
PLACES OF NATURAL BEAUTY AND OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE BIAŁA PODLASKA COUNTY AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH IN TOURISM

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Abstract:

The Biała Podlaska County boasts important cultural heritage and natural sites, not fully exploited yet, which can be a basis for a further development of tourism and recreation. Because of such favourable opportunities, tourist industry can be a leading economic sector in this region in the future. The growing number of tourist farms, together with a rising quality of agrotourism services, makes them complementary to hotel accommodation in this area. However, tourist information, under-developed hiking trails, together with gastronomic and road system infrastructures require vast improvement and development.

INTRODUCTION

A certain area can become popular with visitors only if there are good conditions, the most important of which are places of natural beauty, cultural heritage sites, anthropogenic conditions such as good roads, reliable public transport, tourist information, and tourism infrastructure. In the Biała Podlaska County the tourism sector is growing slowly, with the greatest activity in rural tourism and agrotourism as a form of farmers' non-agricultural economic activity [Karbowski, 2008, Czarkowska, 2015]. The development of agrotourism helps to improve both the living conditions of farm owners and rural infrastructure, but it can also enhance economic situation of the whole community [Grabowska, 2007]; the positive impact of tourism is also visible in the form of integration of rural communities. The development of rural tourism is possible in regions where there are beautiful natural places and cultural heritage sites, but only in an area inhabited by enterprising people [Górny, 2000].

Southern Podlasie has a large potential value for tourists. The current state of tourism services is good enough for travellers to move from place to place and to stay at different places around the entire area. Clean air, the River Bug, and the picturesque river Krzna are enough to encourage visitors to actively relax in this region [Biała Podlaska County Administration, 2006]. Apart from natural attractions, the beauty of the Biała Podlaska County is represented by cultural heritage sites, like wooden Catholic churches, Orthodox churches, manor houses, rural cottages, and roadside shrines.

The aim of the paper is to present and promote natural and historic places important for tourism, including agrotourism, farms offering accommodation to travellers in the Biała Podlaska County.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIAŁA PODLASKA COUNTY

The Biała Podlaska County, also called Southern Podlasie, consists of the city of Biała Podlaska, a county in itself, and the Biała Polaska County, both constituting more than a half of the former Biała Podlaska Voivodeship. The County is located in the Central-Eastern part of Poland, and is part of the Lublin Voivodeship. There are 343 towns and villages in the County. The most important attributes of the region include the location, close to the border and with an important European route, the E-30 road linking Madrid, Paris, Berlin, Warsaw, and Moscow, as well as part of European Rail route, E-20, leading through Warsaw to Moscow [the County Office in Biała Podlaska, 2001].

The Biała Podlaska County is located in the central belt of Polish lowlands, with two geographic regions of Podlasie and Lublin Polesie. Yet, according to the Kondracki physico-geographical division (2002) the area is located in the lowland of Southern Podlasie (the Podlasie Bug Valley, the Łuków plain), and in western Polesie Zachodnie (mezzo regions: Łomaska depression, Kodeńska plain, and Brzesk Polesie).

The terrain between the Bug and Krzna rivers is characterized by the presence of push moraines formed during the first geological epoch of the Quaternary period, during the activity of the ice sheet. By contra [Biała Podlaska County Administration, 2006].

The Biała Podlaska County is a typically agricultural area. Family farms are the main structural forms of agricultural activity, covering almost 95% of farming land. Only about 5% of agricultural land belongs to the agro-industrial companies and cooperatives, developed from former state farms, and former agricultural cooperatives. Crop growing is the main part of agricultural production with cereals, including rye, wheat, and oats, being dominant among the plants cultivated by farmers in this area. Additionally, production of fruit and vegetables is significant there [Biała Podlaska County Administration, 2006,2008].

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The territory of the Bug River area has been ruled by different powers over the centuries. The fact that it is a borderland area has contributed to a cultural diversity and mutual contacts between Polish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian people. It is visible in well preserved Catholic, Orthodox and Uniate churches. The settlement and development of different ethnic communities in this region have contributed to the presence of different traditions and different architectural styles. The most valuable sites, attractive to tourists, are presented in table 1 [Parnicka, 2006].

