



Join us
on an unforgettable journey
through our beautiful town

Tekst: Dominik Cybulski
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KOWARY

VISITOR GUIDE



KOWARY
miasto z tradycjami



KOWARY
miasto z tradycjami



Informacja Turystyczna

ul. Dworcowa 8

tel. +48 75 64 56 111

turystyka@kowary.pl

Kowary – A World of Possibilities

That's right! A whole **world of possibilities** awaits you in Kowary. Our charming mountain town is full of places to discover and **experiences to remember**.

Wander through **picturesque streets** lined with historic buildings, enjoy **spectacular viewpoints**, explore **peaceful mountain trails**, relax in welcoming cafés and restaurants, and uncover the fascinating **industrial heritage** that once made Kowary one of the region's most important mining towns. Families will also find plenty of attractions to keep children entertained throughout their stay. **So, what are you waiting for?** Pack your rucksack and discover everything Kowary has to offer!

We **invite you** to explore one of Lower Silesia's most captivating mountain towns.

(Photo: R. Kotylak)



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View from the Kowarska Pass (Photo: R. Kotylak)

LOCATION

Kowary is situated in Lower Silesia, in south-western Poland. Its spectacular setting makes it an ideal destination for anyone who enjoys hiking and mountain scenery. The town stretches along the **Jedlica Valley**, which forms the natural boundary between two Sudeten mountain ranges: **the Karkonosze Mountains and the Rudawy Janowickie Mountains**. Starting from the town centre, you can reach two peaks included in the Crown of Polish Mountains in a single day: **Skalnik** (around 4 hours return) and **Śnieżka** (around 10 hours return).



*The area around
Wołowa Góra
(Photo: R. Kotylak)*



Railway viaduct over Wiejska Street (Photo: R. Kotylak)

Since the opening of the **S3 expressway** towards Kamienna Góra, Kowary has become one of the main gateways to the Karkonosze Mountains. Anyone travelling from the S3 towards Śnieżka passes through the town. Whether you're stopping for a few hours or staying a little longer, Kowary is an excellent base for exploring the surrounding area. **Nearby destinations** include Karpacz (7 km), Jelenia Góra (14 km), Szklarska Poręba (30 km) and Wałbrzych (45 km). Just beyond the town lies the Jelenia Góra Valley, renowned for its remarkable concentration of historic residences. Known as the **Valley of Palaces and Gardens**, it is said to boast even more castles and palaces than France's famous Loire Valley. Another advantage of Kowary's location

Kowary Reservoir (Photo: R. Kotylak)



(Photo: R. Kotylak)

DID YOU KNOW?

Kowary is home to the **highest railway tunnel in Poland**. The tunnel forms part of the railway line **between Kowary and Kamienna Góra, which is currently being modernised (2026)**. Running beneath Kowary Pass, it is **1,025 metres long**. Its western portal lies at an altitude of **approximately 630 metres above sea level**, while the eastern portal is around **650 metres above sea level**. **630 m n.p.m., a wschodni – ok. 650 m n.p.m.]**.

is its proximity to **the Czech border**. The road border crossing at Okraj Pass can be reached in around 20–30 minutes.

Public transport is provided by private bus operators offering regular services to Karpacz, Jelenia Góra and Janowice Wielkie. During the tourist season, buses also cross the Okraj Pass into the Czech Republic, serving Malá Úpa and Pec pod Sněžkou. According to current plans, **regular passenger rail services** between Kowary and Jelenia Góra are expected to resume in 2028, with a future extension to Kamienna Góra.

