

2.2. SELECTED ASPECTS OF TOURISM ACCORDING TO NON-STATISTICAL SOURCES

2.2.1. The Wieliczka Salt Mine ⁴

The historic Salt Mine in Wieliczka is one of the most attractive and the world's most famous tourist sites. **Year 2008 was the 30th anniversary of entering the Wieliczka Salt Mine on the UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage.**

Already since neolithic times in Wieliczka region, salt, as precious as gold, was acquired from brine springs through heating the brine and vaporisation of water. In the middle of the 13th century the excavation of rock salt began.

Since its beginning the Wielicka salina constituted an important source of royal revenue — in the 14th century it generated 30% of all the state's income. The salt mine maintained the royal court and paid for the upkeep of the castles guarding the trade routes and also for the activity of the Krakow Academy. The profits drawn from the salt trade allowed for development of the Wawel Castle. In the 16th century the mine became one of the largest business enterprises in Europe at that time.

In the 16th century the Wieliczka Salt Mine used to be shown to the privileged visitors of the Wawel royal court. Towards the end of the 15th century tourist activity began in the mine. Few, privileged visitors (members of the upper classes, possessing each time an explicit approval of the king) were let down on thick ropes, then with torches they visited cavities carved in the salt rock. The conditions of visiting the mine improved only after building wooden staircase in one of shafts in 1744. The Austrian rule in the mine meant a further step in the development of tourism. The Austrians correctly estimated the values of the mine, advertising it as one of the prime visiting sites of the Austrian Monarchy. At the end of the 18th century a few dozen of people visited the mine monthly and at the beginning of the 19th century this number increased to one hundred of people weekly. In the course of years new routes and chambers were adapted to visiting; balls, shows, boat rides on salt lakes and even fireworks were organized in the middle of excursions. In the latter part of the 19th century, horse-cars transported tourists. In the 19th century many kings, writers, artists and scientists visited the mine. It became famous all over the world.

Early in the 20th century another tourist attraction was added, namely, the Chapel of the Saint Kinga. The visiting rules were defined as well as days and hours of opening and prices of tickets. Between the two world wars the number of tourists considerably increased. Next, in the period of Nazi occupation, the only visitors were the German VIPs.

After the end of the Second World War, there was a rapid increase of the number of tourists visiting underground routes — in 1945 there were already more than 10 thousand people and this number continued to grow, reaching about 200 thousand in 1955. A large number of visitors to the mine caused the necessity of indispensable renovation of passages and facilities and also preparation of new tourist routes and chambers. In the years 1959-1964 all renovation works were carried out, independent ventilation system for the underground excavation was made and electric wiring was installed. The following years brought a systematical improvement of catering for tourism, which in the mid-1970s caused an increase of number of tourists to 750 thousand annually.

In 1978 the Wieliczka Salt Mine was inscribed in the UNESCO First List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation), together with 11 other sites from around the world (of which, i.a. Krakow Market Square).

In 1994 the mine was acknowledged as the National History Monument by the President of the Republic of Poland.

At present, the mine consists of approximately 3000 chambers and nearly 300 kilometres of subterranean corridors lying on 9 levels, of which a 3.5-kilometres section is accessible to tourists. At the mine there is an underground sanatorium, the Krakow Saltworks Museum, a restaurant, a post office and

⁴ Elaborated on the basis of: Information from Marketing Division of the "Wieliczka" Salt Mine Tourist Route Ltd.; Janusz Podlecki, Wieliczka. The historic salt mine (3rd edition, revised and changed). Publ. „Karpaty” – Andrzej Łączyński, Kraków 2007; the UNESCO First List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 9 September 1978; website <http://www.kopalnia.pl/>

souvenir shops; various types of social events are organized such as concerts, film screenings, sport performances. The Wieliczka Salt Mine is visited annually by approximately million tourists from Poland and rest of the world.