Table 1. Monuments of material Culture

Place (Commune)	Site	Description
Biała Podlaska (Biała Podlaska Commune)	The Radziwiłłs' park and palace complex	Built in the 17th century, out of the original complex what is left is fortifications and a gate, added to later and designed on the model of the Arc de Triomphe with numerous decorations and six-storey entrance tower. At the site there are also remains of a former castle, built in the form of a five-pointed star, with five bastions surrounded by a moat, and an earth rampart. Today the palace is the seat of a museum, with three outbuildings, Baroque East Tower in the Park and a castle chapel.
Wygoda (Janów Podlaski Commune)	Stud of Arabian horses	Located 2 km from the centre of the village, built in 1817 at the initiative of the Commission for Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Poland, it is famous for Arabian horses, while Anglo- Arabian horses, also bred here, are less well known in the world. Every year the stud holds horse auctions. Another big attraction is the 19th Century stable complex situated in an old park. The oldest of these, the Clock Stable ("Zegarowa") and the Main Stallion Stable ("Czołowa") built in 1848 and 1841, respectively, are the works of

		famous architect Henryk Marconi.
Janów Podlaski (Janów Podlaski Commune)	Bishop palace (originally a castle)	The remains of 17th-century castle, a seat of Roman Catholic bishops of Łuck from the 15th century. Now the building complex has been converted into a 4-Star hotel and conference centre.
	Post-cathedral complex	Church of St. Trinity built between 1714-1735, a brick bell tower from 1745, a former seminary from 1745, a fence from the 18th-19th century with a brick gate-bell tower from 1874 and a parsonage from the mid-19th century.
Terespol (Terespol Commune) Kobylany, Lebiedziew, Łobaczew Duży, Murawiec-Żuki, Kolonja Dobratycz	Orthodox church	Orthodox church of saint John the Theologian, a brick building of the Classicist style from 1745, with a bell tower founded by Anthony Pociiej.
	Church	Post-Dominican parish church of the Holy Trinity, built of brick in 1863, to a design of P. Jablonski, with a gateway from the end of the 19th century added to at present times.
	Graveyard church	A wooden chapel from the turn of the 19th/20th century.
	Part of Brest Litovsk fortress	A group of fortresses, unique in Europe (1870-1885).
Łomazy (Łomazy Commune)	Church	Parish church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, built in the neo-Gothic style between 1906-1911.
	Jewish cemetery (Kirkut)	In the necropolis there are two collective graves, where in 1949 the remains of Jews shot in the nearby forest of Hały were buried. They were murdered during the liquidation of the ghetto in August in 1942. Around 1700 Jews of Łomazy and the surrounding towns were murdered, including many women and children.
	Uniate chapel	Dedicated to John the Evangelist, built in 1834, in the Classicist style.
Krasówka (Łomazy Commune)	Remains of a manor farm complex	The mansion of brick, plastered, was built about 1870-90.
Koszoły (Łomazy Commune)	Remains of a manor farm complex	Farm buildings and a manor house, built in the 17th century. In the 18th century it was rebuilt in the Baroque style. During World War I, the manor was destroyed. Around the buildings there was a park, which in part has been preserved to the present day.
Krzymoszyce (Międzyrzec Podlaski Commune)	Chapel	A brick chapel dedicated to Anthony of Padua, from the end of the 19th century.
Rogoźnica (Międzyrzec Podlaski Commune)	Manor farm complex	A manor house from the mid-19th century, a barn, remains of a landscape park.
Wólka Krzymowska (Międzyrzec Podlaski Commune)	Chapel	A chapel dedicated to our Lady of Perpetual Help, built in 1907.
Zawadki (Miedzyrzec Podlaski Commune)	Manor farm complex	With a wooden manor house and a wooden farm building, from 19th and 20th centuries.
Kodeń (Kodeń Commune)	Castle chapel of the Holy Spirit	The oldest church in the Biala Podlaska County, built in 1530, in the Gothic style with Renaissance architectural details. The only brick Orthodox church in Poland.
	Saint Laurence graveyard Chapel	A chapel in the shape of a rotunda built between 1683-1685.