Bus and minibus timetables from Kowary are available here:





The Councillors' Hall in the Town Hall (Photo: R. Kotylak)

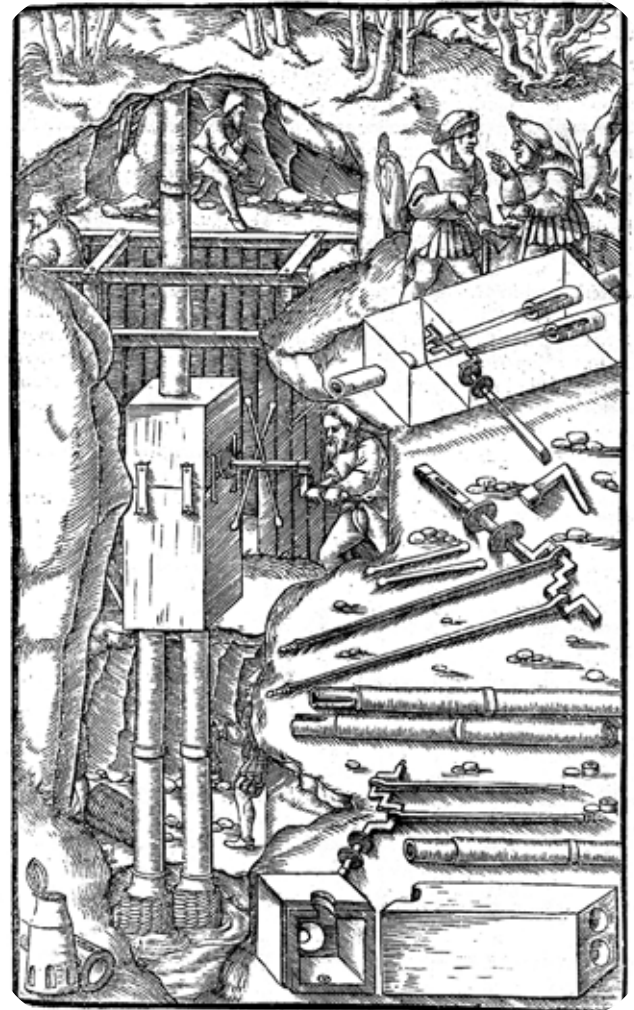
HISTORY

The origins of Kowary are shrouded in mystery. According to local legend, in 1148 the Walloon prospector Laurentius Angelus discovered rich iron ore deposits on the slopes of Mount Rudnik. But did this really happen? And did Laurentius Angelus actually exist? No definitive answers have yet been found. The earliest surviving written reference to Kowary dates from 1355, when Duke Bolko II settled a dispute between Kowary and Jelenia Góra over the trade in iron ore. At the time, Kowary was still officially a village. Yet the fact that it was able to challenge the much larger town of Jelenia Góra and trade such a valuable commodity independently suggests that it was already a well-established settlement rather than a newly founded community. Its mines must already have been operating successfully, and its inhabitants evidently enjoyed a considerable degree of independence. But had those mines already been working in 1148? For now, that question remains firmly in the realm of legend.

DID YOU KNOW?

For centuries, until 1945, Kowary was known by its German name, Schmiedeberg, meaning Blacksmith's Mountain. The modern Polish name, Kowary, is derived from the Czech word kovář, meaning blacksmith.

Rich deposits of magnetite, a high-grade iron ore, brought prosperity to the settlement and paved the way for its development into a town. On 4 November 1513, King Vladislaus II of Bohemia and Hungary granted Kowary its town charter. The sixteenth century is widely regarded as the town's Golden Age. The reputation of Kowary's blacksmiths and gunsmiths spread far beyond the borders of Bohemia and, later, the Habsburg monarchy. Among their distinguished customers was King Sigismund II Augustus of Poland, who commissioned 200 gun barrels from the town's craftsmen. This period of prosperity came to an abrupt end with the beginning of the seventeenth century.



Mining in the Middle Ages (illustration from 'De re metallica libri XII')

In 1618, war broke out between the Catholic Habsburg Monarchy and the Protestant states of the Holy Roman Empire. The conflict, now known as the Thirty Years' War, devastated much of Central Europe, including Silesia. Without defensive walls to protect it, Kowary was repeatedly occupied by armies from both sides. The town suffered looting, destruction and economic decline. One of the most destructive raids took place in 1622, when the Lisowczycy, Polish light cavalry fighting in the service of the Habsburgs, plundered the town.

