FIELD GUIDE · VOLUME 1

Podlasie. Where the forest remembers kings

Four regions around the Białowieża Forest, twelve routes and a map that fits in your pocket. Written by people who live here.

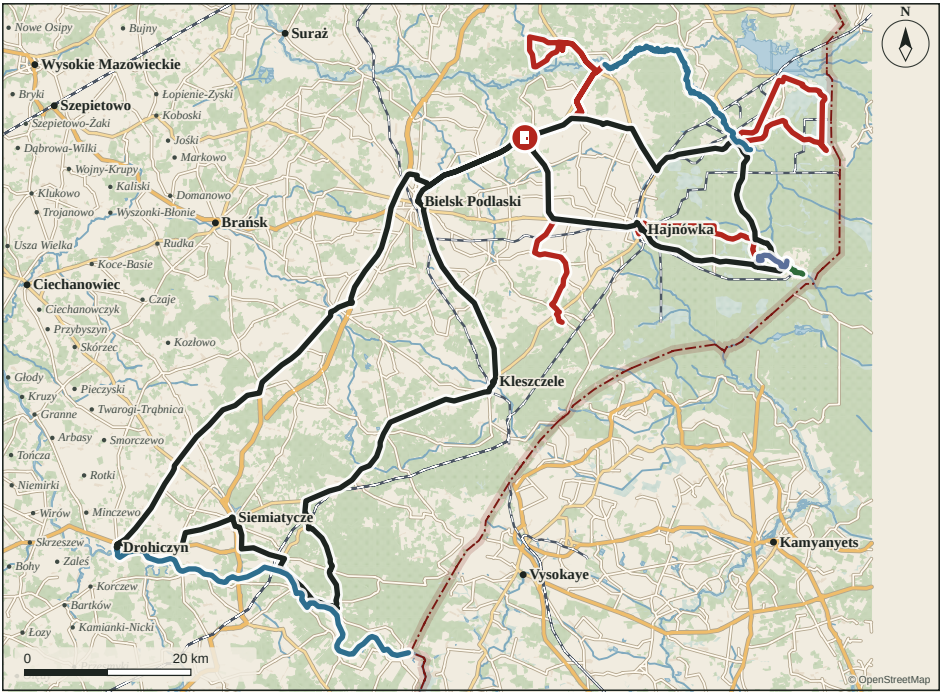
Za czerwonymi drzwiami · Klejniki 157 · zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl

PODLASIE TRAVEL GUIDE

At dawn the mist lies so thick in the Narew valley that the towers of the Orthodox churches rise out of it like masts. At the edge of the Forest a European bison crosses the road without hurry, and the drivers wait. In Trześcianka someone is painting the shutters blue again, because that is how it has always been. Podlasie is in no rush to be liked. You have to come for longer, lose your signal and let the landscape tell its own story: of tsarist hunts, of villages where people prayed in Church Slavonic, of rivers that for centuries were the roads.

This guide begins where we live: in Klejniki, a village in the Czyże municipality, between Hajnówka and Bielsk Podlaski. By car it takes about 20 minutes to reach Hajnówka, the gateway to the Białowieża Forest, and a quarter of an hour to Narew, where the Land of Open Shutters begins. By bike, the red trail in Czyże is 7 km away, and it takes you on to Green Velo in Hajnówka or Dubicze Cerkiewne.

We have divided the area into four regions and twelve routes. These are the places we recommend to our guests most often. Next to each place you will find stars: one means “worth a look”, two “worth a detour”, three “worth a special trip”. Each route lists its length, surface and a GPX file for navigation on your phone.

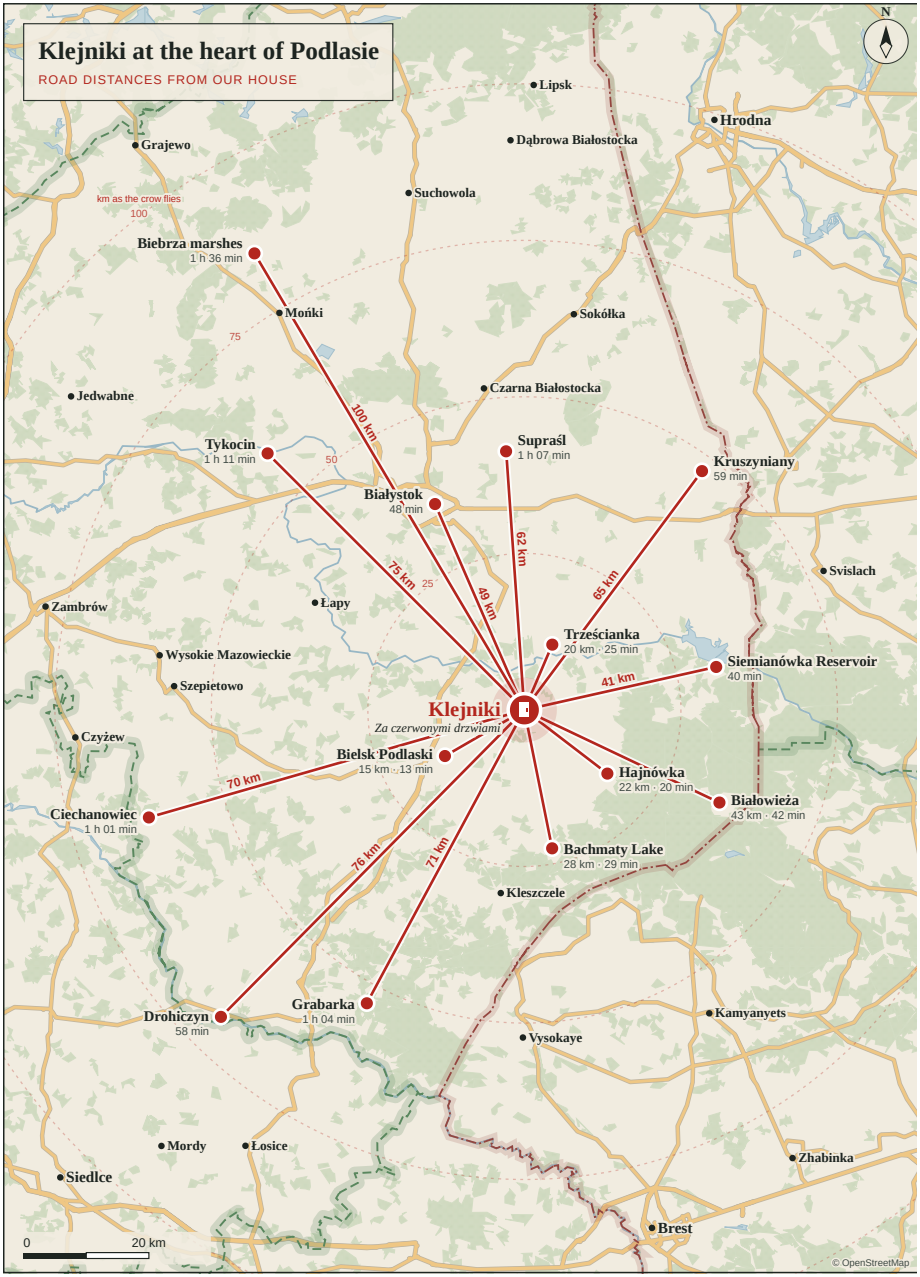


Map: © OpenStreetMap contributors. Route lines are based on OSM data; on the ground, follow the trail markings.

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2. Land of Open Shutters and the Narew Valley
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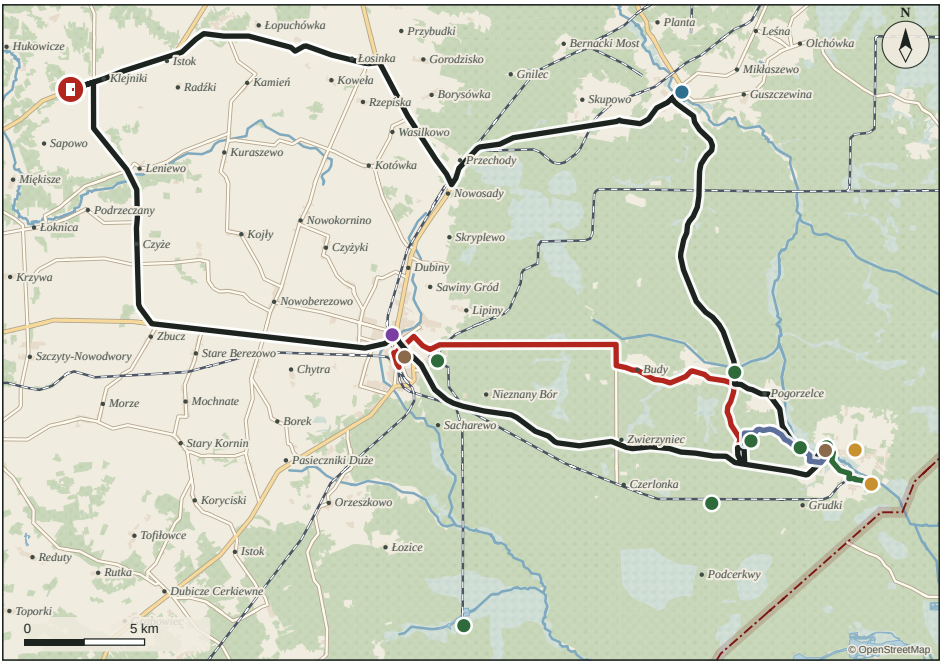
The guide on your phone
Add the guide to your home screen. It works like an app: maps, routes and descriptions even without signal.
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/



From our house everything is close: Hajnówka and Bielsk Podlaski in a quarter of an hour, Białowieża and Białystok in forty-five minutes, and the Biebrza marshes, Augustów and Lake Wigry within a day trip. The map shows road distances and driving times.

