

Armin Mikos v. Rohrscheidt

## **Poland – the biggest „open air museum of fortresses” with a focus on developing culture tourism**

The dynamic development of culture tourism in historic and former military fortifications, that has taken place in Europe over the past decades, has affected Poland very little. Despite the fact, that Poland has a lot to offer especially in this field for tourism development. The potential benefits for tourism could make Poland an even more attractive tourist destination in culture tourism in the global scale through marketing formerly unknown destinations for tourists.

As a result, there will be enormous economic benefits for those regions, where there has not been a lot of investment to the present, and where unemployment rates are more than the average in Poland. The following contribution wants to deal with the following tasks:

- To give an overview of military architecture in Poland, with regard to historic background
- To give an overview of the state of renovation and restoration as well as their significance for tourism
- To disclose the necessary steps in marketing and promotion for developing tourism
- To propose a tourism route for the country as a whole with the topic „architectura militaris“

### **1 The past centuries in polish history as a factor for expanding fortifications**

#### **1.1 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century**

Era of classic fortification building, the time of the huge territorial Polish-Lithuanian Empire. At the same time it was a period of long and frequent warfare in the Southeast, the East and the Northeast and the time of the conflicts with the Muscovite state, the Ottoman Empire, the Tartars and with Sweden between 1626 and 1660. In the first decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the weakened polish state did not build any fortifications. Because of border changes towards the west there are few fortifications left from this period in time on polish grounds today. But one can clearly see, that fortifications built at that time, had a strong impact on dutch and Italian architects.<sup>1</sup>

To mention some of the most important fortification monuments: the Fortress town Zamosc, town fortifications in Mohylow (today in Byelorussia) and Zbaraz, Fortress Kamieniec Podolski (today Ukraine), Monastery fortresses in Częstochowa, Bar (UA), Berditschew (UA), Jaroslaw and Leschajsk as well as the older layers of fortification walls in Gdansk , Warsaw, Cracow, Lviv (UA), Stanislawow (UA) and Brest (BY).

Apart from that, polish nobility (Magnates) used to build fortified residences, that had both qualities – palace and castle („palazzo in fortezza“). The best preserved objects of this kind are to be found in Lancut, Wisnicz and Rzeszow in South-eastern Poland. Furthermore, we can get a glimpse of the architectural and construction value when looking at fragments of fortifications in Biala Podlaska<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, the neighbouring empires of Austria and Prussia fortifications that can be found in today's Poland. Some of them have preserved their original form or were rebuilt like fortresses in Kostrzyn, Swinoujscie, Srebrna Gora or Nysa, some of them where city fortifications like Wroclaw, Swidnica or Szczecin.

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<sup>1</sup> Further reading in J. Bogdanowski, Architektura obronna w krajobrazie Polski. Od Biskupina do Westerplatte, PWN, 1996.

<sup>2</sup>The town administration of Biala Podlaska has recently received financial support in reconstructing the Radziwill-Residence with its fortifications.

## 1.2 End of 18<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - the era of main fortresses in the history of fortification building

Poland is divided by the three Empires- Prussia (later: Germany), Austria (later: Austria-Hungary) and Russia (1795-1806 and 1813-1914). These political changes brought along an enormous development of military architecture. The reason for this was mainly the location of Poland in the borderland of the three Empires and the ongoing tension of the Empires. Polish territories had at that time a high military potential and where used to do intense warfare after 1914.

All three powers implemented huge fortifications in places, that had military importance for controlling the people and power control. Because of this, fortifications were built in important towns of that time, e.g. Warsaw, Poznan, Cracow and Lviv. The efforts of the three powers to maintain power transformed Poland's territory more than any other European territory into a fortified region of different architectural styles. In some cases, fortification complexes amount to an area of 100km<sup>2</sup>. Let us now have a detailed look on the most important military monuments of that time.

### The most important Prussian / German defence objects:

The fortresses Grudziadz, Torun, Poznan, Chelmno – Protecting Prussian ground, gained on Polish territory.

Fortress Boyen in Gizycko, modernised fortress Kostrzyn, fortress Głogów – To keep Russian rebels in distance. Expansion of older coast fortresses in Gdansk, Swinoujscie and Kolobrzeg.

