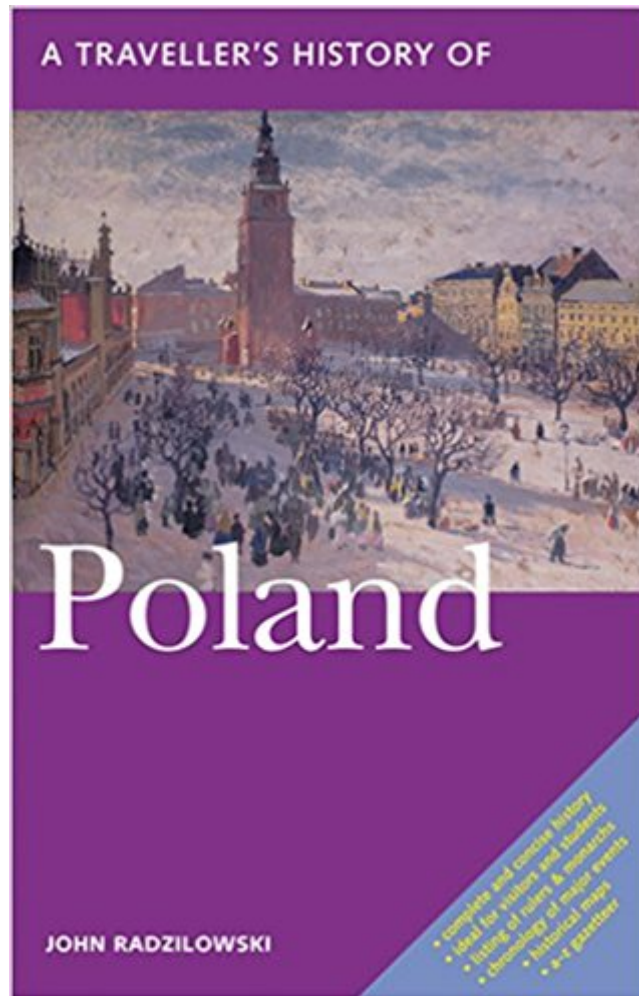




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A Traveller's History Of Poland



Synopsis

Poland is a major European country with over 38 million inhabitants and a land area comparable to Spain. It has played a major role in European history but its subjugation by foreign powers in the nineteenth century and during the Cold War eclipsed Poland in the minds of many in Western Europe and the United States. Throughout its long and diverse history it has been a meeting place of many cultures and has given the world the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz, the music of Chopin, and the scientific discoveries of Copernicus and Marie Curie, to name but a few. In *A Traveller's History of Poland*, John Radzilowski vividly describes the beginnings of the country, first fragmented then reborn to overcome the aggression of the Teutonic Knights and its greedy neighbors. Poland enjoyed a Golden Age in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries but a gradual decline then led to Poland losing its autonomy despite winning many battles with its army's legendary military skill and gallantry. Yet the spirit of the country and its people lived on. Since the horrors of the Second World War and Soviet control, Poland has gradually regained its rightful place in Europe, joining NATO in 1999 and in May 2004, the EU. It is playing a new role on the European and international stage. This makes now an ideal time to introduce students and travellers to Poland and its complex history through the pages of this *Traveller's History*. The book includes a full chronology, a list of monarchs and rulers, a gazetteer, historical maps and is fully illustrated.

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Customer Reviews

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nineteenth century and during the Cold War eclipsed Poland in the minds of many in Western Europe and the United States. Throughout its long and diverse history it has been a meeting place of many cultures and has given the world the poetry of Czeslaw Milosz, the music of Chopin, and the scientific discoveries of Copernicus and Marie Curie, to name but a few. In *A Traveller's History of Poland*, John Radzilowski vividly describes the beginnings of the country, first fragmented then reborn to overcome the aggression of the Teutonic Knights and its greedy neighbors. Poland enjoyed a Golden Age in the fifteen and sixteenth centuries but a gradual decline then led to Poland losing its autonomy despite winning many battles with its army's legendary military skill and gallantry. Yet the spirit of the country and its people lived on. Since the horrors of the Second World War and Soviet control, Poland has gradually regained its rightful place in Europe, joining NATO in 1989 and in May 2004, the EU. It is playing a new role on the European and international stage. This makes now an ideal time to introduce students and travellers to Poland and its complex history through the pages of this *Traveller's History*. The book includes a full chronology, a list of monarchs and rulers, a gazetteer, historical maps and is fully illustrated.