	Renaissance church of St. Anna	A Baroque basilica, with a complex façade, sanctuary of Our Lady of Kodeń (de Guadalupe).
Leśna Podlaska (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Paulinian monastery complex	A church of the late-Baroque, a chapel (17th century), a monastery with preserved Interior (18th century), remains of ramparts (17th century).
Bordziłówka Stara (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Historic cemetery	Founded in 1800 as a uniate cemetery, it was used till the end of the 19th century. What has been preserved is a group of tombstones from the 19th century in the form of a stele with a cross, and a few graves with crosses of wood.
Droblin (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Manor house, carp pond and lime walking alley	A manor house of the late Classicist style, built after 1850, (now private property). On the grounds of the manor house there is a hotel and a restaurant.
Ludwinów (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Manor house	In 1988 the manor house, then in disrepair, was purchased by Mark Karp. In 1991 in its place a new manor House of the Classicist style was built. The Southern part of the mansion is surrounded by a park from the 19th century, with a large central interior on the axis of the house, walking lime alleys, ponds, and with a view of the Klukówka River and a Church in Leśna.
Nosów (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Manor house with a garden	Built in the 19th century, since 1990 private property.
Sosnówka (Sosnówka Commune)	Józef Ignacy Kraszewski museum	The museum is housed in a 19th-century manor house, belonging to the writer's grandparents, Anna and Błażej Kraszewskis. The writer spent his childhood there. The mansion was burned down during World War II, and it was rebuilt between 1959 and 1962, on 22 July 1962 the Museum was opened.

Source: own research based on literature

¹Arasymowicz A., Duklewski W., Grabowski W., Jurzyk A., Kasprzyk A., 1998;

²BLGD, 2006;

³Starostwo Powiatowe w Białej Podlaskiej, 2001;

⁴Gmina Janów Podlaski, 2008,

⁵www.ciekawepodlasie.pl/

NATURAL SITES OF VALUE

The most valuable place of natural beauty in the County and in Podlasie is the Bug Valley, a landscape park. The Bug is one of a few watercourses in Europe which have preserved their natural forms; the meandering river and its valley have not changed much. Simple methods of farming and small anthropogenic impact have resulted in high natural values of the Bug River valley [Głowacki et al., 2006]. What is characteristic of the County section of the Bug River valley are floristically rich plant communities of different trophic levels, growing in different moisture conditions (including riparian woodland with willows and poplars or with ashes and elms), and grass communities, continental or typical for meadows. The stretch of the Bug Valley in the area of Janów Podlaski consists of flooded meadows, traditionally exploited, and a large complex of riparian woods, including one of the largest in the Podlasie section of the Bug River, called "Łęg Dębowy". In its surroundings there are smaller woodland areas, among others including oak and pine trees growing there. The Bug River and its bed there is an abundance of aquatic communities.

The fact that this region, both at the national and international level, is treated as a natural ecosystem and an environmental protection area is a proof of its outstanding value. This area of the Bug River is a *Corridor* in the *Pan European Ecological Network*, being an integral part of the Network. It was also recognised as wildlife refuge no 199 in the Corine system, and it is considered to be a nodal area of international importance according to the *concept of the national ecological network* – EECONET-PL [LIRO et al., 1995]. The most

important biodiversity sites are located in six nature reserves: Liski, Omelno, Chmielinne, Czapli Stóg, Szwajcaria Podlaska, and Łęg Dębowy [Wierzba et al., 2010] (tab. 2).

