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CHRISTMAS BEFORE THE WAR



Arch. MBL-PE

Christmas in folk tradition lasts from Christmas Eve until Epiphany, that is till 6 January. Christmas customs include the beliefs that are related not only to Catholic holidays, but often to All Souls' Day.

In the past Christmas was called *gody* in Warmia and Masuria. As it is today, it was preceded by the Advent period. Disguisers or boys with a star would then appear in Masuria. In some villages, they walked with a goat, a stork and a woman with a donation basket. Advent lasted four weeks. On the first Sunday, a garland was made from a Christmas tree, it was decorated with red ribbons and a single candle was placed on it. It was hung under the ceiling in the room. One candle was added each following Sunday. The climax of the Advent celebrations in Masuria was “*jutrznia na gody*”, a service celebrated on Christmas Eve (*jutrznia* is the time before sunrise). It was a typically religious performance, involving children singing songs from the hymnbook. Scenes related to the birth

of Christ were also re-enacted. In the 1930s, after Hitler's rise to power, the *jutrznia* began to be exterminated, as it had a huge role in maintaining the Polishness among the Masurian people.

The day of Christmas Eve in both the Warmia and Masuria included only very few ecclesiastical elements. Even in catholic Warmia, fasting was not observed on this day (not until much, much later, under pressure from the opinions of settlers from other parts of Poland and priests). The dishes of the Christmas Eve supper often did not differ from the dishes of everyday life. At the 'richer' dinner, goose and meat were served on the table. Supper was served around seven o'clock: roast goose, goose sausage, meat, cake and sweets, whole meal bread.

The custom of breaking the wafer was unknown in Warmia and Masuria until 1945. The custom of putting up a Christmas tree, however, did not spread until around 1910. Plates full of apples, gingerbread, nuts, sweets and small presents were placed under the Christmas tree. In some villages, a sheaf of grain was placed in a corner of the room or branches of conifers were hung. Gifts were brought to the children by Santa Claus. This custom has been preserved to this day. The name Santa Claus used to be different from what it is today: *Nikolus*, *Pikolus*. There was a custom that servants walked with a *shemel* (a grey horse) in a company of a rich retinue. The eldest servant acted as Santa Claus and handed out presents to the children.

Only in the towns of Warmia the Christmas midnight mass was held at midnight. In the countryside, people used to come to the mass in the morning at five o'clock. In a packed church, by the light of the candles burning on the Christmas tree, carols were sung. What is more, the Germans admired them, praising their incomparable charm.

CHRISTMAS TODAY



arch. Hotel Krasicki****

Christmas Eve begins the Christmas celebration. In the Polish tradition, Christmas Eve is the most solemn and moving evening of the year. Christmas supper is usually taken when the first star appears in the sky. The most important moment of the Christmas Eve supper is the sharing the wafer. There are usually 12 dishes on the table. The Polish still attend midnight mass on this night. One of the youngest traditions on Christmas Eve is the decorating of the Christmas tree, with presents waiting under the tree. The singing of carols and the constructing of the nativity scenes are the most beautiful Christmas customs. Recently, it has become increasingly common to go away for holidays and spend them in hotels. However, Christmas holidays in Poland have been still very family-oriented and the Polish still spent them in the company of loved ones.

Following are links to selected hotels where you can spend your Christmas holidays this year:

HOTEL KRASICKI****

www.hotelkrasicki.pl/boze-narodzenie-z-ignacym

HOTEL ZAMEK RYN****

www.zamekryn.pl/boze-narodzenie-Mazury

HOTEL ST. BRUNO****

www.hotelstbruno.pl/oferty-specjalne/boze-narodzenie-rodzinne-swiate-na-mazurach/

[HOTEL ANDERS****](http://www.hotelanders.pl)

www.hotelanders.pl/oferty/swiate-bozego-narodzenia-na-mazurach

HOTEL TAJTY***

www.hoteltajty.pl/oferty-specjalne/szczegoly-pakietu?OfferID=297734

GRANDHOTEL TIFFI*****

www.grandhotel.tiffi.com/pl/pakiety-oferty/rodzinne-wiata-na-mazurach/

HOTEL SPA DR IRENA ERIS WZGÓRZA DYLEWSKIE*****

www.drirenaerisspa.pl/wzgorza-dylewskie/ceny-i-pakiety/szczegoly-pakietu?OfferID=287676

HOTEL MIKOŁAJKI *****

www.hotelmikolajki.pl/pakiety/boze-narodzenie-na-mazurach

HOTEL GOŁĘBIEWSKI ****

www.golebiewski.pl/mikolajki/oferty-specjalne/swiate-bozego-narodzenia-24-26122021

HOTEL MASURIA****

www.hotelmasuria.pl/aktualnosci/boze-narodzenie-na-mazurach-w-masuria-hotel-spa

HOTEL AMAX***

www.hotel-amax.pl/oferty/boze-narodzenie-1

HOTEL***SOLAR PALACE SPA & WELLNESS

www.hotelsolar.com.pl/pakiet-boze-narodzenie-na-mazurach-2/

HOTEL VENTUS &MEDICAL SPA****

www.ventushotel.pl/pakiety-i-promocje/szczegoly-oferty?OfferID=188875

HOTEL ROBERT`S PORT****

www.hotel-port.pl/oferty/boze-narodzenie-na-mazurach-oferta-rodzinna

PALAC MORTEGI HOTEL & SPA****

www.palacmortegi.pl/pakiety/szczegoly-pakietu?OfferID=125631