REGION 1

Białowieża Forest



Stepping into the Forest is like stepping into a cathedral. The trunks of oaks and ashes rise forty metres, light falls from above in narrow shafts, and underfoot lie fallen giants from which the next generation of forest is growing. Nobody clears them away, because in this part of the Forest nature has long ruled itself. It is one of the last fragments of primeval lowland forest in Europe, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The largest herd of free-living European bison in the world lives here.

The gateway to the Forest is Hajnówka: a town of timbermen, railwaymen and Orthodox church choirs. From here a green cycle route leads to Białowieża, and a narrow-gauge forest railway runs to Topiło. Białowieża itself is the former hunting residence of the tsars. The palace is gone, but the park remains, and the old railway station now houses a restaurant.

The most precious part of the forest, the Strict Protection Area of Białowieża National Park, can be visited only with a licensed guide. It is worth it, because it is a completely different world from a managed forest. The rest of the Forest you can explore on your own, on foot and by bike, along marked trails.

> *In Poland you do not call it a "forest" here, you call it the "puszcza". The difference is the one between a garden and the wild.*

Practicalities

GETTING THERE

From Klejniki to Hajnówka it is approx. 22 km (approx. 20 min), to Białowieża approx. 45 km (approx. 45 min). Minibuses run between Hajnówka and Białowieża.

WHEN TO GO

May and June, when the forest is at its greenest and the birds are singing. September and October bring mushrooms and the red deer rut. Winter is quieter, and bison are easier to spot.

HOW LONG

At least one full day for Białowieża and a second for Hajnówka and its surroundings.

GOOD TO KNOW

Opening hours of the European Bison Show Reserve, the BPN museum and guided entries change with the season. Check them at bpn.gov.pl. On trails in the National Park you must not leave the paths, and dogs must be on a lead.

Highlights

European Bison Show Reserve ★★★

Large enclosures where you can see European bison, Polish konik horses, bison-cattle hybrids and other animals of the Forest. More certain than meeting one in the wild, and great with children.

> It is calmest in the morning, before the coaches arrive. Check the hours at bpn.gov.pl.

Royal Oaks Trail ★★★

A short wooden boardwalk among oaks several centuries old, named after Polish kings and Lithuanian princes. The trunks are so thick that it takes several people to put their arms around them.

> It is under a kilometre, so combine it with the bison reserve. Entry may be ticketed; check current rules at bpn.gov.pl.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral, Hajnówka ★★

One of the most extraordinary Orthodox churches in Poland, built from the 1970s to the 1990s. Its form recalls a tent, and inside the eye is drawn to great stained-glass windows and icons. Every year it hosts a festival of Orthodox church music.

> Step in during a service and listen to the choir. The acoustics are impressive.

Białowieża Forest Narrow-Gauge Railway ★★

The forest railway runs from Hajnówka to Topiło through 12 km of forest. It was built to haul timber and today carries tourists in open carriages.

> It runs in season, roughly from May to September. Timetable and reservations from the Hajnówka Forest District.

Palace Park, Białowieża ★★

A park around the vanished hunting palace of the tsars. Ponds, old avenues and buildings of the former residence. This is where most Białowieża outings begin.

> For sunset over the ponds, bring a blanket.

BPN Nature and Forest Museum ★★

The Nature Education Centre of Białowieża National Park. Dioramas, animals and the history of the Forest under one roof. Good preparation before you enter the woods.

> Guided entries to the strict protection area start by the museum.

Żebra Żubra ★★

A boardwalk through a wet, boggy forest between Białowieża and the bison reserve. Wooden planks lead over the water, among alders and ferns.

> After rain the boardwalk can be slippery. Wear shoes with good soles.

Restauracja Carska ★★

A restaurant in the former tsarist railway station of Białowieża Towarowa. Game, blini, regional cuisine and period interiors.

> In season and at weekends, book a table.

Belarusian Culture Museum and Centre ★

The story of the Belarusians of Podlasie: costumes, textiles, tools, rites. It helps you understand why there are so many Orthodox churches in this area, and where this distinctive speech comes from.

> A good option for a rainy afternoon.

Topiło ★

A settlement in the heart of the forest, the railway's terminus. Ponds, wooden houses and silence. The green cycle trail from Dubicze Cerkiewne to Białowieża passes through Topiło.

> In the evening by the ponds you can hear beavers and frogs.

Place of Power ★

A clearing in the forest by the trail from Topiło to Białowieża, wrapped in a local legend of extraordinary energy. Legend aside, it is a lovely spot to rest.

> It lies on the green Dubicze Cerkiewne–Topiło–Białowieża cycle trail, so it is a natural stop by bike.

Stoczek 1929 ★

A restaurant by the entrance to the Palace Park. Babka (potato bake), pierogi and other dishes of Podlasie cuisine.

> A good place for lunch after a walk in the park.

Narewka ★

A village on the Narewka River, on the northern edge of the Forest. A kayak landing, a tourist information point and the start of two Green Velo loops.

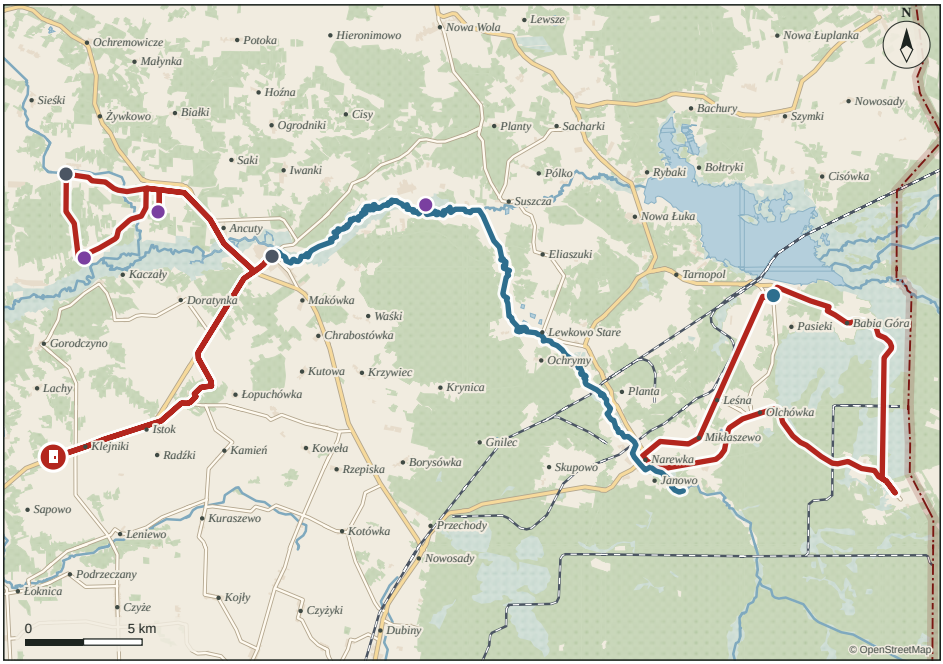
> This is where you rent a kayak for the Narewka trip.



Scan to open the route on your phone
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/bialowieza-forest/

REGION 2

Land of Open Shutters and the Narew Valley



In Trześcianka, Soce and Puchły the houses stand gable-end to the road, one beside the next, like soldiers on parade. Each has its own shutters: blue, green, white, with cut-out suns, flowers and crosses. The patterns passed from father to son, and a carpenter from the next village could tell by them whose work it was. Behind the houses begin the meadows of the Narew valley, backwaters and alder carrs, where cranes circle in the evening.