The large diversity of the habitat of Biała Podlaska County manifests itself in almost a full range of variation of plant communities, characteristic for the well-developed Bug River valley. Distribution of woodland areas, however, is uneven, varying from 10% in the Sławatycze Commune, to 70% in Międzyrzec Podlaski and Biała Podlaska Communes. Mixed forests with pine dominate here and constitute about 70% of the whole area. In addition, oak woods make up 14% of the entire woodland area, birch, 10%, alder, 4%, but larch, spruce, ash, hornbeam, and aspen trees also grow there. In the Biała Podlaska County mixed woods and forests are the most numerous, covering the largest part, up to 73%, of the total area of all forests (URwww.powiatbialski.eu). Forest communities mostly grow on sandy or loamy moraine plains and in wet and fertile river valleys. Moors and areas of bulrush and sedge communities persist in the County, in their majority of natural origin [Biała Podlaska County Administration, 2006,2008].

Table 2. Natural reserves and natural monuments

Town (Commune)	Natural site	Description
Zahajki Forestry (Drelów Commune)	Liski Reserve	A forest reserve created in 1981, with the area of 128.84 ha, in order to protect wildlife, including the dormouse a rare species of mammals. In addition, hedgehogs, squirrels, and many species of birds, like the raven, and the woodpecker, live there.
Turów Forestry (Drelów Commune)	Omelno Reserve	The oldest forest reserve, created in 1965 on an area of 26.97 ha. It is located on the boundary of the County, north of the village of Lisiowólka. The objective of the conservation area is to preserve the linden wood of natural origin, with over 120-year-old oak and lime trees.
Leśna Podlaska Forestry (Leśna Podlaska Commune)	Chmielinne Reserve	A forest reserve with an area of 67.20 ha created in 1967 in order to preserve a riparian wood in the wide valley of the Klukówka River. There is also a variety of other valuable plant communities, mostly in wet woodlands with lime and hornbeam, or in pine – oak woods on higher ground.
	Natural monument	Four huge 300-year-old oak trees, growing around a monastery and ancient, 350 year old “the Oak of Love”
Nepłe-Bohukały (Terespol Commune)	Szwajcaria Podlaska Reserve	Forest-reserve landscape created in 1995 on an area of 24 ha in order to preserve the landscape values and protect forest and wood and water communities which have a high degree unspoiled natural state. It is located from up the mouth of the Krzna to the Bug, and stretches along the Bug River.
Nepłe -Krzyczew (Terespol Commune)	Czapli Stóg Reserve	A fauna reserve created in 1987 on an area of 4.82 ha in a 100-120 year-old forest, single type woodland with reed grass. The objective of the protection area is the colony of about 40 Heron nests there. The neighbouring flooded area between the Krzna and the Bug is an ideal habitat for the species. There are also more than 30 species of songbirds.
Konstantynów Commune	Stary Las Reserve	A forest reserve of 5.88 ha, created in 1995, characterized by well developed typical wet woodland with lime and hornbeam trees and 130-year-old pine but also larch and ash trees.
Wólka Dobryńska (Zalesie Commune)	Dobryń Reserve	A forest reserve with an area of 86.60 ha and a dozen over 200-year-old oak trees, being natural monuments. There are four woodland communities there. The largest

		area is taken by a community of alder woods with currants and single-type patches of vegetations. Part of Natura 2000 PLH060004 "Dobryń Programme"
Janów Podlaski (Janów Podlaski Commune)	Dębowy Łęg Reserve	A forest reserve created in 1972 on an area of 132.38 ha. It is accessible from the meadows of the horse stables. In the forest there are oak trees with elongated leaves, a variety common on fertile alluvial soil.
Międzyrzec Podlaski (Międzyrzec Podlaski Commune)	Natural monument	An oak tree with a circumference of 480 cm, at the rectory (according to a legend, it was planted in the year of the enactment of May 3 Constitution).
Korczówka (Łomazy Commune)	Natural monument	An erratic boulder of gray-red granite with the circumference of 540 cm in the "Olszynka" forest
Koszoły and Lubenka (Łomazy Commune)	Natural monument	A lime tree in Lubenka and two ash trees in Koszoły.
Jabłeczna (Sławatycze Commune)	Natural monument	44 oak trees located on the meadows along the Bug River
Zalutyn (Piszczac Commune)	Natural monument	A 340 year-old oak called Boryna

Source: own research based on literature

⁶www.slowopodlasia.pl

⁷www.kurierlubelski.pl

⁸www.powiatbialski.eu;

⁹BLGD, 2006,

TOURISM FORMS

Hiking tourism

There is a small number of paths for walking in the Biała Podlaska County, with only three marked hiking trails.