John Radzilowski is a writer and historian. He received his Ph.D. in history in 1999 with a specialization in East European History. He has written and spoken widely on Polish history and current affairs. He is the author or co-author of several books on Polish themes, including: *Poland's Transformation*, *Spanish Carlism and Polish Nationalism*, *The Eagle and the Cross: A History of the Polish Roman Catholic Union of America*. His articles have appeared in both Polish and English periodicals and reference works. In 1998 he received the Cavalier's Cross of the Order of Merit from the President of the Republic of Poland. Series Editor Professor Denis Judd is a graduate of Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and Professor of History at the London Metropolitan University. He has published over 20 books including the biographies of Joseph Chamberlain, Prince Philip, George VI, historical and military subjects, stories for children and two novels. He has reviewed and written extensively in the national press and in journals and is an advisor to the BBC History Magazine.

The history of Poland is complex and convoluted...An amazing story shaped by those inside and outside of Poland -- and those with Poland's best and worst interests at heart. Western Europeans and North Americans have, for the most part, received a disorganized story shaped partially by the real events, but one also framed by various conquerors, suitors, allies, enemies, the well-intentioned, and the truly evil at heart...with a little myth and pure B.S. thrown in for good

measure. Many readers, for example, will discover that the events in and about Poland leading up to and through WWII did not really come about as we were taught in school. Centuries ago Poland set out down a path of more representative forms of government -- another historical context we typically don't hear about. There is no way that a book of barely 300 pages can deliver a comprehensive study of (in the words of historian Norman Davies) "God's Playground". But this volume does a good job of providing historical context for both visitors and the geographically/politically curious. Author Radzilowski may seem to run through the centuries at a fast clip -- and at first I was wondering if his bullet point facts would end up being just a part of some historical list. But as you read along you come to the understanding that he is plotting out a trend line for you to follow. Maybe you can remember all the Polish monarchs and their external allies and foes...I'm not that good at names, dates, and battles. But you should be pleased to come away with a better formed generalized understanding of the country and its people. I have been extremely fortunate the past few years to have "acquired" some wonderful Polish friends and colleagues. This has fueled my curiosity about Poland, and lead to my first trip there last year. I'm planning a second trip soon, and this book, along with several books on more contemporary Polish history and events, has been a real asset. I give the book five stars not because it is the best history of Poland, but because it accomplishes precisely what it sets out to do. In the back of the book there is a nice historical chronology, a listing of Polish rulers, a list of English language sources for Polish history, and a historical gazetteer. The book ends on this note: "The Polish people have taken everything fate has to throw at them, including the worst crimes of fascism and communism, and have not succumbed. Though its position in the world is not certain, Poland is no longer a plaything of the great powers. Poles earned the right to govern themselves and make their own mistakes and at last to write their own history." Enjoy!

Brilliant and enlightening book, well-written. Radzilowski's insight and breadth of knowledge is amazing. I know of no better introduction to Polish history. Essential reading for anyone who ever wishes to Poland or is simply interested in European history.

I really like this book; it was well written, informative, and insightful, but feel compelled to make some comments. First of all, do not be misled by the title, which features the word "Traveler's." There is nothing in the book that will necessarily aid a traveler. If you are looking for a book that discusses the main sites of Poland, this is not it (by the by, I recommend the Eyewitness Guides). In fact, I feel this series of books was titled thus to only appeal to those who are looking for tour books.

The main word to pay attention to is "History." This is, first and foremost, a history. While there are some cultural elements mentioned, they are done so only within the confines of a historical discussion. I purchased this book to familiarize myself with Poland and its history prior to going there during the summer of 2010. If you are looking for a history of Poland and its people, I recommend this book very highly. If you are looking for something to aid you on your travels, I suggest you find another text. As an aside, this book has the tightest binding of any paperback I've ever held. The same tight binding is on the Oxford book from the same series. Be prepared for a wrist workout.

Well-done, John with the long last name, well-done.

Written by Poland history and culture expert John Radzilowski, *A Traveler's History of Poland* is a primer of Polish history written for anyone looking to better experience and understand the nation's culture and legacy during their visit. From Poland's origins, to the end of the Commonwealth, war, occupation, and the Holocaust, the all too often violent rule of Communism, the ascent of Polish pope John Paul II and the dawn of modern Polish independence, *A Traveler's History of Poland* succinctly surveys history and does not whitewash the sufferings and atrocities that all the different ethnicities of people in Poland have endured across the decades. A highly readable, enlightening, even-handed and accessible account ideal for readers of all backgrounds.

Great book. Fast service.

This book will satisfy every reader who is interested in this beautiful country. Even though notable historians like Adam Zamoyski and Norman Davies have already wrote about Polish history, the author manages to present a fresh and simple account of Poland's heroic and turbulent past. I only wish, he could mention more about the Polish Golden Age and the contribution of the Polish people to world civilisation. But overall, this book is a good introduction for those who do not know much about Poland.

Excellent information--very interesting!

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