### The most important Russian defence objects:

Citadel in Warsaw (to prevent Polish uprising), later expanded into a Fort.

Expansion of Fortress Modlin and Zegrze. Fortress in Osowiec (together with the fortresses in Kaunas and Grodno): prevent a possible German attack from Eastern Prussia)

Fortress in Deblin (Defending the Vistula-River). Fortifications in Terespol (fragments of fortress in Brest - BY). Fortified river line along the river Narew (Forts in Pultusk, Rozan and Lomza). Expansion of fortress in Zamosc.

### The most important Austrian defence objects:

The giant main fortresses in Przemysl and Cracow (Prevention of Russian attack from Galicia towards Hungary and Austria, later also Silesia and Berlin).

## 1.3 Period between World War I and World War II and the period of the Second World War (1939-1945)

Is another period of extensive fortification building. In this period mainly decentralised military complexes are built. The newly established Polish state builds fortresses along its new borders. But the neighbouring countries, especially Germany also put effort into erecting defence lines along their borders. After dividing Poland in 1939, the Soviet Union starts to construct a new fortification line along the border to the German Reich. The Germans nevertheless also put effort into constructing new military bases in their part of the Polish territory and in Eastern Prussia to prepare planned invasion against their neighbours to the East (1940-1941). Later, in the aftermath of the war losses in the East, the Germans went on to fortifying the strategic defence lines against the Soviet Union to prevent further attacks. Apart from that, the Germans turned some towns into fortification areas. The most important military objects and complexes built at that time, sorted by origin<sup>3</sup>:

**Poland (1919-1939):** fortified Peninsula Hel, fortified area (Upper-) Silesia, Westerplatte (Gdansk), Mława and Wizna as well as smaller places at the Western and Northern borders of Poland.

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<sup>3</sup>Further reading in: Chorzepa J., Fortyfikacje, Warsaw, 2007. There is a detailed map on p.7 showing the fortified areas and the defence lines on the Polish territory.

**Soviet Union (1940-1941):** so called „Molotow-Line“ (planned as a defence line along the whole German-Soviet border from the Lithuanian coast to the Rumanian border in the Carpathian Mountains) In reality, it was only partly put into practice – in Poland parts from Augustow to Przemyśl, that formed six fortified areas: Grodno, Osowiec, Zambrow, Brest, Rawa-Russka, Przemyśl.

**Germany (1928-1945):** Masurian Borderline (1940-41), „Oder-Warthe-Bogen“(Międzyrzecz Fortification Region) (1932-45), „Pommernstellung“ (1932-45), fortified area Lötzen (1935-44), defence line Breslau-Glogau-Grünberg (1928-45), Heilsberger Dreieck (1932-37), headquarters: Wolfsschanze (Wolf's Lair) , „Anlage Mitte“ near Tomaszow and „Anlage Süd“ near Strzyzow. 1944-45 fortified towns „Town Fortresses“: Kolberg (Kolobrzeg), Breslau (Wroclaw), Posen (Poznan), Gdynia

### **Additional military object as tourist destinations:**

A useful addendum to this list of possible tourist destinations in the field of military complexes are historic places, that are connected to European war history and the military traditions of a country like for example:

- Well known battlefields like Liegnitz (1241), Grunwald and Tannenberg (1410, 1914), Leuthen (1757), Pultusk (1806), Preußisch-Elau and Ostroleka (1807), Westerplatte (1939), Warsaw (1794, 1939 and 1944)
- Huge military cemeteries (e.g. Warsaw Bunzlau, Poznan, Przemyśl, Siemianowice, Zgorzelec, Szczecin, Wroclaw)
- Military museums (e.g. in Warsaw, Poznan, Cracow or Drzonow)
- Military open-air museums like in Lesna Gora, Zbdice und Polichno
- Former camps for prisoners of war (e.g.. in Laminowitz).

In some places there are regular “battle events” that remind of historic battles like those in Grunwald, Malbork, Nysa and other places. Apart from that, there are meetings of lovers of military vehicles (Borne-Sulinowo, Darlowo)<sup>4</sup>.

