

POLAND

Country name	Poland
State title	Republic of Poland
Official language	Polish
Country name in official language	Polska
State title in official language	Rzeczpospolita Polska
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 country code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	PL/POL
Capital in official language	Warszawa
English conventional name of capital	Warsaw

Introduction

Poland has existed as an independent state from the 11th up to the late 18th century and again since 1918, with the exception of 1939-45. In size it is slightly larger than Italy, the Philippines or Arizona. It has international boundaries with seven other countries and a coastline on the Baltic Sea.

Geographical names policy

PCGN advice is to follow the geographical names as used on official sources from Poland. Poland has published its own [Toponymic Guidelines for map and other editors](#), which includes detailed guidance on language, names, minorities and source materials. Official mapping is produced by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography and the Military Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff of the Polish Army, official maps and data being available at <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl/>.

There is more detail on the standardization of geonames in Poland here: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/sopgn.php>.

Language

The main language is Polish (*polski* ISO 639 code: pol), a West Slavic language most closely related to Czech or Slovak; rather more distantly to Russian, Serbian, Bulgarian and other Slavic languages. Polish has half a dozen dialects, most named after historical regions. The Kashubian (Polish: *kaszubski* ISO 639 code: csb) dialect is sufficiently distinct to be commonly regarded as a separate language, closely related to Polish. Kashubian is spoken in a small part of Pomorze province. In the 2011 census, some 108,000 people recorded speaking Kashubian as a mother tongue and Kashubian language place names may be used alongside the Polish name¹.

¹ https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/26th-gegn-docs/WP/WP23_Minority%20place%20names%20in%20Poland.pdf

Orthography

Polish uses 23 letters of the Roman alphabet, excluding Q, V and X. Nine additional characters are formed using a total of four distinct diacritics, some of which are unique to Polish. There are seven digraphs which form distinct sounds (their usual IPA² value is shown in square brackets): *cz* [tʃ] and *rz* [ʒ], which are distinctively Polish, and *ch* [x], *dz* [dʒ], *dź* [d͡z̥], *ż* [ʐ] and *sz* [ʂ]. In common with other Slavic languages, F is rare in Polish and unlikely to be found in place-names.

Kashubian has additional diacritics, but its spelling is not fully standardised. They are not listed here.

Inventory of additional characters

Symbol	Unicode hex
Ą	0104
ą	0105
Ć	0106
ć	0107
Ę	0118
ę	0119
Ł	0141
ł	0142
Ń	0143
ń	0144
Ó	00D3
ó	00F3
Ś	015A
ś	015B
Ź	0179
ź	017A
Ż	017B
ż	017C

Alphabetical order

The order of letters is the same as in English except that letters with diacritics are sorted directly after their counterpart without.

Capitalisation³

Upper-case letters are used in Polish less often than in English and a generic geographical term may have a lower-case initial if it is part of a place name. Place names have lower-case initials when used as adjectives, for example the administrative division names (see page 4).

² The International Phonetic Alphabet can be found at the [International Phonetic Association website](https://www.internationalphoneticassociation.org/).

³ Note that the US NGA GEONet Names Server follows the English-language convention of capitalising each element of place names, regardless of local language convention.

State title

The Polish word *rzeczpospolita* is normally translated as “Republic” but is used only in reference to Poland (1918-39 and 1945 to present), or to refer to the Lithuania-Poland Commonwealth of the 16th to 18th centuries. For all other countries, the word *Republika* is used.

Transnational features

Some geographical features (rivers, mountains etc.) are shared between Poland and one or more neighbouring countries. On a map they should be labelled in the appropriate language on each side of the boundary, with no preference given to either name. Most of these do not have an English conventional name in common use (shown in italics in 4th column where they exist). Where they do exist, English conventional names can be used alone for transnational features, or included in brackets after the local name(s).

Feature type	Polish name	Name in neighbouring country/countries	English conventional names (if any)
Canal	Kanał Mazurski	Russia = Канал Мазурский (<i>Kanal Mazurskiy</i>)	<i>English: Masurian Canal</i>
Forest	Puszcza Białowieska	Belarus = Белавежская пушча (<i>Byelavyezhszkaya pushcha</i>)	
Island	Uznam	Germany = Usedom	
Lagoon	Zalew Szczeciński	Germany = Stettiner Haff or Oderhaff	
Lagoon	Zalew Wiślany	Russia = Калининградский залив (<i>Kaliningradskiy Zaliv</i>)	<i>English: Vistula Lagoon</i>
Mountains	Sudety	Czechia = Sudety Germany = Sudeten	
Mountains	Tatry	Slovakia = Tatry	<i>English: Tatra</i>
Region	Pomorze	Germany = Pommern	<i>English: Pomerania</i>
River	Bug	Ukraine = Західний Буг (<i>Zakhidnyy Buh</i>) Belarus = [Заходні] Буг (<i>[Zakhodni] Buh</i>)	
River	Narew	Belarus = Нараў (<i>Narau</i>) Russia = Нарев (<i>Narev</i>)	
River	Nysa	Germany = Neisse (Neiße) Czechia = Nisa	
River	Odra	Germany = Oder Czechia = Odra	
River	San	Ukraine = Сян (<i>Sian</i>)	
Town	Cieszyn	Czechia = Tesin Germany = Teschen	

English conventional names

There are not many conventional English language names for places in Poland, though some exist for transnational features as noted in the table above. The following are still common. See also the administrative divisions table below for a list of province names in English. (Note that it is not appropriate post-1945 to use old German-language names such as Danzig or Stettin.)