TABLE IX. VISITORS TO THE "WIELICZKA" SALT MINE

Specification	2000	2005	2007	2008
	in thousand			
TOTAL	758.2	1028.7	1159.6	1097.5
Domestic	533.6	452.6	483.9	470.2
Foreign	224.6	576.1	675.7	627.3
of which from:				
Great Britain	15.0	39.0	85.0	87.0
Germany	30.0	53.7	44.1	43.4
France	18.3	41.2	40.4	38.0
Korea	5.8	27.2	33.7	34.9
Italy	13.4	42.2	43.7	34.6
USA	38.2	53.4	45.9	32.5
Norway	10.9	22.6	29.4	29.2
Russia	2.4	25.3	34.7	27.9
Spain	4.1	20.3	25.3	26.2
Hungary	6.6	22.5	21.2	24.9

Note. 10 countries are specified, from which the number of visitors in 2008 was the biggest.

2.2.2. Tatra National Park ⁵

The Tatra Mountains located in Małopolska are one of the most attractive tourist areas of Poland. It is the only territory in Poland with high mountain character, visited by the large number of domestic and foreign tourists. In order to preserve plants and animals as well as unique landscape, this area is totally protected. The Tatra National Park was created in October 1954. It began its activity on 1st January 1955.

The Tatra National Park has an area of 21164 ha. It is one of the largest national parks in Poland. Forests and thickets of dwarf mountain pine (15048 ha) constitute approximately 70% of the area of the park and the remaining 30% is alpine grass, rocks and waters. Almost 11500 ha of the area are strictly protected, of which all belt of meadows and crags, a belt of dwarf mountain pine and partially also forests of upper and lower belt.

The Tatra National Park borders on the National Park of Slovakia (TANAP), together they constitute the International Biosphere Reserve created in 1992 by UNESCO.

At the Park there is the highest point of Poland — the northern peak of Rysy (2499 m above the sea level), by which a border of the country passes. The highest peak located totally on the area of Poland is Kozi Wierch (2291 m above the sea level).

Flora of the Tatra National Park includes more than 1000 vascular plants, of which 102 species of protected plants (28 of them are on the Polish red list of endangered plants). From among 450 mountain species, for almost 250 it is the only place of occurrence in Poland. It is home to above 80% of Polish endemic plants.

Fauna includes 290 species of vertebrates and 5-6 thousand species of invertebrates. From among vertebrates on the area of the Polish Tatra Mountains there were showed so far 53 species of mammals, 101

⁵ Elaborated on the basis of: the Regulation of the Council of Ministers dated 30 October 1954 regarding the creation of the Tatra National Park (*Journal of Laws* No. 4 item 23); the Regulation of the Council of Ministers dated 1 April 2003 regarding the Tatra National Park (*Journal of Laws* No. 65 item 599; Paweł Skawiński, Tomasz Zwijacz-Kozica, Tatra National Park, series: Meetings with nature, Publishing House „Multico”, Warsaw 2005;