This is a land of slow tempo. It is best covered by bike, or slowly by car, stopping at every Orthodox church. The interiors are often closed, but at many churches there is a parish phone number, or a neighbour who knows who has the key.

To the east the Narew valley opens onto Siemianówka Reservoir, one of the largest bodies of water in Podlasie and a refuge for waterbirds. The Narewka River, which

flows out of the Forest, runs calmly through the meadows here and is one of the most pleasant kayaking routes in the area.

> *Shutters used to be the calling card of the householder. Today they are the calling card of the whole village.*

Practicalities

GETTING THERE

From Klejniki to Narew it is approx. 14 km, to Trześcianka approx. 19 km, to Puchły approx. 23 km. Go via the bridge in Narew, because there is no other crossing of the river in the area.

WHEN TO GO

May to September. In spring the Narew backwaters and the birds, in summer greenery and long evenings. On an overcast day the colours of the shutters glow the strongest.

HOW LONG

Half a day by car, a full day by bike.

GOOD TO KNOW

These are living villages, not an open-air museum. Take photos from the road and do not enter yards without an invitation. Shops are small and there are almost no places to eat, so bring provisions or plan lunch in Narew or Hajnówka.

Highlights

Trześcianka ★★★

The largest village of the Land of Open Shutters. The most decorated houses and the green Orthodox church of St Michael the Archangel from the 1860s, with a rich iconostasis.

> Walk through the whole village. The prettiest shutters are on the side roads.

Soce ★★

The smallest and most intimate of the three villages. Houses in an even row, a stream and the chapel of St Elijah.

> The best light for photos is in the late afternoon.

Puchły ★★

A village with a colourful Orthodox church of the Protection of the Mother of God, built in 1913–1918, one of the most picturesque in Podlasie. Its bright decoration is visible from the road.

> The interior usually opens for services. Keep quiet around the church.

Odrynki Hermitage ★★

An Orthodox hermitage on the edge of the Narew valley marshes, far from the roads. Wooden buildings among meadows and silence.

> This is a place of prayer. Come for a short visit and do not disturb the monks.

Siemianówka Reservoir ★★

A large reservoir on the Narew near the Belarusian border and one of the most important refuges for waterbirds in Podlasie. Herons, terns, cormorants, and in spring hundreds of ducks.

> Bring binoculars. The most birds are there in the morning and evening.

Narew ★

An old small town on the river, one of the oldest in the area. Two Orthodox churches and a wooden church, with the meadows of the Narew valley all around.

> This is the easiest place for a shop and lunch in the Land of Open Shutters.

Scan to open the route on your phone
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/land-of-open-shutters/

REGION 3

Bielsk Podlaski, Grabarka and the Bug Valley



On Grabarka the crosses stand so thick that the hill looks like a forest without leaves. There are thousands of them, from wooden ones several metres tall to little ones tied with a ribbon. Each was brought by someone with an intention: for the sick, for the dead, in thanksgiving. On the August night before the Feast of the Transfiguration, pilgrims with candles walk here from every corner of Podlasie. A few dozen kilometres on, the Bug spreads wide between chalk slopes, and in Drohiczyn the former capital of Podlasie looks down at the river from its high escarpment.

Bielsk Podlaski, approx. 15 km from us, is a good place to begin. The town hall on the market square houses a museum, and Orthodox churches and Catholic churches have stood side by side here for centuries. Further south begins the land

of the Bug: Mielnik, with its chalk quarry and the ruins of a Gothic church on Castle Hill, and Drohiczyn, with its cathedral and a view that is hard to forget.

To the west, in Ciechanowiec, waits one of the most interesting open-air village museums in Poland. In the park stand cottages, windmills and manor houses, and inside are gathered the tools and machines that several generations of farmers worked with.

> *On Grabarka nobody asks where you come from. They only ask whether you have brought a cross.*

Practicalities

GETTING THERE

From Klejniki to Bielsk Podlaski it is approx. 15 km, to Grabarka approx. 70 km, to Drohiczyn approx. 75 km. This region is a full day by car.

WHEN TO GO

From May to October. For Grabarka the most important day is 19 August, the Feast of the Transfiguration. There are crowds then, so for a quiet visit choose another day.

HOW LONG

One day for the driving route, two days for the Bug kayak trip.

GOOD TO KNOW

Grabarka is an active place of worship. Modest dress is expected, and women usually cover their heads. The Bug above Niemirów is a border river. Start your trips at Niemirów or lower down, and carry an ID document.

Highlights

Grabarka Holy Mountain ★★★

The most important Orthodox shrine in Poland: a hill with a church, a convent and thousands of crosses brought by pilgrims. At the foot of the hill is a spring whose water is credited with healing power.

> Dress modestly; women should cover their heads. In mid-August the great pilgrimage takes place.

Bielsk Podlaski ★★

An old royal town with a late-Baroque 18th-century town hall on the market square, which houses a museum. In the centre, Orthodox and Catholic churches stand side by side, a trace of many centuries of neighbourliness.

> Look in on the market square on market day. That is when the town is liveliest.

Mielnik ★★

A small town on hills above the Bug. At the foot of Castle Hill stand the ruins of a Gothic church, and nearby a chalk mine lays bare white slopes.

> Climb Castle Hill for sunset over the Bug.

Drohiczyn ★★

The former capital of Podlasie, today a small town with a cathedral and monasteries. From Castle Hill opens one of the loveliest views of the Bug valley.

> The trip from Niemirów ends here. After the kayaks, climb the hill and look at where you have paddled from. Around here, try zaguby, a local dish on Poland's list of traditional products.

Museum of Agriculture in Ciechanowiec ★★

A great village museum in the park of a former palace complex. Cottages, windmills, a manor house and collections of farm equipment.

> Plan at least half a day. Check the seasonal hours before you go.

Niemirów ★

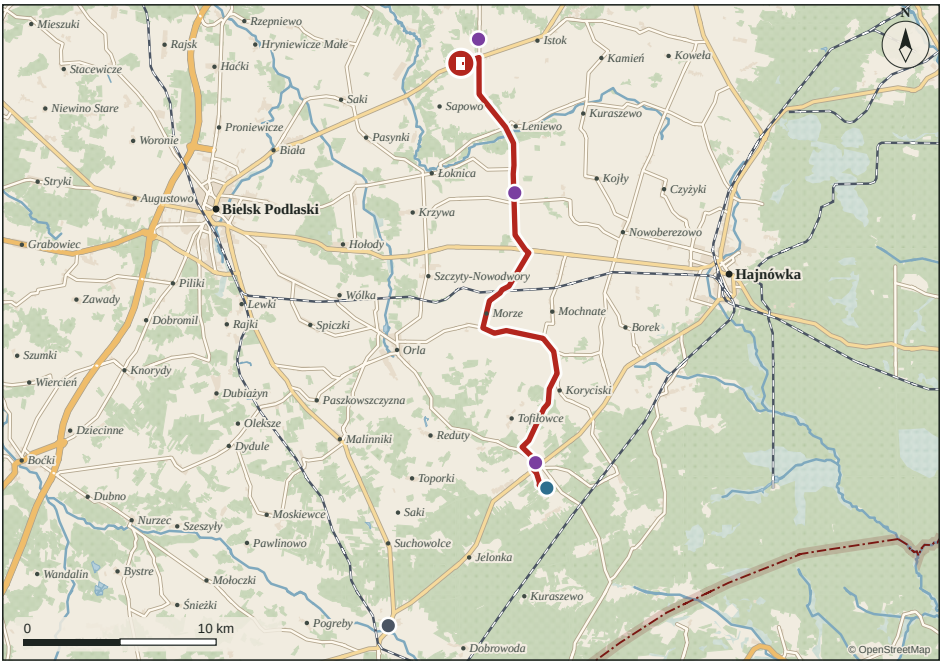
A village on the Bug, at the place where the river stops being a border. Here the trips downriver to Mielnik and Drohiczyn begin.

> Book kayaks and transport in advance with the local rental companies.

Scan to open the route on your phone
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/bielsk-grabarka-bug-valley/

REGION 4

Around Klejniki



Klejniki is one long street, wooden houses and gardens that smell of dill and linden. The first mentions of the village go back several hundred years. To this day people speak in their own way here, in what linguists call the Podlasie dialect and locals simply call “speaking simple”. Beyond the village begin fields, field boundaries and copses. In the morning you hear cranes, in the evening thrushes. There are no great attractions here, and that is exactly why it is so good for resting.

Seven kilometres from our house, in Czyże, runs the red Hajnówka–Piaski cycle trail. To the south it leads through villages with Orthodox churches and crosses at the crossroads to Dubicze Cerkiewne, where it meets Green Velo, the longest cycle trail in Poland. In the forest nearby lies Bachmaty Reservoir with its beach. Further on is Kleszczele, an old small town on the old highway, and to the north Hajnówka and the Forest.