Polish name	English conventional	Remarks
Warszawa (city)	Warsaw	
Śląsk (region)	Silesia	Former province in the south-west.
Góry Świętokrzyskie	Holy Cross Mountains	Literal translation sometimes used in tourist guides.

Administrative divisions

Since 1 January 1999 Poland has been divided into sixteen first-order administrative (ADM1) provinces or “voivodships”, though the latter word exists only as an English calque of the Polish *województwo*. Many of these are loosely based on historical regions, though usually with significantly different boundaries. They bear some resemblance to the ADM1 units of 1950 to 1975, but from 1975 to 1998 there were 49 much smaller ADM1 units, usually named after towns. The usual Polish short names for the provinces are lower-case adjectives, not nouns, and notably the word *województwo* is often omitted. Three are named after towns. Noun forms can be used for some, but these would more often refer to the historical regions.

Each *województwo* is divided into *powiaty* (singular: *powiat*), usually translated as “district” or “county”. There are 380 in total. A *powiat* can be urban or rural. The Polish name is typically the word *powiat* followed by a lower-case adjective, nearly always derived from the name of its capital.

For further details see *List of Identifiers and Names of the Units of Territorial Division of the Country*: http://eteryt.stat.gov.pl/eteryt/files/wykaz_identyfikatorow_i_nazw_jednostek_podzialu_terytoryjalnego_kraju_01012015.pdf

Usual adjectival (PCGN Recommended form)	Polish form	Noun (not in common use)	English name (not in common use)	ISO 3166-2 code	No. of powiat (urban+rural) ⁴	Province capital	Latitude and Longitude of province capital
dolnośląskie		Dolnośląsk	Lower Silesian	PL-02	4+26	Wrocław	51 07N 17 02E
kujawsko-pomorskie		Kujawy-Pomorze	Cujavo-Pomeranian	PL-04	4+19	Bydgoszcz & Toruń	53 07N 18 00E 53 00N 18 36E
lubelskie			n/a	PL-06	4+20	Lublin	51 15N 22 34E
lubuskie		Lubusz	n/a	PL-08	2+12	Gorzów Wielkopolski & Zielona Góra	52 44N 15 14E 51 56N 15 30E
łódzkie		n/a	n/a	PL-10	3+21	Łódź	51 46N 19 27E
małopolskie		Małopolska	Lesser Poland	PL-12	3+19	Kraków	50 04N 19 56E
mazowieckie		Mazowsze	Masovian (1)	PL-14	5+37	Warszawa	52 15N 21 01E
opolskie			n/a	PL-16	1+11	Opole	50 40N 17 55E
podkarpackie			Sub-Carpathian	PL-18	4+21	Rzeszów	50 02N 22 00E
podlaskie		Podlasie	n/a	PL-20	3+14	Białystok	53 08N 23 10E

⁴ Full details shown in the Toponymic Guidelines of Poland http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/topon_inte.doc.pdf (though Warsaw appears in the rural counties list in this document)

pomorskie	Pomorze	Pomeranian (2)	PL-22	4+16	Gdańsk	54 21N 18 39E
śląskie	Śląsk	Silesian (3)	PL-24	19+17	Katowice	50 15N 19 01E
świętokrzyskie	Święty Krzyż	Holy Cross	PL-26	1+13	Kielce	50 52N 20 38E
warmińsko-mazurskie	Warmia-Mazury	Warmian-Masurian	PL-28	2+19	Olsztyn	53 47N 20 29E
wielkopolskie	Wielkopolska	Greater Poland	PL-30	4+31	Poznań	52 24N 16 56E
zachodniopomorskie	Zachodniopomorze	West Pomeranian	PL-32	3+18	Szczecin	53 25N 14 33E

1. Or Mazovia.
2. The traditional region of Pomerania (Pomorze) included most of pomorskie, zachodniopomorskie and an area further west which is now in Germany, but not kujawsko-pomorskie.
3. The traditional region of Silesia included most or all of the provinces of dolnośląskie, opolskie and śląskie.

Useful references

- Toponymic Guidelines of Poland: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/docs/26th-gegn-docs/WP/WP27_Toponymic%20Guidelines%20of%20Poland.pdf
- Official geoportal of Poland: <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl/>
- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17753718>
- CIA World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- FCO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/poland>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/>
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com; www.omniglot.com
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server (GNS): <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>

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