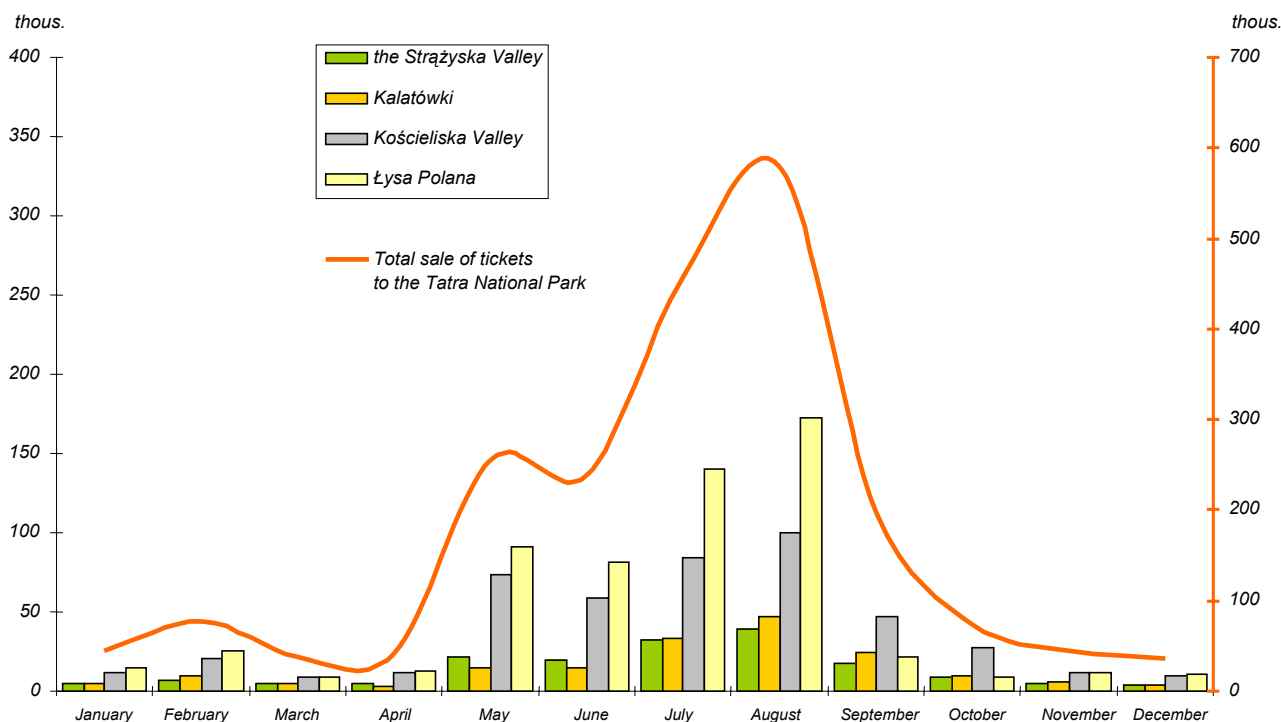
species of birds and 6 species of fish. From the group of reptiles there are 3 species and from the group of amphibians the occurrence of 7 species is proved.

Numerous sources and streams with the total length exceeding 300 kilometres make the landscape of the Park more attractive. On the threshold of the Valley of Five Polish Lakes there is Siklawa — the highest Polish waterfall (about 70 m of height). By the way to the Morskie Oko Lake, on the Roztoka Stream in the Roztoka Valley, one can see the most popular Tatra waterfall called Wodogrzmoty Mickiewicza. The biggest waterfall of the Polish part of Western Tatras is Siklawica in the Strażyska Valley.

At the Park there are about 100 lakes and ponds called staw (pond). They cover altogether an area of about 148 ha. The largest of them is the Morskie Oko Lake with an area of almost 35 ha and depth of 51 m. Wielki Staw Polski has just a little lower area — over 34 ha — but it is the deepest lake at the Park (depth of 79 m) and the second one regarding the depth in Poland.

The Tatra National Park is one of the most visited tourist area in Poland. The entrance to the Park is charged — tickets are sold at 14 points of entrance to the Park. In 2008 jointly 2078.7 thousand of tickets were sold.

SALE OF ENTRANCE TICKETS TO THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK AT SELECTED PLACES BY MONTHS IN 2008



Note. There were presented places of entrance to the Park, where the most tickets were sold.

The entry of motor vehicles to the Park is forbidden. A tourist attraction is a possibility of horse-drawn cart ride in summer and sleigh ride in winter through valleys: Chochołowska, Kościeliska, Bystra, Rybiego Potoku (the Rybi Stream).

At the entrance points to the Park parking lots were created for passenger cars and buses. They are situated at following places: the Kościeliska Valley (Kiry), the Valley of Little Meadow, the Strażyska Valley, Jaszczurówka, the Filipki Valley, Wierch Poroniec, Palenica Białczańska.

In the Park at the disposal of tourists there is a thick network of tourist trails with different degrees of difficulty, from very easy to very difficult and equipped with safety appliances such as chains, clamps and little ladders. A total length of 68 available hiking trails is about 275 kilometres. The most famous and at the

same time the most dangerous Tatra trail is “Orla Perć”. This trail leads through a long ridge across peaks and crags from the Zawrat Pass by Kozi Wierch, Granaty to the Krzyżne Pass.

