



# How to navigate through Polish holidays, festivals and traditions

A list of 45 calendar entries for 2017 in Poland



<b>January 1</b> ★	New Year's Day	Nowy Rok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• Most of the stores and restaurants are closed</li><li>• Cities are usually quiet, people are recovering after night parting as well as after the whole previous week celebrations</li></ul>
<b>January 6</b> ★	Epiphany The three wise men / kings	Trzech Króli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• Christian holiday commemorating the three wise kings' visit to infant Jesus</li><li>• In Warsaw and other big cities there are street parades</li><li>• There is a tradition in Poland to write with chalk brought from church above the entrance of your home: K+M+B (or C+M+B). The letters have two meanings: they represent the initials of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar (<i>Kacper, Melchior i Baltazar</i>); it's also the abbreviation of the Latin phrase <i>Christus mansionem benedicat</i> (May Christ bless this house)</li></ul>
<b>January 21</b> <b>January 22</b>	Grand-mother's Day Grandfather's Day	Dzień Babci Dzień Dziadka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People meet or call their grandparents to honor them</li><li>• In kindergartens there are usually events for grandparents</li></ul>



<b>February 13-26</b>	Winter school break	Ferie zimowe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In Poland schools are closed for 2 weeks during winter season (January and February), each year it's different time for different regions / voivodships. In 2017 in Warsaw and Mazowieckie Voivodship it's February 13-26</li></ul>
<b>February 14</b>	Valentine's Day	Walentynki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It's relatively new celebration in Poland (not observed during communism time before 1989)</li><li>• All restaurants are full, book your table in advance!</li></ul>
<b>February 23</b>	Fat Thursday	Tłusty Czwartek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The last Thursday before Lent starts (do not confuse with Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday)</li><li>• In the morning you can notice long lines in front of bakeries and cafes. People all day long eat <i>pączki</i> (donuts filled with fruit jam) or <i>faworki</i> (French dough pastry served with powdered sugar) at schools, at work, at home. There are even contests for the best pastry stores in the city</li></ul>
<b>February 28</b>	Last day of Carnival	Śledzik (herring night), Ostatki (last days of carnival, Shrovetide)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The last chance to party before the start of Lent (which doesn't mean there are no parties during Lent in Poland, just not as many)</li><li>• <i>Śledzik</i> (herring) in old-fashioned Polish parties is a popular appetizer washed down with vodka</li></ul>



<b>March 1</b>	Ash Wednesday	Środa Popielcowa Popielec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first day of Lent</li><li>• People go to church where priests place ashes (made from palm branches blessed on the previous year Palm Sunday) on their foreheads saying <i>Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return</i></li><li>• It is a custom among the Roman Catholics in Poland to avoid meat, alcohol and snacks on that day</li></ul>
<b>March 8</b>	Women's Day	Dzień Kobiet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The old tradition of Women's Day is not as popular as during communism time in Poland, but still women usually get flowers, including female teachers at schools</li></ul>
<b>March 17</b>	St. Patrick's Day	Dzień Świętego Patryka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poland also celebrates St. Patrick's Day - people wear green, there are parades, festivals, concerts</li></ul>
<b>March 21</b>	Hooky Truant's Day Skip Day	Pierwszy dzień wiosny Dzień Wagarowicza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The first day of spring</li><li>• The old folk tradition of drowning <i>Marzanna</i> (a straw figure of woman symbolizing winter) in the nearest river. Nowadays mostly in rural areas and by children at schools</li><li>• Truant's day (<i>dzień wagarowicza</i>) - some students skip classes but usually it is just a fun day at school. Students dress up in a funny way, there are events at schools and no tests on this day</li></ul>
<b>March 26</b>	Time change	Zmiana czasu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On Sunday, March 26, 2017 at 02:00 clocks are turned forward 1 hour to 03:00. There will be more light in the evening</li></ul>