## **2 The state of restoration of historic defence complexes in Poland and ways and protective action.**

### **2.1 The state of military complexes**

The majority of fortresses and fortifications are in a bad state. This is because of:

- War damage when used for defence
- Neglect and lack of interest in the monuments as a result of lacking national identity with the „alien“ constructions – with the result of vandalism, wild tourism, illegal extraction of scrap metal and building materials
- Demolition of constructions in order to make room for new housing and other purposes
- Lack of interest from foreign or domestic investors in developing tourism in this field

Only in some complexes, that were used by military, as a museum or memorial, as residence (seldom) or as storeroom (e.g. Warsaw citadel, Legion-Fort, Poznan Fort VII, Fort II, Cracow-Wawel hill, Fort St. Benedikt, Fortress Osowiec and Modlin) the state of restoration is much better.

Thanks to regaining autonomy also on a local level, the local initiatives and associations like TPF<sup>5</sup> (friends of the fortresses in Poland) and similar associations<sup>6</sup> the interest in fortifications is constantly

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<sup>4</sup>Further reading in : Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., Turystyka Kulturowa. Fenomen, Potencjal, Perspektywy, Gniezno 2008, p. 248-255.

<sup>5</sup>The association TPF (founded in 1990) is active all over Poland, especially in local groups of bigger towns with historic fortresses (Warsaw, Poznan, Cracow, Przemyśl, Zielona Gora). TPF is active in ground research at the sights of former military objects, organising scientific conferences, broadening knowledge on fortresses and publishing (TPF has its own publishing house).

<sup>6</sup>For example TPF Fortress Modlin (without any office in town and without any influence on the administration of the complex): clearing, restoration of fortress grounds, guided tours, education of fortress guides, renting.

rising in the past 20 years. First restorations are taking place with the help of subsidies<sup>8</sup>, efforts to restore and to reactivate, to cultivate and to prepare these sites for touristic development. In some places the revitalisation was initiated. After the potential in tourism has been recognized the touristic infrastructure strategy is adjusted.

Despite of the approval of the historic value of fortresses there is ongoing decay and sometimes devastation of fortification monuments, even of listed ones<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.2 Ownership– Situation today

- Until 1989 the majority of objects were owned and administrated by the military and the state (Exceptions: citadel in Grudziadz and Central Fort in Osowiec)
- At the moment a gradual transfer of most listed military complexes and bigger defence objects to the local administration
- some objects or autonomous fragments of town fortifications (smaller forts or bunkers) are now owned by private individuals

## 2.3 Care and Revitalisation

The responsibility put to the local level has different effects on care and revitalisation, depending on the local authorities, depending also on the historic value of the object, touristic value and possibilities, priority in development plans and financial means of a local administration.

Local administration finds support with the TPF- Association and scientific staff at technical universities all over Poland e.g. in Cracow, Warsaw or Wroclaw. (inventory of objects, design of development plans, revitalisation programmes, future strategies etc<sup>8</sup>).

## 2.4 Level of touristic access<sup>9</sup>

Depending on the touristic value of a fortification object, the access for tourist in Poland differs a lot. There is a variety of visiting options:

- daily opening hours, signboards, visitor trails, guides tours by appointment (e.g. Boyen und Modlin)
- visits on request to be booked at local tour agencies or tourist offices<sup>10</sup>
- limited access to objects on private territories that are used as offices, clubs or for other purpose
- objects used for military purposes: visit possible only by appointment, not all areas can be accessed by tourists with a guide (e.g. Fortress Osowiec), visiting permit needed from the local headquarters. Foreign visitors need visiting permit from the Defence Ministry (e.g. citadel in Grudziadz)
- no access for visitors at all: lots of smaller objects, that are not yet open to public
- open air museums and museums in general<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>For example Gdansk (Danzig), where restoration of Fort Carre is going on, to house one part of the Historical Museum of Gdansk

<sup>7</sup>Fortress Zegrze has been taken over by the Central National bank of Poland. The complex is transformed into a banking centre, by destroying historic monument qualities and without preserving the characteristic elements.