At the Park tourist cycling is permitted, but only on available marked 6 bicycle trails:

- the “Droga pod Reglami” trail from “Murowanica” in the Bystra Valley to the Siwa Clearing in the Chochołowska Valley,
- at the Chochołowska Valley from the Siwa Polana clearing to the shelter on the Chochołowska Polana clearing,
- Kuźnice – the shelter on the Kalatówki Polana clearing,
- the Sucha Woda Valley – the shelter “Murowaniec” on the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture,
- Małe Ciche – Zazadnia – Wierch Poroniec – Zgorzelisko – Tarasówka,
- Małe Ciche – Lichajówki – Murzasichle.

On the Park’s area there are conditions to surface and cave mountaineering. One can go in for the surface mountaineering to marked for this purpose areas of the Morskie Oko Lake, the Valley of Five Polish Lakes together with the Buczynowa Little Valley, the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture, in the mouth of the Lejowa valley as well as in the Jaroniec couloir. There are 37 caves available for cave mountaineering. Marked tourist trails lead to 6 caves available for tourists. These caves are situated in the Kościeliska Valley: Mroźna (illuminated), Smocza Jama in the Kraków Ravine, Młyn, Raptawicka, Obłazkowa and a cave Dziura (Hole) in the Valley to Hole.

At the Park there is a cable railway completed in 1936, running all year from Kuźnice to Kasprowy Wierch. Currently, it is a modern cabin railway with panoramic panes providing a splendid view on the Tatra Mountains. In winter especially for skiers there are also two chair-lifts in a valley of Goryczkowa and Gąsienicowa.

TABLE X. CABLE RAILWAYS IN THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK

Specification	Name of the railway		
	“Kasprowy Wierch”	“Goryczkowa”	“Gąsienicowa”
Kind of the railway	cabin	chair	chair
Time of ride in min.	12	15	8
Length in m	4292	1624	1180
Elevation above the sea level in m:			
of lower station	1027	1355	1601
of upper station	1959	1958	1953
Difference of elevations in m	936	602	352
Average inclination in %	22	37	30

S o u r c e: website of the Polish Cable Railways www.pkl.pl.

There are marked trails for downhill skiers in the Sucha Stawiańska Valley (a pothole of Gąsienicowa) and in the Goryczkowa Valley as well as on the northern slope of Nosal. There were created also little ski fields on the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture near “Betelemka”, on the Chochołowska Polana clearing, at Kalatówki and in the Suchy Couloir. A ski route leads from the Goryczkowa Valley to Kuźnice. In Kościelisko Kiry and in the area of the Middle Rafter there are marked trails for cross-country skiing.

In recent years more and more tourists traverse the Tatra trails on skis. Ski alpinism becomes popular as combination of traditional cross-country and downhill skis. In the Polish Tatra Mountains one can ski on marked tourist trails except for sections closed in the period from 1 December to 31 May. Moreover, there are marked ski trails in the area of Goryczkowa and Kondratowa Valleys as well as from the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture and Nosal to Kuźnice and also in the Chochołowska Valley. At good snow conditions and lack of danger of avalanches one can also go in for alpine skiing.

On the Park’s area there are 8 tourist shelters, possessing jointly 648 bed places.