<b>April 1</b>	April Fools' Day	Prima Aprilis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A day of pranks and jokes. Don't trust anyone (including Polish media which also participates in the celebrations with lots of fabricated stories)</li> </ul>
<b>April 9</b>	Palm Sunday	Niedziela Palmowa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It starts the Easter celebrations. There are processions around the church to commemorate the day Jesus entered Jerusalem. People bring „palms” made of paper flowers, dried flowers and twigs</li> </ul>
<b>April 14</b>	Good Friday	Wielki Piątek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good Friday commemorates passion and crucifixion of Jesus</li> <li>• In Warsaw and other cities there are processions on the streets – people carrying huge cross and contemplating passion of Jesus</li> <li>• In Poland for many people it's a day of fasting – no meat, no parties, no alcohol</li> </ul>
<b>April 15</b>	Holy Saturday	Wielka Sobota	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Święconka</i> – people bring baskets filled with food to churches to get a special blessing. Baskets usually include eggs as symbol of rebirth (<i>pisanki</i> – boiled eggs painted in various colors and patterns), bread, salt, sausage, sometimes other food – chocolate, cake, horseradish etc.</li> <li>• Food from <i>Święconka</i> basket is shared the next morning during festive Easter breakfast</li> </ul>
<b>April 16</b> ★	Easter Day	Wielkanoc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank holiday (always on Sunday anyway)</li> <li>• Easter Sunday commemorates the resurrection of Jesus</li> <li>• Many people start the day with 6 am morning mass (<i>Rezurekcja</i>)</li> <li>• Key event of a day – a family breakfast that starts with eating <i>Święconka</i>, then <i>żurek</i> soup (also known as white <i>barszcz</i>), <i>bigos</i>, sausage with horseradish, <i>mazurek</i> cake</li> </ul>
<b>April 17</b> ★	Easter Monday	Poniedziałek Wielkanocny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bank holiday</li> <li>• <i>Śmigus dyngus</i> – an old tradition in which people use buckets (kids usually play with water guns) to soak each other with water. It's safe to stay home and avoid water fights</li> <li>• Another Easter Monday tradition is to beat legs with willow branch or Palms (the ones used for Palm Sunday)</li> </ul>
<b>April 19</b>	Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (1943)	Rocznica Powstania w Getcie Warszawskim (1943)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The major celebrations of the anniversary of the uprising in Jewish ghetto in Nazi-occupied Warsaw are held at the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes and POLIN museum. You may notice in Warsaw daffodils (<i>żonkile</i>) symbolizing the Uprising (Marek Edelman, the last leader of the Uprising, before his death in 2009, used to receive daffodils from an anonymous person every anniversary)</li> </ul>



<b>May 1</b> ★	Labor Day	Święto Pracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• In Warsaw and other big cities there are political marches to promote workers rights</li><li>• May 1 starts so called <i>długi weekend</i> in Poland (long weekend) – <i>Majówka</i> (please note that May 2 is a regular working day, however schools are closed and people usually take a day off). People go out for short vacation. Warsaw is usually empty and quiet while Polish seaside, Zakopane and other major touristic destinations get crowded</li></ul>
<b>May 2</b>	Flag Day	Dzień Flagi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working day</li><li>• It's a relatively new holiday in Poland (introduced in 2004). You can notice Polish flags in some private windows and balconies</li></ul>
<b>May 3</b> ★	Constitution Day	Święto Konstytucji Trzeciego Maja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• The May 3rd Constitution was passed in 1791 and is claimed to be the first constitution in Europe and second one in the world (after the American one)</li><li>• It is celebrated with military parades, picnics and music festivals</li></ul>
<b>May 26</b>	Mother's Day	Dzień Matki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is a day when you visit or call your mum, send her a card, flowers or other gifts</li><li>• In some kindergartens and schools there are special events for mums (usually dads are also invited however the official Father's Day is on June 23). Children make <i>laurka</i> (a hand made card prepared by kids, decorated with hearts, flowers and a personal note)</li></ul>