- Bużny Most – the path leads through the floodplains to the Bug River, near the village of Neple (length 11.5 km); standing on the bridge a tourist can enjoy a picturesque panoramic view of the river Krzna, with a large post of nestling herons nearby.
- Sz wajc ar ia Podlaska – the rout leads through the area of the Sz wajc ar ia Podlaska reserve, at the mouth of the Krzna, where it flows into the Bug (length 5 km),
- Nadbużańskie Łęgi – the path, abundant in rich meadow communities, bulrushes, and riparian woods, leads through wet woodlands near Janow Podlaski and across the reserve of „Łęg Dębowy” (length 12.5 km),

Additionally, Chotyłów Forestry Management offers tourist routes for hiking and cycling, whereas in Zalutyn, the Kłoda Forestry has built a forest school path. It starts at the Forestry and leads through timber woods to the forest school. Walking to this school, a tourist can read information on boards put up along the trail. At the Chotyłów Forestry Management there is a point of environmental education called „Barwinek”. There is also a "green class" there, a place to conduct field lessons on nature [Maryniuk 2015].

Horse riding

In Zalutyn the Piszczac Commune there is a stable specialising in raising horses of the lesser Poland breed and hucul ones, picturesquely located on the river Lutnia. It offers riding lessons for children and adults, and it has a registered sports section taking part in national and regional horse jumping competitions [Maryniuk 2015]. Horse tourism centres are also located in Rakowiska and Woskrzenice. Every year they hold recreational hunting events like Hubertus or chasing the fox.

Kayaking

An attractive kayaking trail is a route on the river Krzna. It begins in Międzyrzec Podlaski and is divided into the following stages: Międzyrzec Podlaski-Biała Podlaska (25 km); Biała Podlaska-Woskrzenice (20km); Woskrzenice - Neple (25km). There are two camping places in Woskrzenice and Neple; they can be a starting point for kayaking on the Bug river, with landing stages arranged in Pratulin (35 km from Neple), Janów Podlaski (25 km from Pratulin) and Gnojno (15 km from Janów Podlaski) [Bochenek, Kędra, 2006; Tworek, 2012].

Fishing

The following places are popular with anglers: Terebela-Witulín lake, quarry ponds in Woskrzewice and in Międzyrzec Podlaskim, as well as carp ponds in Kobylany.

Swimming

In the village of Chotyłów, the Piszczac Commune, there is Kubiki lake where a tourist can rent pedal boats, kayaks, and motor boats. Those who are in favour of active sports have tennis courts, but also volleyball and basketball courts at their disposal [Maryniuk 2015].

Part of the quarry pond in Międzyrzec Podlaski is a swimming pool, covering a vast area of an old gravel mine. It consists of two sections, separated by a narrowing, a smaller one in the northern part, where a swimming pool is, and of a much bigger, southern part, intended mainly for fishing. The steep walls of the old mine overgrown with trees are also picturesque. Nearby there is a place with a volleyball court, and a place where kayaks can be rented.

In Kobylany the Terespol Commune an artificial reservoir is located at the site of an old powder keg from the 19 century. There is a wide sandy beach around, and a wide stretch of shallow water.

Skiing

Międzyrzec Podlaski boasts a plastic ski slope with a ski lift open all year round, while in winter skiers can take advantage of a short ski lift on the slope of an old powder keg in Kobylany.

Cycling

The Bug valley bike trail, with a total length of over 420 km, runs through the area of the County. In Biała Podlaska there are 10 km of cycle lanes. This network is going to be expanded and divided in many sections.