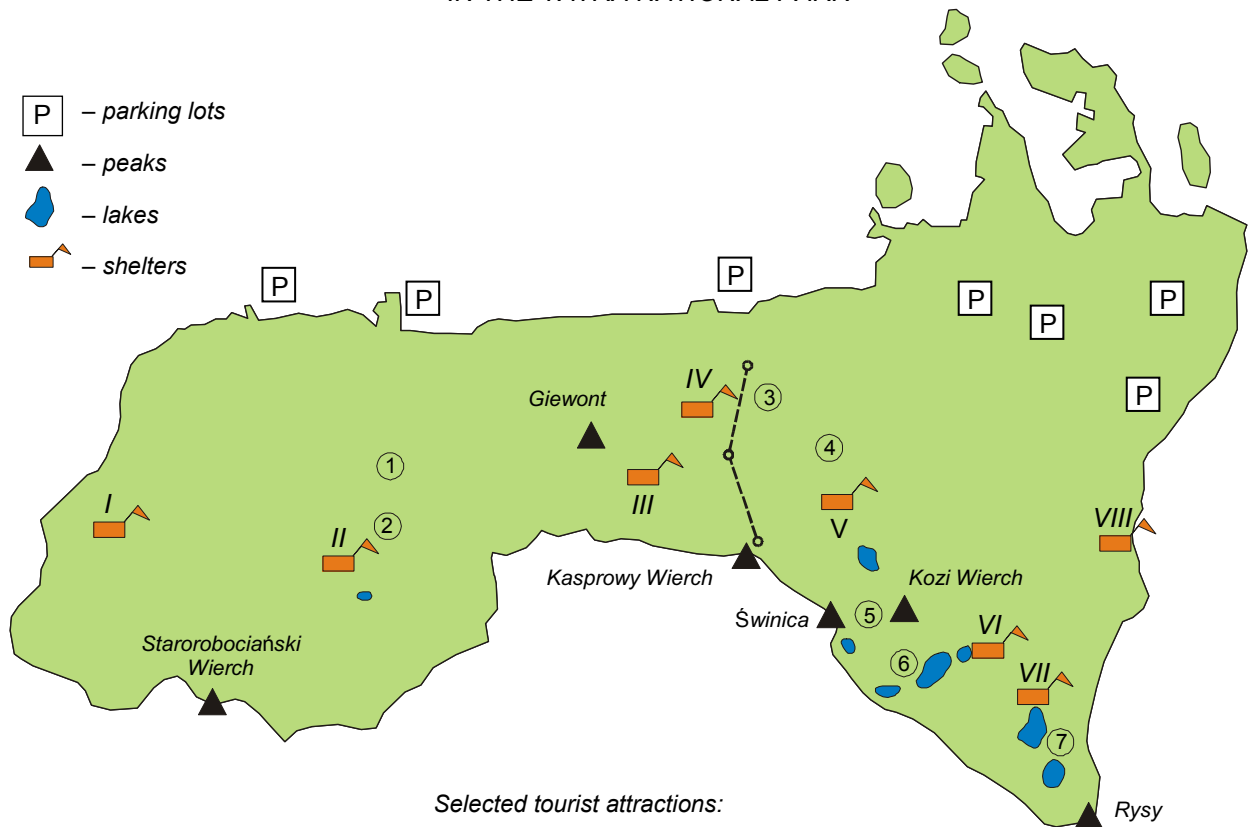
TABLE XI. SHELTERS IN THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK

Facilities (a sign on a scheme)	Bed places	Elevation above the sea level in m
Shelter on the Chochołowska Polana clearing (I)	133	1146
Shelter "Ornak" in the Kościeliska Valley (II)	80	1100
Shelter on the Hala Kondratowa mountain pasture (III)	20	1335
Shelter – hotel on Kalatówki (IV)	84	1198
Shelter "Murowaniec" on the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture (V)	108	1505
Shelter in the Valley of Five Polish Lakes (VI)	71	1671
The St. Staszic Shelter by the Morskie Oko Lake (VII)	75 ^a	1405
Shelter in the Roztoka Valley (VIII)	77	1031

^a Of which 43 bed places in so-called Old Shelter.

S o u r c e: website <http://www.schronisko.ezakopane.pl/>

SCHEME OF DEPLOYMENT OF SELECTED TOURIST ATTRACTIONS
IN THE TATRA NATIONAL PARK



Selected tourist attractions:

- 1 – the Mroźna Cave
- 2 – the "Kraków" Ravine
- 3 – the cable railway on Kasprowy Wierch
- 4 – the Hala Gąsienicowa mountain pasture
- 5 – "Orla Perc"
- 6 – the Valley of Five Polish Lakes
- 7 – the Morskie Oko Lake

N o t e. Roman numerals (I–VIII) stand for location of shelters, which are listed in table XI.