<sup>8</sup>Molski P., Zasoby poforteczne w Polsce jako potencjal turystyczny, in: Fortyfikacje jako atrakcje turystyczne, Gizycko 2003, pp. 15-25, esp. p. 16.

<sup>9</sup> Chylinska D., Formy ekspozycji i udostepnienia turystycznego obiektow militarno-wojskowych z czasow II. Wojny Swiatowej. Rozwiazania polskie a praktyka europejska, in: Folia Turistica 17, AWF Krakau, 2006, pp. 77-98.

<sup>10</sup>There is limited access to the most interesting and best preserved objects at "Oder-Warthe-Bogen" region with the guide of a tour agency. The tour is called „Underground Route“ because it is not open for the general public.

<sup>11</sup>For example objects in Zbdice or in the military open air museum in Lesna Gora

### 3 Culture tourism in historic military complexes in Poland: necessary steps for development and perspectives

#### 3.1 In the field of fortresses: Reasons for lack of demand

- Military aspects are few in education
- Fewer people who do military service
- Polish citizens prefer to go abroad for holiday
- little activity in administration of military complexes and insufficient coordination of cooperative action (no common proposals from tour operators, no transregional topic-routes )
- limited financial options to have more than one holidays in a year
- the growing number of member in TPF and other hobby associations are mainly young people with very limited financial resources, so that at the moment the demand for gastronomy and hotel services is still low

#### 3.2 Incoming-Tourism for military objects

- Foreign tourists (the majority are from Germany) do have more financial resources
- demand for a more sophisticated touristic infrastructure (transfer, hotels, restaurants)
- lacking promotion of Polish fortresses abroad – Europeans do not know about the existence of the historic fortresses in Poland and their significance
- attention is drawn mostly on well-known objects like Wolfsschanze, „Oder-Warthe-Bogen“ or fortifications of larger towns
- lack of additional offer for tourists on the spot like interactive exhibitions, scale models of fortresses, interactive tours or staging

**Conclusion:** there is no modern and competitive offer in the field of fortresses for tourists in Poland.

#### 3.3 Task and Action plan for the present:

- Complete **clarification of administrative issues, especially property rights** of the most important military objects
- Listing of not yet listed complexes to the list of monument protected objects<sup>12</sup>, to prevent demolition or neglect
- Gaining of financial resources to restore and reconstruct
- Modification of administrative status into a Culture Park <sup>13</sup>, creating landscape parks on the territory, new internal rules, founding of separate organisation units in the local administration, financial autonomy<sup>14</sup>

#### 3.4 Fundamental works to be done on the site

On the basis support of local TPF-Groups, owners and few financial support of Monument Protection Offices:

- Continuation of security measurements and clean-up operations
- Secure and label touristic routes and single objects
- Didactic topic paths
- Education of tourist guides and organisation of specialized sightseeing-tours

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<sup>12</sup>Today polish fortresses are only partly listed as protected monuments.

<sup>13</sup>The law norms regarding founding of Culture Parks are fixed in the law of July 23 2003 on monuments and monument protection (Dz. U. Nr 162, Pos. 1568) in articles 16-17 and 19.

Further reading on Culture Parks as a way to protect historic military objects in Molski P., Zasoby forteczne w Polsce jako potencjal turystyczny, in: (Biegunski G. (Ed.) Fortyfikacje jako atrakcje turystyczne, Gizycko 2003, pp. 20-21.

<sup>14</sup>Locally administrated Culture Parks are to be found already in Gdansk-Grodzisko (since 2002 Culture Park of the Gdansk Fortress), Fortress Parks exist in Srebrna Gora and Klodzko. The „Nature- and Culture Park Nysa“ is opening soon.