This is a good area for a first, warm-up day: a bike from the doorstep, lunch by the water, back before sunset.

> *The best attraction in Klejniki is the bench in front of the house at seven in the evening.*

Practicalities

GETTING THERE

Everything starts at the house. To Czyże approx. 7 km, to Dubicze Cerkiewne approx. 27 km, to Kleszczele approx. 38 km.

WHEN TO GO

All year round. Swimming in Bachmaty in summer, mushrooms in the surrounding forests in autumn, walks across snowy fields in winter.

HOW LONG

From an hour's stroll to a full-day bike trip.

GOOD TO KNOW

Local roads are narrow and without hard shoulders, but traffic is light. There is a shop and a pharmacy in Czyże and Hajnówka. On Sundays many shops are closed.

Highlights

Bachmaty Reservoir ★★

A reservoir in a pine forest, with a beach and a swimming area in season. In summer the nearest water for swimming from Klejniki.

> On hot weekends arrive before noon.

The Orthodox church in Klejniki ★

The Orthodox Church of the Transfiguration stands on the edge of the village, a few minutes' walk from our house. It looks loveliest in the evening, when the sun sets behind the fields.

> The parish feast day falls in August. Then the village fills with guests and music.

Czyże ★

The seat of the municipality, on the red Hajnówka–Piaski cycle trail. The Orthodox Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God, shops, and the starting point for trips south.

> By bike from Klejniki you are here in 20 minutes.

Dubicze Cerkiewne ★

A village on the Green Velo trail, with an Orthodox church and Bachmaty Reservoir in the forest right next to it.

> A good spot for a picnic lunch halfway along the route.

Kleszczele ★

An old small town on the highway from Brest, today a sleepy place with a market square, an Orthodox church and a Catholic church. It lies on the Green Velo trail.

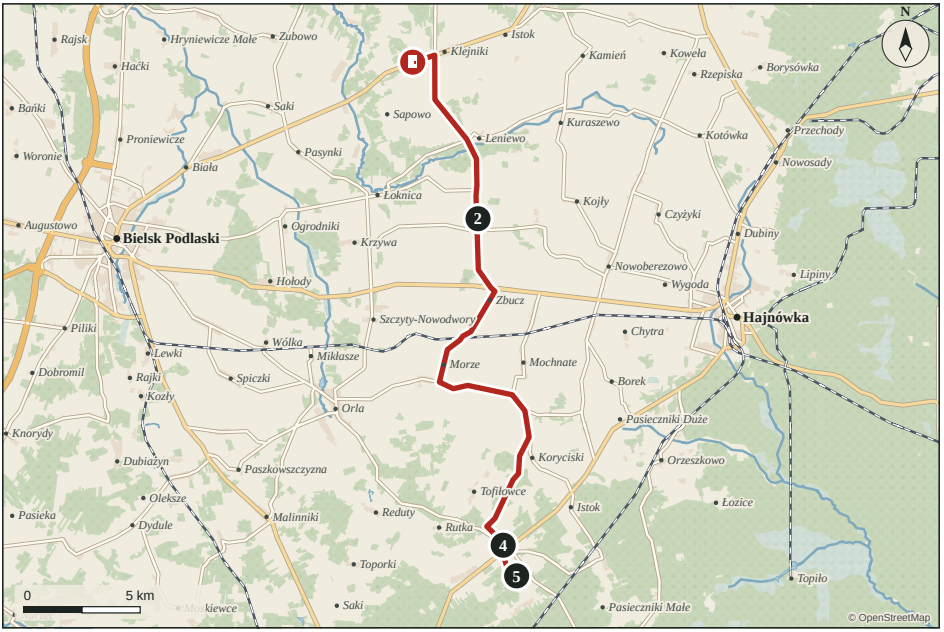
> A good coffee stop on a longer bike ride.

Scan to open the route on your phone
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/around-klejniki/

CYCLING ROUTE · AROUND KLEJNIKI

To Green Velo and Bachmaty Reservoir

30 km	2–2.5 hrs one way	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



The first day in Podlasie is best begun with a bike and wind in your face. From Klejniki you ride to Czyże, where you pick up the red signs of the Hajnówka–Piaski trail, and head south through villages where time runs slower: Zbucz, Krywiatycze, Stary Kornin. At every crossroads stands a cross, at every village an Orthodox church. In Dubicze Cerkiewne you reach Green Velo, and Bachmaty Reservoir waits in the pine forest.

The route step by step

1. **Klejniki** – Set off from the red door. Pump and water in your panniers.
2. **Czyże** – After approx. 7 km you join the red Hajnówka–Piaski trail and head south, towards Dubicze Cerkiewne.

3. **Zbucz, Krywiatycze, Stary Kornin** – A string of quiet villages with wooden houses. The terrain is flat but open, so the wind can make itself felt.
4. **Dubicze Cerkiewne** – Orthodox church, shop and Green Velo. Time for an ice cream.
5. **Bachmaty Reservoir** – A beach in the forest and a well-earned swim. The reservoir is on Green Velo. Return the same way or along the red trail via Kleszczele (longer).

SURFACE

asphalt, short stretches of gravel

BEST TIME

May–September

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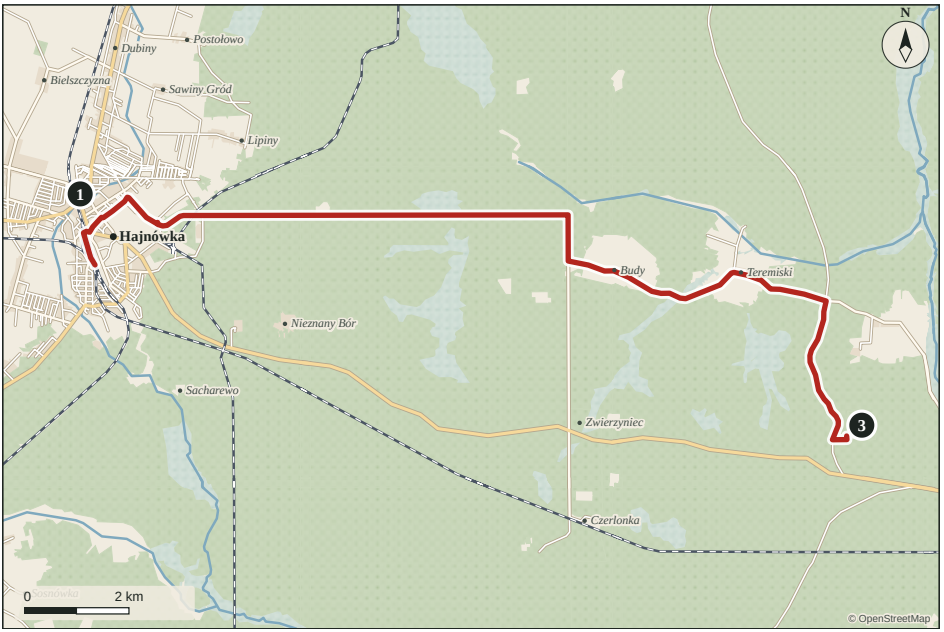
CYCLING ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

By bike from Hajnówka to the European bison

20 km LENGTH

1.5–2 hrs one way TIME

easy DIFFICULTY



Beyond the last houses of Hajnówka the road enters the forest and does not leave it. For twenty kilometres you ride under a vault of hornbeam, oak and spruce crowns, and the only sounds are tyres on gravel and a woodpecker somewhere high up. If you are lucky, a roe deer or a wild boar will flash by on the verge. At the finish the bison are waiting. In the reserve for certain, and if you arrive early, sometimes in the wild too.

The route step by step

1. **Hajnówka** – Start at the PKP railway station. You can rent a bike in town; it is worth reserving one the day before.

2. **Forest sections of the trail** – The trail leads through the Forest away from traffic. Stick to the markings, because forest tracks fork.
3. **European Bison Show Reserve** – The finish is at the reserve car park. From here it is close to the Royal Oaks Trail and Żebra Żubra.

