producing water units. The Second Polish Republic made it possible to practice water tourism through main rivers as well as their basins and also inland water reservoirs. The habits of tourism on inland water routes during the discussed period of time created foundations of tourism development on water routes after 1945.

¹³ J. W. Gan: *Z dziejów żeglugi śródlądowej w Polsce*, Warszawa 1976, *passim*; *Wisła pasażerska Od Płocka do Tczewa*, [w:] *Żegluga śródlądowa wczoraj, dziś i jutro w Polsce i Europie*. Artykuły, http://www.zegluga.wroclaw.pl/articles.php?article_id=509, dostęp 14.06.2014.