- Tourism Marketing (website, press, tour operators)
- Reconstruction/Revitalisation according to original construction plans under expert surveillance of historians specialized in fortifications and expert building teams
- Measurements to gain national or European funding / financial resources
- Support of local initiatives for their own or common touristic projects and start-up and coordination of activities to enriching the offer for tourists and promotion of objects (e.g. guided tours<sup>15</sup>, meetings of lovers of military vehicles<sup>16</sup>)
- Nationwide cooperation and coordination of institutions and companies (offices, public services, companies, associations, private and public universities, local tourist offices, hotels, trade associations, gastronomy, companies specialised in culture tourism among others)
- A change of attitude in polish local administration towards private companies and prospective investors, especially in bigger places
- Common marketing activities
- Presentation of Polish military complexes and fortification in electronic media, at tourism fairs, in brochures and folders etc. (e.g. Baltic Fort Route<sup>17</sup>)
- Cooperation and financial involvement of all interested institutions and companies, support from polish tourism organisation (government agency POT), regional authorities and EU-programmes to foster tourism development
- Preparation of projects in culture tourism to attract as many tourists as possible in a contemporary and attractive way (e.g. historic „Soldier's book“ „**Söldnerbuch**“<sup>18</sup>)

### 3.5 Tourism specialised on military objects

Specialised trips and culture tourism (classic cultural offers) aim not only at presenting attractive places and content, but also to make this touristic product available at a reasonable price (accommodation, meals etc).

The potential target group (from Poland and abroad) for culture tourism are customers, which prefer to „experience“ their destinations in an uncommon way, e.g. want to know more about architecture, history, local traditions and events etc). Therefore tour operators have to create sophisticated touristic products to accomplish the expectations of customers and target groups.

Design of topics and routes (incl. Prearrangements and realisation) has to be prepared by tour operators specialized in this field. These experts know how to design the offer and do have the necessary contacts in the tourism industry.

### 3.6 Specialised staff for topic tours

The benefits of a **study- or culture trip** highly depend on the tour guide, his personality, expertise, organizational skills and authority<sup>19</sup>. In order to guarantee high standards, training of specialists for fortification and culture tourism is advisable to be built on the know-how of leading and best practice companies.

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<sup>15</sup>Further reading in Mikos v. Rohrscheidt, A., Kulturtourismus (op. cit.), pp. 352-353.

<sup>16</sup>For example festival at Nysa Fortress (with a spectacular staging of the occupation in 1807) with participation of some hundred protagonists from several countries and some thousand guests. Apart from that there is an international meeting of lovers of military vehicles in Borne-Sulinowo.

<sup>17</sup>Offer from KulTour.pl, polish partner of BFR  
[http://www.kultour.pl/?one=opis\\_tras&mt=fr&miejscas=opis](http://www.kultour.pl/?one=opis_tras&mt=fr&miejscas=opis) (21 May 2008).

<sup>18</sup> The idea of a „Soldier's book“ was born in 2007 at a BFR conference in Swinoujscie. The book could be similar to the „Passport of Greater Poland“, put into practice by the travel agency KulTour.pl – further reading <http://www.kultour.pl/paszport/index.php> (21 May 2008).

<sup>19</sup>Further reading: Freericks R, Reiseleitung im Kulturtourismus in: Dreyer A., Kulturtourismus, München/Wien 2000, pp.345-362, See also: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., Turystyka Kulturowa, op. cit. p. 377-383.

#### 4 Proposal of a Culture Route in Poland as a main axes for the topic „military complexes“

An important factor in broadening for culture tourism is the design of culture routes<sup>20</sup>. The attractiveness of a culture route is fostered through sights that form a common topic on the routes. It is not an easy task, to make proposal in this respect regarding polish military objects. This is because Poland has a huge military heritage from different historic periods. Touristic development differs largely on a national scale.

This proposal for a Polish Culture Route is an attempt to design an attractive topic route, keeping in mind the different points of view mentioned above. This list of destinations intends to be the **Main Route**, including variety of objects and central locations (starting points). Complementary to this, the central locations connect the regional routes to form a network across the whole country:<sup>21</sup>

**Fortress Küstrin** (Kostrzyn) and **Fort Gorgast**: old-Prussian fortress type, partly reconstructed, good transport infrastructure, pro-tourism attitude, historic events

**Oder-Warthe-Bogen** (MRU – Position Boryszyn): Parts of a defence line in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at that time very modern fortification type, good maintenance, underground route, good location in between Kostrzyn and Poznan

**Fortress Posen** (Poznan): well-preserved elements of town fortress in new-Prussian style, important during World War II, several military museums, well preserved Fort 7, excellent tourist infrastructure