SURFACE

asphalt and compacted gravel, flat

BEST TIME

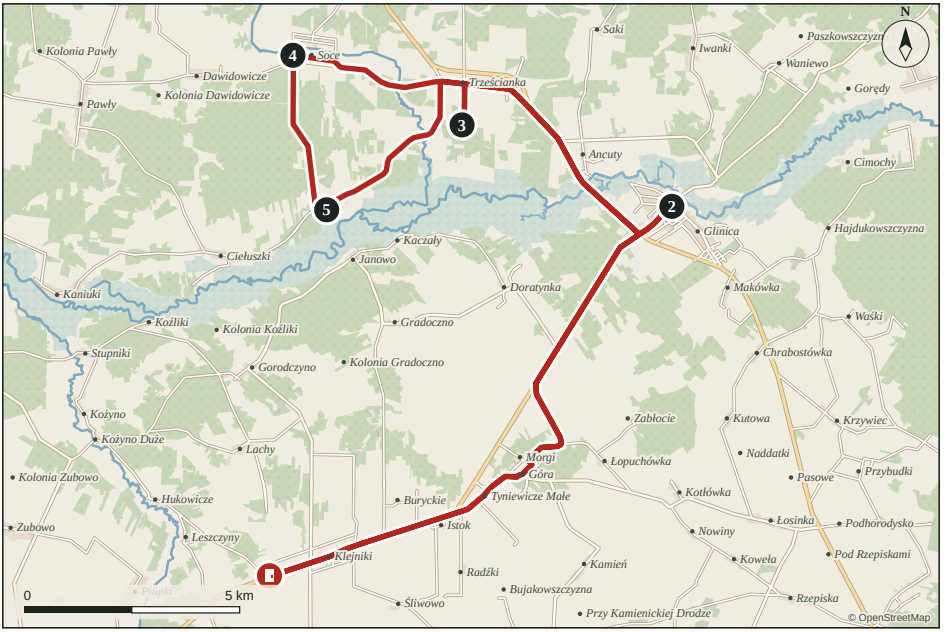
April–October

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CYCLING ROUTE · LAND OF OPEN SHUTTERS AND THE NAREW VALLEY

The Land of Open Shutters loop

56 km LENGTH | **4–5 hrs with stops** TIME | **moderate** DIFFICULTY



This loop starts at our house and is like a photo album of Podlasie. Across the fields you reach the small town of Narew and cross the river. Then Trześcianka, where there are so many shutters that it is hard to choose which to photograph. Next Soce, tucked away behind a bend, with its houses in an even row, and finally Puchły with its colourful Orthodox church. You return through the meadows of the Narew valley, home for supper.

The route step by step

1. **Klejniki** – Ride out north-east, towards Narew.
2. **Narew** – Shop and Orthodox churches. Across the bridge over the Narew you enter the Land of Open Shutters.
3. **Trześcianka** – The heart of the Land. Take a walk along the main street.

4. **Soce** – A short detour through the village. The prettiest shots are from the little bridge over the stream.
5. **Puchły** – The last of the three villages. Stop by the Orthodox church, then ride back to Klejniki via Narew.

SURFACE

asphalt, a few short stretches of cobbles and gravel

BEST TIME

May–September

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
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CYCLING ROUTE · LAND OF OPEN SHUTTERS AND THE NAREW VALLEY

Around Narewka: Siemianówka and Masiewo

37 km	3–3.5 hrs	moderate
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



This route is for those who love a horizon. From Narewka you ride north-east until the forest opens and Siemianówka Reservoir spreads out before you, flat and silver as the sky above it. Herons stand in the water, and marsh harriers circle over the reeds. Then the road turns south, along the border, and returns to Narewka along the edge of the Forest, through Masiewo.

The route step by step

1. **Narewka** – Start at the kayak landing and the tourist information point.
2. **Siemianówka Reservoir** – A stop with binoculars. The shores are flat and the birds are easy to see.

3. **Masiewo** – A village on the edge of the Forest, close to the boundary of the National Park. Do not stray from the trail.
4. **Back to Narewka** – Along forest tracks back to the river.

SURFACE

asphalt, gravel and forest tracks

BEST TIME

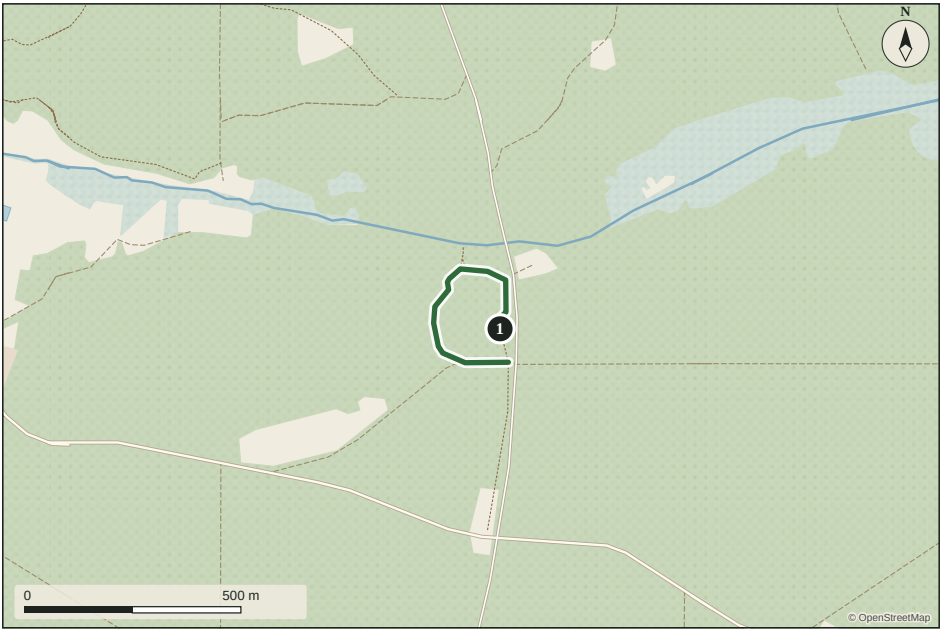
May–September, best on a windless day

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
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WALKING ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

Royal Oaks Trail

0.6 km	30–45 min	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



These oaks were growing here before anyone had invented the word “Poland” in today’s sense. Each tree bears the name of a ruler: Sigismund the Old, Władysław Jagiełło, Bona. The boardwalk is short, but you cannot walk it quickly, because every few steps you are craning your neck. The oldest trunks are overgrown with moss and lichen, and some giants already lie on the ground, slowly turning back into forest.

The route step by step

1. **Trail entrance** – Car park by the Hajnówka–Białowieża road, not far from the European Bison Show Reserve.
2. **Loop among the oaks** – Signs by the trees tell the stories of the rulers whose names they bear.

SURFACE

wooden boardwalk

BEST TIME

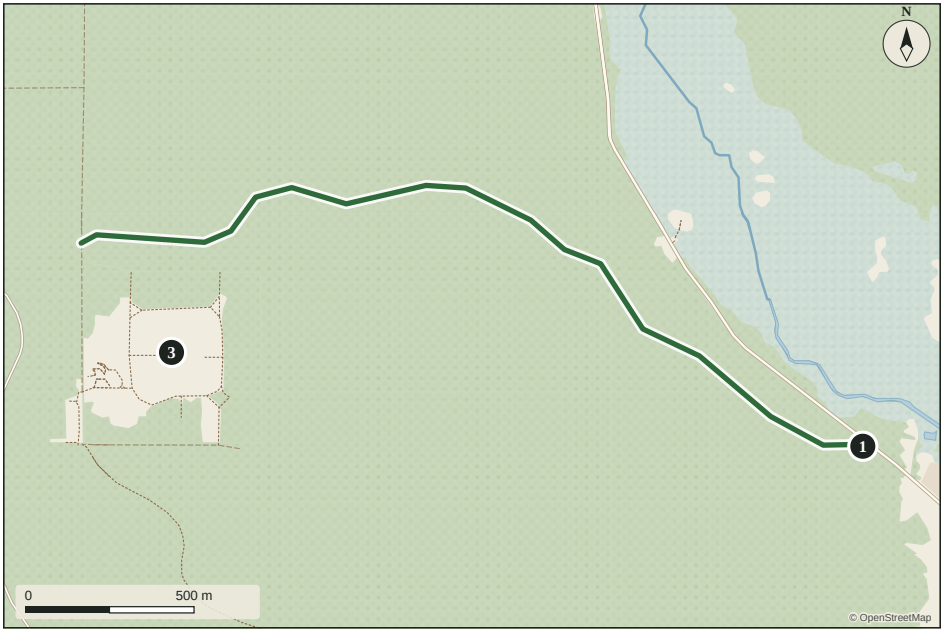
all year

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/szlak-debow-krolewskich/

WALKING ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

Żebra Żubra

2.7 km	1–1.5 hrs one way	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



The name comes from the shape: the boardwalk winds through the waterlogged forest like the spine of a great animal, and the cross planks look like ribs. Below stands black water, from which alders rise on stilts of roots. In spring the frogs croak, in summer the mosquitoes buzz, in autumn everything smells of mushrooms. It is the easiest way to see what the Forest looks like where you cannot walk with dry feet.