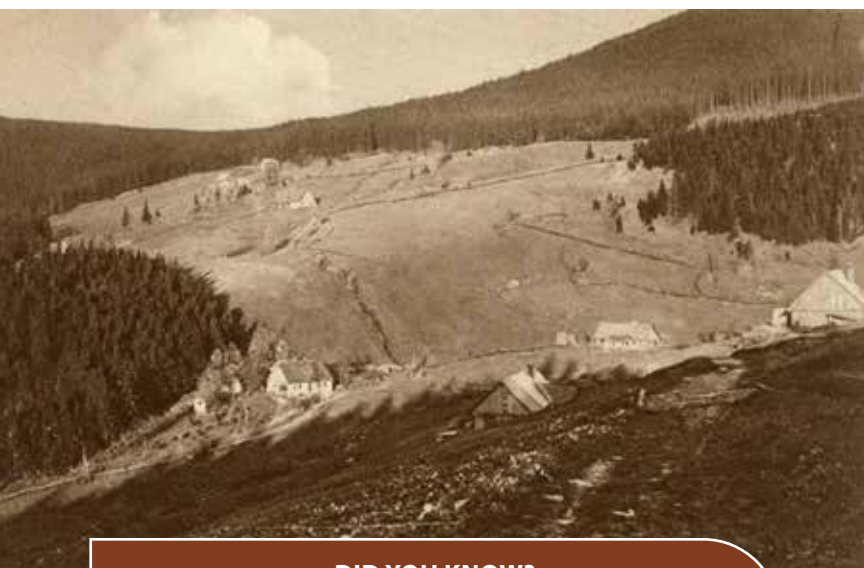
Many residents fled into the surrounding mountains, where they established small settlements such as Lower Town, Upper Town and Budniki, traces of which can still be found today.



(Photo: archives of the Kowary Enthusiasts' Association)

As the settlement gradually became depopulated, mining and blacksmithing declined. Many of the town's men were away fighting, leaving women, children and the elderly to support their families. To earn a living, local people turned to home weaving. What began as a modest cottage industry gradually evolved into the driving force behind Kowary's economy. In 1720, the town's first organised textile enterprise, the Linen Manufacturing Workshop, was established. Throughout the eighteenth century, Kowary slowly recovered from the devastation of the Thirty Years' War. This revival was reflected in the construction of a Protestant church, opened in 1744, and the replacement of the old town hall with a new Neoclassical building, completed in 1789. Even the devastating fire of 1792, which destroyed almost the entire old town, failed to halt the town's recovery. By the nineteenth century, Kowary had developed into one of the region's leading industrial centres.

The nineteenth century, particularly its second half, was a period of rapid expansion. Although textile production continued to dominate the local economy, mining also experienced a revival. One example was the Bergfreiheit Mine, established in 1854 on the site of medieval workings on the slopes of Mount Rudnik. It initially extracted iron ore before later becoming a uranium mine. The same year also saw the founding of the town's famous carpet factory in Wleń. Two years later it was relocated to Kowary, where, for more than 150 years, it earned an international reputation for producing high-quality woollen carpets. Other important industrial enterprises included the Peschel bleaching works (opened in Krzaczyzna in 1877 and in Kowary in 1878), Güttler's



DID YOU KNOW?

The inhabitants of Budniki (formerly Forstlangwasser) lived in the shadow of the surrounding mountains and did not see direct sunlight from their homes for around 113 days each year, between November and March. To mark this remarkable phenomenon, they held ceremonial farewells to the sun in autumn and welcomed its return in spring. Today, this unique tradition has been revived by the Budniki Lovers' Association.

(Photo: budniki.pl)



Postcard from the 'Bergfreiheit' mine, 1915–1925 (Photo: polska-org.pl)

carpet and later technical felt factory (1863), and the Pohl brothers' porcelain factory (1871). With the exception of the bleaching works in Krzaczyzna, which changed its function during the Second World War, these factories continued to employ generations of Kowary residents long after 1945. Another important milestone was the arrival of the railway in 1882. In 1905, the line was extended through the Bergfreiheit Mine towards Kamienna Góra, further improving transport links and contributing to the town's continued industrial growth.