**Fortress Thorn** (Torun): well preserved fortress in new-Prussian style, with elements of a bridgehead, accommodation possible in Fort IV, events on request, well developed touristic infrastructure

possible regional knot (Kujavia-Pommerania and Warmia with Fortress Grudziadz, Kulm, Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Znin, Koronower lakes, Lidzbark Welski, Brodnitz lakes)

**Fortress Danzig (Gdansk) and Westerplatte**: fortification from several historic periods and different origin (Grodzisko, Weichselmünde, Westerplatte). Historic reference, example of complex reconstruction (Fort Carre), big amount of tourism offers in Gdansk and surroundings (Malbork/Marienburg distance 1h)

possible regional knot for coast fortresses (Kaliningrad/Königsberg, Frombork/Frauenburg, Elbing, Kolobrzeg/Kolberg, Szczecin/Stettin, Swinoujście/Swinemünde, additional stops: Gdynia, Peninsula Hel, Leba)

**Feste Boyen and Wolfsschanze**: two important military complexes (distance about 30km). Boyen in Gizycko (Lötzen): polygonal system with modern elements from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historic reference. Wolfsschanze near Ketrzyn (Rastenburg): fortified headquarter from World War II, historic reference, well developed touristic infrastructure.

possible knot for local routes along the former headquarters (Radziejewo, Mamerki, Pozedrze, Lötzen, open-air museum of fortifications in Bakalarzewo)

**Fortress Osowiec** (in Goniadz/ Monki): modern Russian fortress with unique size (Fort Nr. 1, diameter measures about 2,5 km), historical importance

**Fortresses Modlin and Warsaw:**

**Modlin** is a complex of French, Russian and polish origin and a Russian Fort. Used for historic spectacles, close to Warsaw.

**Fortress Warsaw**: Russian citadel, police function, later fortress, underground military route within Fort Legionow, polish capital with big amount of cultural and touristic attractions.

possible knot for regional masovian fortress route (e.g. Fortress Zegrze, Bridgehead Rozan, Bridgehead Pultusk, remains of fortress Lomza, Nowogrod, Wizna)

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<sup>20</sup>On the notion of culture tourist routes, its classification and functions: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., *Turystyka Kulturowa*, op. cit., pp. 293-311.

<sup>21</sup>More on these fortress and other important military complexes in: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., *Reiseland Polen*, Verlag KulTour.pl, Poznan 2006.

**Fortress Deblin:** Remaining of the Russian fortification from the 19<sup>th</sup> century

**Fortress Zamosc:** fortress town from late renaissance, important historic value, touristic infrastructure well developed

**Fortress Przemysl:** large fortress from Austrian origin, „Verdun of the East“, external forts and fortress museum, war cemetery from World War 1, referred to in literature „The Good Soldier Švejk“, well developed touristic infrastructure

possible knot for regional routes along the Molotow-Line (in direction towards Krasiczyn and Sanok, Przemyski, fortified Rayon).

**Fortress Cracow:** fortress of Austrian origin, contains historic defence object of high value (Barbakan - Bridgefort), museum with precious art collections in the field of military history, several important art collections.

**Monastery Fortress Jasna Gora** (Czestochowa/Tschenstochau): one of the best preserved fortified monasteries, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in polish traditional, icon of „Black Madonna“, museum

**Fortress Nysa:** Prussian fortress, partly revitalised, fortress with historic reconstruction of the occupation in 1807 of Napoleon's army

**Fortress Srebrna Gora:** huge Prussian mountain fortress (unique in Poland) , Donjon – biggest casemate tower in Europe, „soldier“ from the regiment, presentations of historic weapons, scenic location, operates as „culture park“

**Fortress Glatz** (Klodzko): fortress of Austrian origin, conterminous corridors, annual fortress days with nightly manoeuvre, military drill shows, reconstruction of occupation with presentation of historic weapons, guided story-tours.

Possible starting point for local route „Complex Riese“ (Owl Mountains, Gluszyca-Osowka, Walimer mines, underground spaces of palace Fürstenberg (Ksiaz), complex Wlodarz, Sobon, Solkolec and Jawornik)

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