The route step by step

1. **Entrance from the Białowieża side** – The path starts on the western edge of the village.
2. **Boardwalk over the wetlands** – The most interesting stretch. Stop and listen to the forest.

3. **Near the European Bison Show Reserve** – The path ends not far from the reserve. Return the same way or by minibus.

SURFACE

wooden boardwalk and forest path

BEST TIME

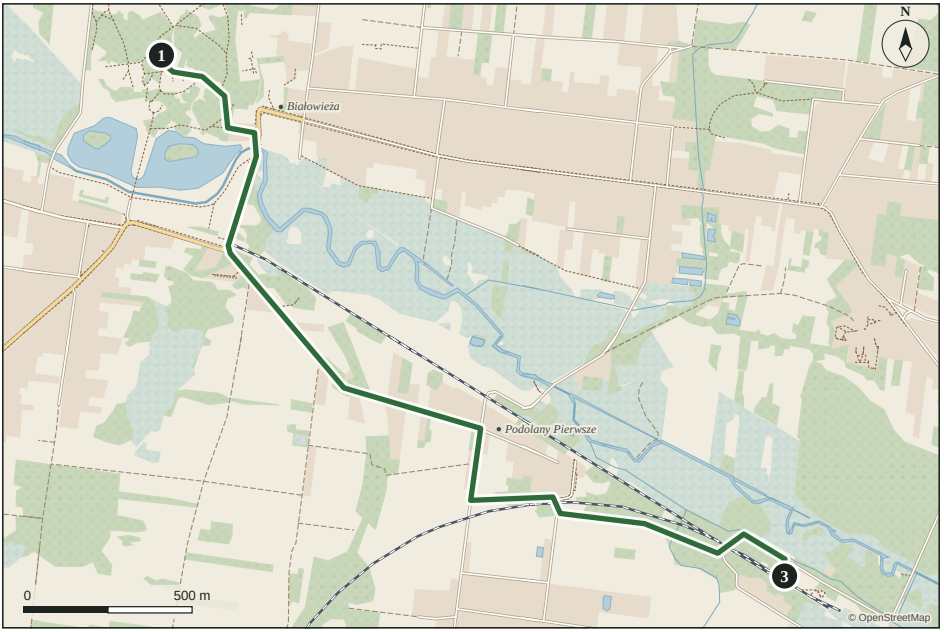
April–November

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/zebra-zubra/

WALKING ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

The Tsar’s Path to lunch

3.1 km	45–60 min one way	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



In the early 20th century, visitors came to Białowieża, the tsars' hunting residence, by rail. Trains stopped at Białowieża Towarowa station, built around 1903. You can walk to that station along a forest path from the Palace Park. Three or four kilometres among the trees, and at the end a table laid with a cloth, blini and game in a building where time seems to have stopped a century ago.

The route step by step

1. **Palace Park** – Start by the ponds in the park.
2. **Forest path** – A peaceful walk through the forest to the south-east.
3. **Restauracja Carska** – The finish at Białowieża Towarowa station.

SURFACE

forest path and dirt roads

BEST TIME

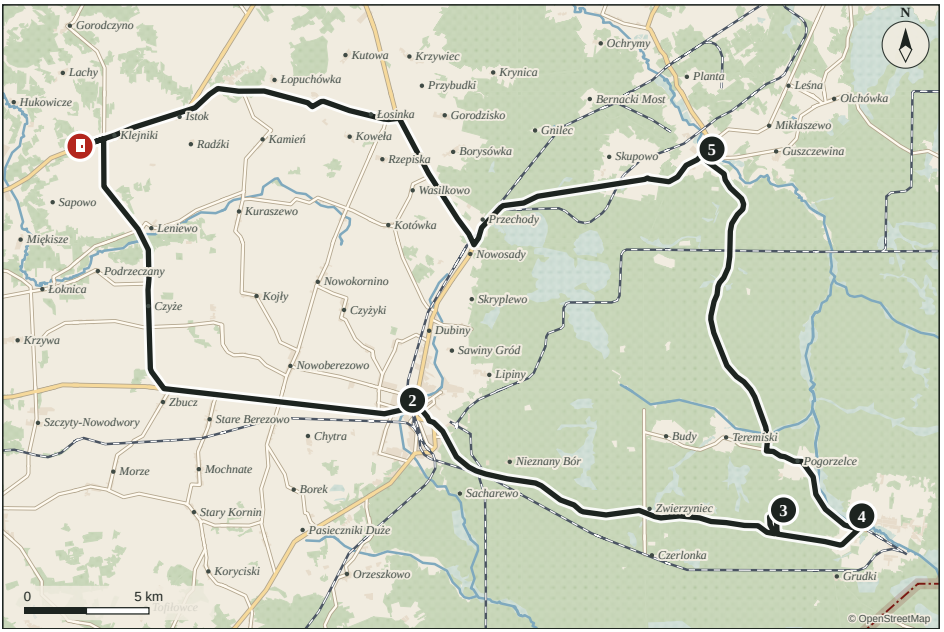
all year

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/carska-tropinka/

DRIVING ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

The Forest in one day: by car from Klejniki

96 km	full day, approx. 2 hrs of driving	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



Set out early, before the mist lifts off the fields. In Hajnówka look in at the cathedral that looks like a tent of copper and glass, and drive on along the road through the forest, where trees stand right up against the asphalt. Before noon, the bison in the reserve; at midday the Palace Park and lunch; in the afternoon a guided entry into the strict protection area. You return via Narewka, as the light turns golden.

The route step by step

1. **Klejniki** – Best to leave at about 8:00.

2. **Hajnówka: the cathedral** – A short stop. If time remains, the Belarusian Culture Museum.
3. **European Bison Show Reserve** – The bison, and the Royal Oaks Trail next door.
4. **Białowieża** – Park, BPN museum, lunch. In the afternoon, the strict protection area with a guide.
5. **Narewka** – A walk by the river and the return to Klejniki via Hajnówka.

SURFACE
asphalt

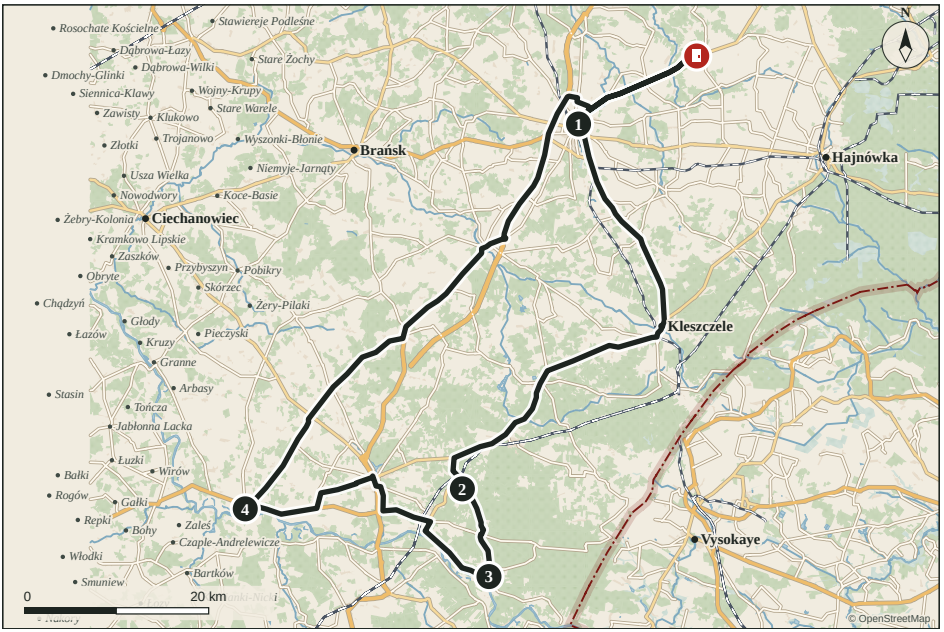
BEST TIME
all year

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/puszcza-bialowieska-w-jeden-dzien/

DRIVING ROUTE · BIELSK PODLASKI, GRABARKA AND THE BUG VALLEY

A day on the Bug: Bielsk, Grabarka, Mielnik, Drohiczyn

196 km LENGTH | **full day, approx. 3.5 hrs of driving** TIME | **easy** DIFFICULTY



This is a day full of hills, which on flat Podlasie sounds like a joke. You begin in Bielsk Podlaski, on the market square by the town hall. Then Grabarka and a forest of crosses that falls silent as you climb the hill. In Mielnik, chalk slopes and the ruins of a church on Castle Hill, and finally Drohiczyn, where the sun sets over the Bug so that people come here specially to see it.