The Biała Podlaska County is part of the *Green Velo Eastern Cycle Trail*, which is a continuous bike lane running through five voivodeships. The part of the lane in the Biała Podlaska County leads from the boundary with the Podlasie Voivodeship in the Konstantynów Commune, to a Bug River crossing in Gnojno, then to Terespol, Kodeń, Sławatycze, and, finally, to the boundary with the Włodawa County.

In the Biała Podlaska County the above trail is still under construction and it is going to run along County road 1136L and two sections of County road 1137 in Terespol. Two cycling bridges are being built across the Grabarka River, along Voivodeship road 816 in Kodeń, and the crossroads of this road and national road 63 in Sławatycze [Pawluk, 2015].

Tourist infrastructure (accommodation, food, hiking trails, roads)

In properly functioning tourism infrastructure, accommodation and catering play the most important role. The Biała Podlaska County has a well developed hotel facilities, as well as seasonal youth hostels, guesthouses, and places of accommodation in agrotourism farms. In 2014, there were 25 places offering accommodation for tourists (including 17 year-round),

with 986 beds (including 659 all-year-round beds) (www.powiatbialski.eu) (table 3). But the food service offer is quite limited. A few restaurants and bars are mainly based in several major towns; additionally, most of them are only open during the summer season. Moreover, information and road infrastructure of the region are underdeveloped [Dołowska-Żabka et al., 2013].

Table 3. Agrotourism farms and accommodation places in the Biała Podlaska County

Town (Commune)	Hotel or farm Agritourism	number of beds
Woskrzenice Małe (Biała Podlaska)	farm Agritourism	2 - rooms, 6- number of beds
Woskrzenice Duże (Biała Podlaska)	Hotel	18- rooms, 36- number of beds
Wilczyn (Biała Podlaska)	farm Agritourism	5- rooms, 20- number of beds
Terebela (Biała Podlaska)	farm Agritourism	4- rooms, 8- number of beds
Husinka (Biała Podlaska)	farm Agritourism	5- rooms, 10- number of beds
Janówka (Biała Podlaska)	farm Agritourism	2- rooms, 8- number of beds
Grabanów (Biała Podlaska)	Hotel	41- number of beds
Roskosz (Biała Podlaska)	Accommodation	70- number of beds
Sławacinek Nowy (Biała Podlaska)	Hotel	28- number of beds
Zaborek (Janów Podlaski)	Guesthouse	80 number of beds
Wygoda (Janów Podlaski)	Hotel	32 number of beds
Terespol	farm Agritourism	6 number of beds
	Guesthouse	25 number of beds
Kobylany (Terespol)	Hotel	46 number of beds
Chotyłów (Zalesie)	farm Agritourism	5 number of beds
Zalutyń (Zalesie)	farm Agritourism	4 number of beds
Liszna (Sławatycze)	farm Agritourism	10 number of beds
Liszna (Sławatycze)	Guesthouse	25 number of beds
Liszna (Sławatycze)	farm Agritourism	11 number of beds
Sławatycze	farm Agritourism	6 number of beds
Łózki (Drelów)	farm Agritourism	5 number of beds
	farm Agritourism	10 number of beds
Wisznice	Guesthouse	25 number of beds
Kostomłoty (Kodeń)	farm Agritourism	6 number of beds
Kodeń	Guesthouse	94 number of beds
	Hotel	10 number of beds

Source: own research based on literature:

¹⁰Starostwo Powiatowe w Białej Podlaskiej, 2006;

¹¹www.osp.org.pl/hosting

¹²www.noclegiw.pl/noclegi-bialski;

¹³www.lubelskie24.pl/

SUMMARY

The Biała Podlaska County is an area of outstanding natural beauty with many sites of cultural heritage. It has a sufficient accommodation infrastructure, which makes it possible to conduct and develop various forms of tourism and recreation. It is a perfect area for tourism development, especially for agrotourism which in the future may be an important economic branch in the region. Increasing quantity and quality of agrotourism farms complements hotel and, in particular, dining facilities. However, there are some improvements required in areas such as tourist information, under-developed hiking trails, dining facilities, and road and public transport infrastructure. The development largely depends on the involvement of local authorities in generating publicity and in promoting the region.

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