

Great Drives

Krakow

Around Krakow - Jurassic Park

South of Krakow lies Poland's winter playground – and a driver's paradise.

A wild and wonderful landscape surrounds the city – the Jurassic Valleys, thick forests and mountain ranges where the Poles go to ski, hike and swim. Now you can join them.

Test drive this two-day tour for the best of Southern Poland

Pick up your Avis hire car from [Krakow Airport](#) and drive south on the E77/E40 road to nearby **Wieliczka**, and a spot of subterranean sightseeing, before a trip through breathtaking landscape to get your heart racing at **Kluszkowce**. Next stop is the sophistication of the “winter capital”, **Zakopane**, before getting back to nature with a **Dunajec** raft ride. Last but not least, another tour through the deep forest to **Pieskowa Skala**.

High Points en route

Salt Mine, Wieliczka – Salt of the earth

It's a short drive south to the extraordinary **Wieliczka Salt Mines** – 300 metres deep, covering 7.5 million square metres and filled with the carvings of generations of miners. The highpoint is the spacious Kinga Chapel, where the chandeliers, altarpieces and pews are all carved from salt. To give you an idea of the scale of the place – the mines were the site of the world's first underground bungee-jump!

Czorsztyn Ski, Kluszkowce – Roller coaster

It's a great drive through the deep forest of Southern Poland to the **Czorsztyn** ski resort. In winter you can hit the slopes – the skiing here on Wdzar Mountain is excellent – but even in summer the 1000-metre long Alpine Coaster down the mountainside is heart-stopping, and there is white-water rafting and mountain-biking nearby.

Zakopane – Walk out to winter

More fabulous driving – this time along the edge of the Tatra Mountains to Poland's “winter capital”, Zakopane. Work up an appetite walking the miles of paths through the lakes and foothills before dinner at **Bakowo Zohylina**. This converted barn serves up the heartiest of Polish cooking – think fresh trout and venison goulash – with local music and dancing.

Dunajec Raft Ride, Pieniny – White water world

Time to drop off the car and try a wilder kind of ride. The raft trip through the **Pieniny Mountains** is deceptive – it starts off as a gentle glide through stunning scenery, but as the river twists and turns it changes into a real white-knuckle ride. Those of a nervous disposition may like to chill out at the end. Luckily the trip winds up at Szczawnica, “the pearl of Polish spas”.

Pieskowa Skala – The art of castling

Deep in the forests of **Ojcow National Park** lies one of Poland's most beautiful buildings – the Renaissance castle of **Pieskowa Skala**. Art-lovers can check out the huge collection of paintings, while nature buffs have the glorious local landscape to explore.

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We try
harder.

High Points en route - Free time on your hands? Take your pick from the following five gems:

1/ Bieszczady Mountains – Call of the wild

Head south and take a **Bieszczady mountain** tour. This is Poland's wildest spot and by car is the best way to explore it. Drive the well-established loop through the National Park and mountains to take in the beautiful wooden church at Rownia, the Solina dam and some rugged scenery. Keep your eyes peeled though – this is one of the few spots in Europe where bears and wolves are common...

2/ Eagle Nest Trail – Bird's eye view

Some sights are just made for drivers. Perched along the spine of a mountain range north of Krakow are the **Eagles Nests** – a string of medieval castles overlooking the beautiful Jurassic valleys. Hit the road on a leisurely two-hour loop that takes in dozens of castles, but be ready to stop along the way – the **Mirow** and **Ogrodzieniec** castles are spectacular ruins that are also famous spots for rock-climbing and cycling.

3/ Kilcolgan – Krakow Valley – Shooting stars

Time to live out some James Bond fantasies. **Krakow Valley Golf and Country Club** has all the normal country

club luxuries – riding, restaurants and a Ronald Fream-designed 18-hole golf course – but we're here for something special. The amazing shooting range. Take on moving mechanical targets with the clubs' rifles or, for that authentic 007 moment, a Walther PPK.

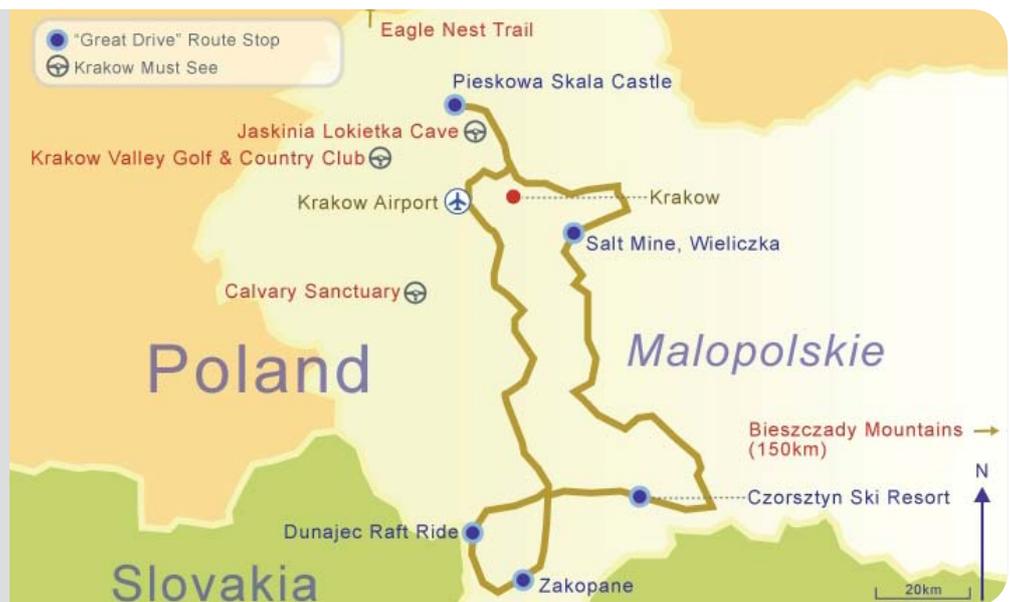
4/ Calvary Sanctuary, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska – New Jerusalem

As you wind your way into Kalwaria Zebrzydowska you're met with a stunning sight – a vast complex of over 40 churches, many dating back to the 1600s, clinging to the foothills of **Zar Mountain**. There are so many different styles on show here, it's like a quick masterclass in ecclesiastical architecture!

5/ Jaskinia Lokietka Cave – Going underground

If you ever tire of Ojcow National Park's lush forest landscape, you could always head underground. Take a guided tour of the Jaskinia Lokietka Cave, the largest of a network of hundreds of caves to the north of Krakow, which houses seven breeds of bat. Afterwards, relax at the Zazamcze Inn in nearby Ojcow village over a dinner of grilled trout or barbecued pork.

Avis Great Drives Route Map: Krakow



Need to know

Round trip

260 miles (416 km):
approx 6 hours driving time

Best time to come

The best season for Tatra
Mountains skiing is December
to May.

Soundtrack

David Bowie - Low

Essential item

A huge appetite – the food is
hearty and very tasty.

Tip

According to Polish law, drivers have to keep their headlights on at all times between 1 October and 1 March. The motorway between Krakow and Katowice is the country's only toll-road.

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