

Poland



Did you know:

- ✓ Poland is a large country in Eastern Europe. It has borders with seven other European countries and a population of almost 40 million people.
- ✓ Krakow is Poland's oldest and most beautiful city. It was the country's capital until 1600. Warsaw, Poland's largest city, is now the capital.
- ✓ Throughout history Polish people have travelled around the world, sometimes to find a better life in other countries.
- ✓ The national symbol of Poland is a white eagle. In the winter temperatures in Poland can drop to below -20°C and snow can lie on the ground for 60-70 days!
- ✓ Poland is the most important bird breeding ground in Europe and more white storks nest in Poland than anywhere else in the world.

Polish Food

Poland is known for its hearty food, which keeps people warm and full during the long Polish winters. One of Poland's most famous foods is pierogi, which are large dumplings filled most often with potatoes, cheese, and onions, but they can also have meat or fruit inside. Traditional food also includes bigos (a stew made of sausages, cabbage and mushrooms), and borscht soup (made with beetroot). Ice cream, known as lody, is a very popular dessert and there are lody shops in every city.



Polish Holidays

- ✓ Christmas Eve and Easter are the two most important holidays in Poland.
- ✓ Christmas is celebrated on 24 December in Poland. It is called Wigilia and celebrates the birth of Jesus. Christmas dinner consists of a feast of twelve dishes that include fish but not meat. It is traditional to have an even number of guests and people usually lay an extra place at their table in case an extra guest arrives!
- ✓ The Polish celebrate Easter by dyeing and painting eggs and enjoying an elaborate family meal. A chocolate or caramel-filled cake called mazurek is an Easter tradition. The day after Easter is a children's holiday called mingus-dingus, in which children splash water on each other for good luck!

Polish Culture

Traditional Polish clothing is very colourful and decorative. Women wear long skirts with large flowers and ribbons and plaits in their hair while men wear white jackets embroidered with coloured flowers (though today these kind of outfits are only worn for cultural festivals).

Traditional celebrations often include music like the polonaise and dances like the mazurka and the polka. Another traditional skill is paper cutting, wycinanki – Polish people have been decorating their homes with paper cut-outs for hundreds of years.

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Craft

Wycinanki

"Wycinanki" pronounced Vee-chee-non-kee is the Polish word for 'paper-cut design,' a Polish folk art that dates back at least 150 years. No one is sure exactly how or why this Polish folk art started, but some say it goes back to the time when few farm houses had glass windows. The legend says that peasant farmers would hang sheep skins over the window openings, snipping small openings to let some light in. Soon these became decorative as well as functional.

What you need:

- Colored paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Access to google to see inspiration for your own "Wycinanki"

Common subject matter includes peacocks, doves, roosters, and other birds; circular or star-shaped medallions (gwiazdy); tons and tons of colorful flowers; plus annual holidays such as Easter and Christmas with angels, churches or even Nativity scenes. Some include details in black, while others use bright colors, or even just a single color.

Symmetry in art and design creates balance, harmony, order, and is aesthetically pleasing. It is found everywhere in nature, which is probably why we find it to be so beautiful. The authentic wycinanki are all symmetrical. Fold the paper in half to cut out the designs, or just cut out 2 copies at the same time.