The route step by step

1. **Bielsk Podlaski** – The town hall with its museum, Orthodox churches and Catholic churches in the centre.

2. **Grabarka Holy Mountain** – An hour is enough, but it is hard to leave quickly.
3. **Mielnik** – Castle Hill, the church ruins and a view of the chalk quarry.
4. **Drohiczyn** – Supper and sunset on Castle Hill. The return to Klejniki takes approx. 1.5 hrs.

SURFACE

asphalt

BEST TIME

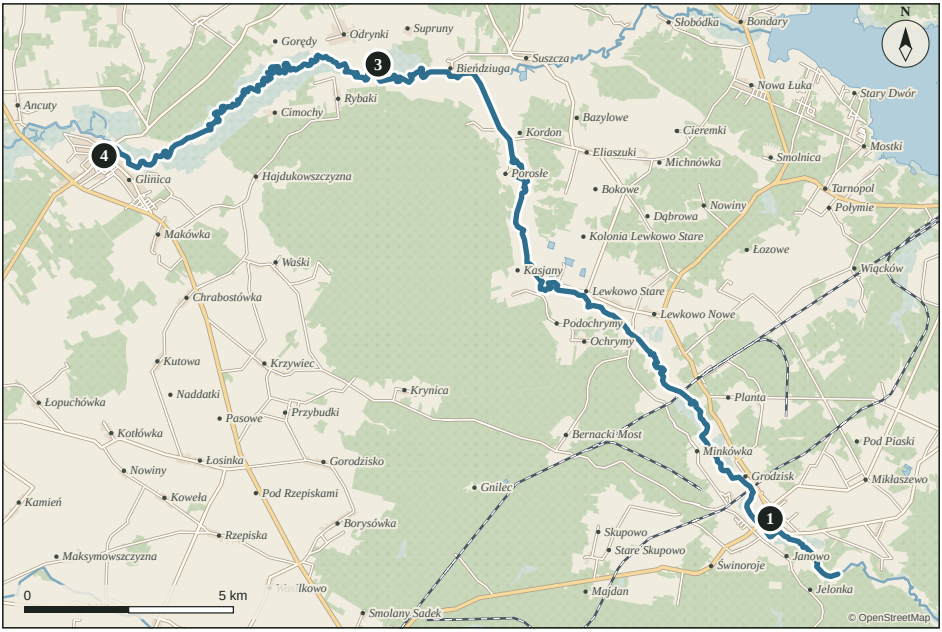
April–October

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/bielsk-grabarka-mielnik-drohiczyn/

KAYAK TRIP · LAND OF OPEN SHUTTERS AND THE NAREW VALLEY

By kayak down the Narewka to the Narew

35 km	a full day (approx. 35 km) or two shorter sections	moderate
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



The Narewka flows out of the Forest dark with peat, and for the first kilometres it is narrow, winding and wild. Then the forest parts, and the river slows and spreads out among the meadows. From a kayak you see more than from the road: storks wading in the grass, herons on a shoal, sometimes a beaver that vanishes under the water with a splash. The Narew receives the Narewka without ceremony, and a few bends later the towers of the Orthodox churches of Narew appear.

The route step by step

1. **Narewka** – Launch at the landing. Book the kayak and return transport in advance.

2. **Meadows of the Narewka valley** – The calmest stretch. The river meanders and it is easy to lose track of time.
3. **Mouth of the Narewka** – The Narewka joins the Narew. A few kilometres on, on the meadows near Odrynki, stands the hermitage.
4. **Narew** – The finish in the small town. From here it is only a quarter of an hour by car to Klejniki.

SURFACE

lowland river, gentle current

BEST TIME

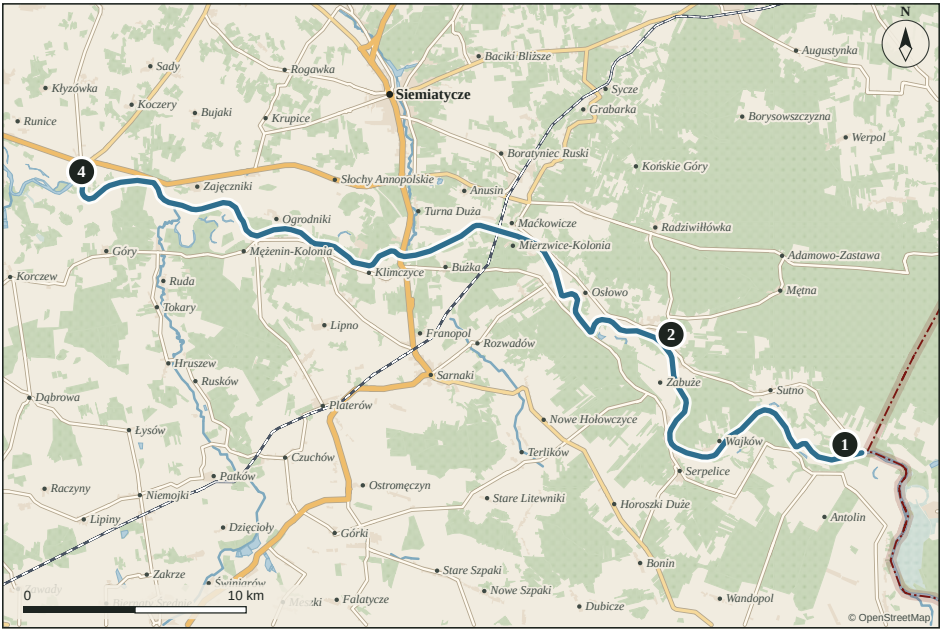
May–September, depending on water level

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/kajakiem-narewka/

KAYAK TRIP · BIELSK PODLASKI, GRABARKA AND THE BUG VALLEY

The Bug: from Niemirów to Drohiczyn

39 km	2 days (approx. 39 km)	moderate
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



The Bug is wide, lazy and unregulated. Nobody has straightened it or shut it between concrete banks, so it flows as it likes: in meanders, around islands, along sandy bars where tents are pitched in the evening. On the right bank rise the chalk slopes of Mielnik, on the left stretch riverside alluvial forests. On the second day Drohiczyn appears on the horizon on its escarpment, with church towers above the river.

The route step by step

1. **Niemirów** – Start at the place where the Bug stops being a border river.
2. **Near Mielnik** – Overnight at a campsite or an agritourism farm. In the evening, climb Castle Hill.

3. **Meanders and beaches** – The second day brings the wildest stretches of the river. Watch out for sunken trunks.
4. **Drohiczyn** – The finish below the escarpment. Climb Castle Hill and look at the river you have paddled.

SURFACE

large lowland river, eddies and shallows

BEST TIME

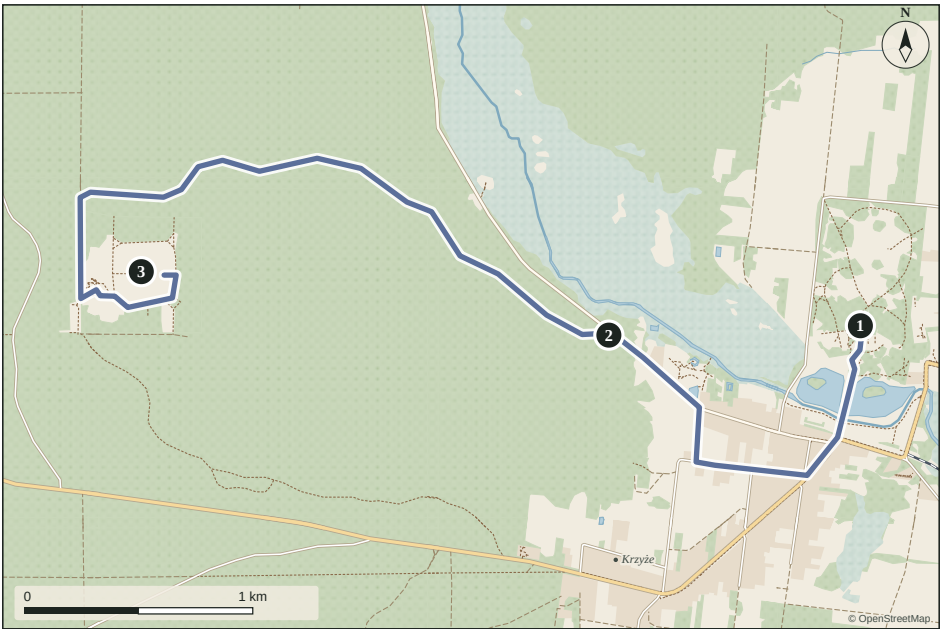
June–September

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/kajakiem-bug-niemirow-drohiczyn/

WINTER ROUTE · BIAŁOWIEŻA FOREST

White Białowieża: a winter walk to the European bison

5.8 km	2–2.5 hrs one way	easy
LENGTH	TIME	DIFFICULTY



In winter the Forest speaks in a whisper. Snow muffles everything except the creak of boots and the tapping of woodpeckers. On the Żebra Żubra boardwalk you can read the tracks: here a fox passed, there a marten ran, and that big print is probably an elk. In winter the bison keep closer to people, because food is harder to find in the forest. In the reserve they stand with frost on their manes, steaming like locomotives.