<b>June 1</b>	Children's Day	Dzień Dziecka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children receive gifts</li><li>• Schools and daycares host special events for kids – picnics, concerts, sports competitions</li><li>• There are many events in Warsaw and other cities (hold also on a weekend next to June 1) organized by the city authorities, institutions, theaters, restaurants, etc.</li></ul>
<b>June 4</b> ★	Whit Sunday Pentecost	Zielone Świątki / Zesłanie Ducha Świętego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday (always on Sunday anyway)</li><li>• The Day of Descent of the Holy Spirit – <i>Zielone Świątki</i> (Green Holidays). In Poland some people decorate their homes with branches with green leaves</li></ul>
<b>June 15</b> ★	Corpus Christi	Boże Ciało	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday (always a Thursday)</li><li>• The catholic church organizes in each parish huge outdoor procession (in many places in Poland traffic is stopped during the procession). The procession stops at four altars temporary built on the streets. The altars are decorated with birch-tree twigs which can be later taken home and are kept the whole year to protect family. Girls dressed in white scatter flower petals</li></ul>
<b>June 23</b>	St. John's Night Wreaths	Noc Świętojańska Wianki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The festival has a strong pagan background (pagan name is <i>Sobótka</i> meaning fire). Nowadays it is mostly the opportunity to celebrate midsummer with various festivities, including concerts, singing songs, bonfire jumping. Women wear wild flower wreaths that later are thrown into river or pond</li></ul>
<b>June 23</b>	Father's Day	Dzień Ojca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Father's Day is not as loudly celebrated as Mother's Day, however each mother makes sure that children at least hug their father</li></ul>
<b>June 23</b>	End of the school year	Zakończenie roku szkolnego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The last day of the school year is celebrated with speeches, concerts, shows. Teachers get flowers. Parents of younger kids usually take a day or few hours off to participate in the ceremonies</li><li>• The school year will resume on September 1</li></ul>

July is a blank page. Just enjoy summer in Poland!☺



<b>August 1</b>	Warsaw Uprising Remembrance Day	Dzień Pamięci Powstania Warszawskiego	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The anniversary of the outbreak of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 against the Nazis</li><li>• At precisely 5 pm all the Warsaw city sirens sound and lots of cars and pedestrians stop to commemorate and contemplate the fact that 200,000 Polish civilians died, mostly from mass executions</li></ul>
<b>August 15</b> ★	Polish Army Day Assumption of Mary	Święto Wojska Polskiego, Wniebowzięcie Najświętszej Maryi Panny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• Polish Army Day is marking the 1920 breakthrough battle called <i>Cud nad Wisłą</i> (the Miracle on the Vistula river) between the Poles under Marshal Piłsudski and the Bolsheviks</li><li>• The main celebrations are held at Piłsudski Square (<i>Plac Piłsudskiego</i>), including parades and the president speech</li><li>• The Assumption of Mary celebrations in Poland focus on The Sanctuary of <i>Jasna Góra</i> in Częstochowa – on August 15 a pilgrimage (<i>pielgrzymka</i>) destination for many people walking hundreds of kilometers for days from all over Poland</li></ul>



**September 1**

Start of the school year

Rozpoczęcie roku szkolnego

- Short formal ceremonies. The real work starts on Monday, September 4
- Parents of younger children usually take a day or few hours off to attend the event at school



<b>October 14</b>	Teachers' Day	Dzień Nauczyciela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students give teachers flowers and / or gifts</li><li>• In public schools there are no regular classes. Usually there is the inauguration event for first year students (<i>ślubowanie</i>) and older kids either do not go to school or have some fun activities</li></ul>
<b>October 29</b>	Time change	Zmiana czasu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On Sunday, October 29, 2017 at 03:00 clocks are turned backward 1 hour to 02:00. There will be more light in the morning</li></ul>
<b>October 31</b>	Halloween	Halloween	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Halloween is relatively new in Poland, few years ago it was almost impossible to buy a pumpkin this time of year. Now pumpkin carving and pumpkin decorations are more and more popular at schools and homes</li><li>• In bars and restaurants there are themed parties for adults and costume parties for kids at some schools</li><li>• More and more children in Poland are dressing up and playing trick or treat (<i>cukierek albo psikus</i>)</li><li>• Please note that some people in Poland find Halloween inappropriate just a day before All Saints' Day</li></ul>



