

"THE WORLD'S FIRST ALL-INCLUSIVE  
INSTRUCTIONAL SKI  
+ SNOWBOARD  
HOLIDAYS TO  
POLAND"



**New kid from the bloc**

ALAN GARCIA 2005



**A** new contender is vying to be Europe's best-value ski resort – the Polish mountain town of Zakopane, in the Tatra Alps, with an incredible 51 ski areas on its doorstep.

Prices are as low as they go – £10 for a ski pass, £1 for a beer and a tenner buys a gourmet dinner with wine. Yet the standards are much higher than other eastern bloc ski countries like Bulgaria and Romania.

No hand-me-down rickety old chairlifts from Austria, but the best, state-of-the-art Doppelmayr quad lifts with rolling mats.

For sure, most of the region's skiing is mamma and pappasyle resorts like you find in the Eastern United States, with two or three short runs. But there are bigger areas, and when these are linked up they will give some of Austria's linked ski areas a run for their money.

Zakopane has its own beginner/intermediate slope, Szyloschkowa, in the town, and an even larger cruising mountain, Bialka, served by four chair lifts.

Best of all, just outside the town, is the Pope's mountain – 2000 metre-high Kasprowy-Wierch.

This was Pope John Paul's favourite ski mountain and he loved to take on its challenging runs every time he visited his birthplace nearby.

**PRICES YOU WON'T BELIEVE**

**Ski pass:** £10 a day

**Ski instructor:** £10 an hour

**Equipment hire:** £8 a day

**Taxis:** £1 a mile

**Three-star hotel/half board:** £10 a night

**Luxury hotel:** £50-£150 a night

**Half litre beer:** £1

**Large Vodka/Gin:** £2

**Slap up meal:** £5, £6 with wine!

**Gourmet dinner:** £10 with wine

**Transfer from Krakow:** official £100/£50 if you haggle.

Kasprowy has some serious blacks and reds and couliour skiing at the summit and a five mile home run back to base.

This area will keep a good skier busy for a few days sport. Really good skiers will struggle to get real challenges but for those who don't need to ski endless pistes, and are happy with the same little mountain, Zakopane is ideal. And it's perfect for first timers.

Poland was the first eastern bloc country to throw off the shackles of communism, although there is still plenty of mediocrity. However its standards are well up on other eastern European countries, particularly in bars, restaurants and hotels.

It's the prices that appeal. Food and drinks are a third of prices in Britain. I stayed in a four-star luxury hotel for £80 a night bed and breakfast and dined like a king in the Hotel Belvedere (best in town) for £20 a head, including a bottle of Chilean Shiraz.

Zakopane is brought to the British market by Surrey based

tour operator Alan Garcia, who toured the world looking for the ideal resort to start his Sunshine World operation.

He was particularly underwhelmed with his native France for its chauvinistic attitude towards visitors, particularly the profit bringing Brits, but chose Poland because they welcome us with open arms.

Zakopane is a two-hour BA flight from Gatwick to ancient Krakow. Return prices from around £100, then a further two hours on winding country roads. Krakow itself is well worth a visit and is starting to rival Prague for culture tourism and stag and hen nights.

We stayed there in an apartment in a former imperial palace for the princely sum of £9 a head, including breakfast. □

**JOHN HILL**

**FACT FILE**

[www.sunshineworld.co.uk](http://www.sunshineworld.co.uk)  
[www.ba.com](http://www.ba.com)