The route step by step

1. **Palace Park** – Start in the park. The frozen ponds look like a fairy tale in the morning.

2. **Żebra Żubra** – The boardwalk over frozen wetlands. Watch your step; the planks can be icy.
3. **European Bison Show Reserve** – The finish. Return by minibus, taxi or the same way.

SURFACE

paths and boardwalks, slippery in winter

BEST TIME

December–March

Scan to open the route on your phone · GPX
https://zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl/en/guide/routes/bialowieza-zima/

THEMES

Orthodox churches and sacred sites

In Podlasie faith is visible in the landscape. Orthodox churches with blue and green domes stand in the middle of villages, crosses at the crossroads are tied with embroidered towels, and the Sunday bell can be heard several villages away. In one area Orthodox and Catholics live side by side, and once also Jews and Tatars. This is a borderland where East and West met long ago and learned to live under one sky.

When visiting Orthodox churches, dress modestly and keep quiet. During services do not take photographs without permission. The interiors of village churches are usually opened for services. At other times, help comes from the parish phone number on the board by the entrance, or from a neighbour who knows who has the key.

Wild nature

In few places in Europe is nature so close. The European bison, the largest land mammal on the continent, saved from extinction right here, walks across fields near villages. Storks nest on almost every barn, and in spring thousands of birds pass over the Narew valley. The Białowieża Forest is one of the last forests that look the way Europe looked before humans changed it.

The best time for animals is dawn and dusk. Bring binoculars, keep quiet and keep your dog on a lead. Do not approach wild bison closer than several dozen metres. They look calm, but they weigh up to a tonne and can run fast.

Flavours of Podlasie

The cuisine of Podlasie is the cuisine of the potato, the mushroom and the oven. Babka (potato bake) with a crisp crust, kiszka in its casing, kartacze (meat-filled potato dumplings), blini with sour cream. From the Bug valley around Drohiczyn come zaguby: pasta dough rolled up with fried potatoes and onion, cut on the slant, boiled and topped with crackling. For dessert there is sękacz, baked layer by layer on a rotating spit over the fire. From the Tatar heritage came pierekaczewnik, a many-layered pastry with a filling. Many of these dishes were born in ovens like ours, and they taste best after a whole day on a bike.

Białowieża has the most restaurants serving regional cuisine. In smaller villages there are almost no places to eat, so it is worth carrying provisions. In summer, stalls with strawberries, honey and mushrooms stand by the roads. Sękacz can be bought in many shops and bakeries in the region.

Green Velo and cycle trails

Green Velo, the Eastern Cycle Trail, is almost 2,000 km long and runs through five provinces along Poland's eastern edge. About 590 km of it is in Podlasie. From Białystok it goes through Supraśl and Gródek to Siemianówka Reservoir, then through Narewka and the Forest to Hajnówka, and south through Dubicze Cerkiewne, Kleszczele and Czeremcha to Grabarka and the Bug at Mielnik. It is waymarked with metal signs bearing the trail logo on an orange background.

Klejniki is not on Green Velo itself. The nearest points are Hajnówka (approx. 20 km) and Dubicze Cerkiewne (approx. 25 km). The nicest way there is the red Hajnówka–Piaski trail, which passes through Czyże, 7 km from the house. Self-service bike repair stations stand in Hajnówka, Kleszczele, Białowieża, Czeremcha and at Bachmaty Reservoir, among others. Bike shops and repairs are in Hajnówka. Along the Belarusian border there is a buffer zone: villages and trails are excluded from it, but check the current Border Guard notice before heading east.

- **Green Velo (Eastern Cycle Trail)** (orange signs with logo, approx. 590 in Podlasie km): Białystok – Supraśl – Gródek – Siemianówka – Narewka – Białowieża – Hajnówka – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Kleszczele – Czeremcha – Grabarka – Mielnik
- **Hajnówka – Piaski** (red, 81 km): Hajnówka – Nowoberezowo – Czyże – Zbucz – Stary Kornin – Dubicze Cerkiewne – Kleszczele – Czeremcha – Wiluki – Piaski
- **Dubicze Cerkiewne – Topiło – Białowieża** (green, 38 km): Dubicze Cerkiewne – Bachmaty Reservoir – Werstok – Topiło – Place of Power – Białowieża (palace park). Forest roads, wet in places.
- **Hajnówka – Białowieża** (green, approx. 20 km): Hajnówka – the Forest – European Bison Show Reserve – Białowieża
- **Hajnówka – Topiło – Hajnówka** (blue, approx. 42 km): A loop through the Forest to the Topiło settlement and back. Asphalt and gravel.
- **Royal Cycle Trail of the Białowieża Forest Region** (QR-code stickers, 153.5 km): A loop from Hajnówka through Białowieża, Narew, Kleszczele, Policzna, Wiluki, Czyże, Dubicze Cerkiewne and the Repczyce and Bachmaty reservoirs. About 10 hours' riding; map and GPX on bialowieza.travel.

PTTK hiking trails

Waymarked hiking trails in Poland share one system, run by PTTK, the Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society: a coloured stripe between two white ones, painted on trees and posts. Red usually marks a main trail, blue a longer one, and green, yellow and black local links. In the Białowieża Forest the trails start in Hajnówka and Białowieża and lead through the forest to Narewka, Topiło, Siemianówka and Masiewo. No hiking trail passes through Klejniki or Czyże, so you drive about 20 minutes to Hajnówka to start.

Take water and food: there are no shops in the forest between villages. In spring and after rain some stretches are wet. The strict reserve of Białowieża National Park can only be visited with a licensed guide. In reserves and in the park dogs must stay off the trail or at home, so check the rules first. Some trails are closed temporarily because of falling trees or forestry work; current notices are published by the Hajnówka Forest District and the national park.

- **Hajnówka – Białowieża** (green, 25 km): Hajnówka – W. Szafer reserve – Zwierzyniec car park – European Bison Show Reserve – Białowieża
- **Hajnówka – Narewka (Partisan Battles Trail)** (red, 22 km): Hajnówka – Lipiny and Szczekotowo reserves – Krynoczka chapel – Lipiński Trakt – Świnoroje – Narewka. The forest district has reported it closed due to damaged trees; check before you go.
- **In the Footsteps of the January Uprising** (blue, 31 (loop) km): Hajnówka – Orzeszkowo – Tsar's Oak – near the Głęboki Kąt reserve – railway route – Hajnówka. No bridge over the Chwiszcza; wet in spring.
- **Białowieża – Topiło** (yellow, 19 km): Białowieża – Podcerkwa, Berezowo, Olszanka Myśliszcze and Michnówka reserves – Topiło
- **Białowieża – Narewka** (yellow, approx. 21 km): Białowieża – Pogorzelce – Stara Białowieża – Janowo – Narewka
- **Białowieża – Siemianówka** (blue, 41 km): Białowieża – Pogorzelce – Stara Białowieża – Gruszki – Babia Góra – Siemianówka
- **Białowieża – Czerlonka – Zwierzyniec** (blue, 17 km): Białowieża Towarowa – Podolany – "Jagiellońskie" forest education centre – Jagiellonian Track – Czerlonka – Zwierzyniec settlement
- **Places of National Remembrance** (red, 14 (loop) km): Białowieża – Białowieża Towarowa – "Jagiellońskie" – Podolany – Białowieża
- **Wolf Trail** (green, 16 km): Kosy Most – Głuszec forest – Masiewo (Masiewo Glade). A shorter loop from Masiewo via Głuszec is 6.5 km.
- **Place of Power and Tsar's Path** (black, 5.5 and 4 km): Short paths: to the stone circle of the Place of Power and from the tower at Kosy Most.

Your base: Klejniki

Every route in this guide starts within an hour of our house. After a day out, a tiled stove, a kitchen with a wood-fired range and silence are waiting for you.

Za czerwonymi drzwiami · Klejniki 157, 17-207 Klejniki · +48 602 138 030 · zaczerwonymidrzwiami.pl

Information as of November 2026. Check opening hours and timetables before you set off. Map: © OpenStreetMap contributors. Route lines are based on OSM data; on the ground, follow the trail markings.