<b>November 1</b> ★	All Saints' Day	Wszystkich Świętych	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• People visits cemeteries (often they travel long distances, there is in general increased traffic, especially close to the biggest cemeteries) to light candles and lay flowers on the graves of their family and friends (this is a religious holiday but in Poland it is observed by many people no matter religious or not)</li><li>• In Warsaw you may want to visit the <i>Powązki</i> cemetery in the evening when it's dark outside, it's really exceptional this time of year with so many candles (not on November 1, but the following week when it's not so crowded). It's located in Ochota district (in between Klif and Arkadia mall centers)</li></ul>
<b>November 11</b> ★	Independence Day	Święto Niepodległości	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• The anniversary of Poland's independence in 1918</li><li>• In Poland there are held parades, military ceremonies including official gathering in Warsaw at Pilsudski Square (<i>Plac Piłsudskiego</i>)</li><li>• In Warsaw each year there is a very popular 10 km Run of Independence (<i>Bieg Niepodległości</i>)</li><li>• You should probably avoid the center of Warsaw since the <i>March of Independence</i> organized by nationalists can turn violent</li></ul>
<b>November 29 / 30</b>	St. Andrew's Day	Andrzejki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A night for future telling games. The classic one is to pour hot wax through key hole into cold water. The shape determines your future</li><li>• In the past, <i>Andrzejki</i> marked the start of the Catholic Church Advent period and it was the last chance to have parties before Christmas. Now it's not strictly observed, still <i>Andrzejki</i> parties tend to be heavy in terms of food, alcohol and dancing</li></ul>



<b>December 6</b>	St. Nicholas' Day	Mikołajki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The name <i>Mikołajki</i> comes from <i>Mikołaj</i> (Polish for Nicholas), meaning little Nicholas</li><li>• Children usually receive little treats – candies or small toys. One of the traditions is to hide treats in shoes. Children should clean them the night before and the next morning (<i>Mikołajki</i>) they would find there a small surprise</li></ul>
<b>December 24</b>	Christmas Eve	Wigilia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Christmas Eve is not a public holiday, most of shops and businesses are open no longer than 2-3 pm</li><li>• The grand dinner (12 meat-free courses, including carp fish, beetroot soup, dumplings, cabbage with mushrooms) starts (only after the first star is visible on the sky) with sharing the Christmas wafer (<i>opłatek</i>). Another tradition is to have an extra seat for unexpected guest or put some hay under the table cloth to remind guests that Jesus was born in a stable</li><li>• Gifts are open after the dinner is finished</li><li>• After dinner people attend a special midnight mass (<i>pasterka</i>)</li></ul>
<b>December 25</b> ★	Christmas Day	Boże Narodzenie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• People feast together with family and friends, they go to church, sing carols, spend long hours at the table</li></ul>
<b>December 26</b> ★	Second Day of Christmas	Drugi Dzień Świąt Bożego Narodzenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bank holiday</li><li>• It is worth visiting churches in the old town in Warsaw or any other big city – each church develops its own unique nativity scene. Sometimes modern and metaphorical, sometimes just with lots of details that children will love, e.g. animals, angels</li></ul>
<b>December 31</b>	New Year's Eve St. Silvester's Day	Sylwester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Start of the carnival season in Poland</li><li>• People usually go out to parties and balls</li><li>• At midnight or even before fireworks shows start, arranged by the city authorities but also outside of apartments, in parks, playgrounds etc. – hard time for infants and dogs</li><li>• Stores are usually open no longer than 5-6 pm</li><li>• Very difficult to order a taxi</li></ul>