Kowary entered the twentieth century still recovering from the worst flood in its history. In July 1897, torrential rainfall caused widespread devastation. The iron ore mine spent months pumping out floodwater, while the porcelain factory suffered extensive damage. With substantial government support, however, the town recovered. It also weathered the economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Although several factories, including the Bergfreiheit Mine, temporarily suspended production, most soon resumed operations. The early twentieth century also brought the first confirmed discovery of uranium ore in Kowary, an event whose significance would only become apparent decades later.

DID YOU KNOW?

Uranium – a chemical element mined in and around Kowary ultimately contributed to the development of nuclear weapons. Radium extracted from uranium was widely used in luminous watch dials, and, remarkably, was even added to chocolate!

By the Second World War, Germany recognised uranium as a strategically important raw material and was pursuing its own atomic weapons programme. Some of the uranium intended for this research came from deposits around Kowary. The project was never completed. In 1945, Soviet troops discovered barrels of uranium concentrate marked "Schmiedeberg" among the ruins of a laboratory in Oranienburg. Tracing their origin led investigators to Kowary and marked the beginning of an entirely new chapter in the town's history – its years as a closed mining town.

The first few years after the war were relatively peaceful. The fighting never reached Kowary itself and, apart from isolated acts of post-war vandalism, the town and its factories remained largely intact. The Bergfreiheit Mine, renamed Wolność ("Freedom"), resumed magnetite production under the management of the Iron Ore Association in Częstochowa. Everything changed when the Soviet authorities confirmed that the surrounding mountains still contained uranium deposits. Remembering that the Germans had extracted uranium here before the war, they assumed direct control of the mining industry. Existing mines were taken over, new workings, including the Podgórze Mine, were excavated, and extensive exploration continued under conditions of strict secrecy. Entry into Kowary required a special permit.



Despite these restrictions, many local people enjoyed a relatively high standard of living. Uranium miners earned several times the national average wage, and between 1949 and 1952 a dedicated Mining Estate was built for them – the first purpose-built mining housing estate established in Poland's Western Territories after the Second World War. The generous wages and social benefits came at a heavy cost. Mining conditions were extremely harsh. Dust masks often contained asbestos filters that damaged miners' lungs, while working without respiratory protection exposed them to silica dust, leading to silicosis. Ironically, the long-term effects of uranium and radioactive radon exposure often had little opportunity to develop fully, as many miners died much earlier from asbestos-related diseases or silicosis. Eventually, the uranium deposits proved too limited to justify continued Soviet operations.

Mining continued under Polish administration until 1958, when the last uranium mine, Podgórze, was closed. The R-1 Industrial Works, responsible for uranium extraction, subsequently concentrated on recovering uranium from waste heaps and producing uranium concentrate. Later, a specialist laboratory was established to recover rare earth elements from mining waste. After the facilities were transferred to Wrocław University of Science and Technology in 1973, research continued under the name Hydro-Mech Experimental Plant until the 1990s.

Uranium ore extracted from the Kowary mines	
Podgórze Mine	78.6 thousand tonnes
Wolność Mine	26.7 thousand tonnes
Liczyrzepa Mine	0.47 thousand tonnes

The post-war history of Kowary was shaped by more than uranium mining alone. The town remained an important industrial centre, with several factories. The best known was undoubtedly the carpet factory, first mentioned earlier in this guide. Although its buildings and machinery were heavily vandalised in 1945, production resumed despite extremely challenging conditions. By 1968, however, years of operating with ageing machinery and deteriorating buildings led to a decision to close the factory. However, public opposition prompted a change. Instead of shutting the factory, new production halls were built and equipped with modern weaving machinery. Following several years of modernisation, the factory regained its reputation as one of Poland's leading carpet manufacturers. Its products could be found in homes across Poland and were exported to countries including Japan, the Soviet Union, the United States and Arab states. Kowary carpets became renowned for their outstanding quality and exceptional durability. One particularly famous example adorned the Column Hall of the Presidential Palace in Warsaw from 1969 until 2009. Economic transformation at the turn of the twenty-first century, the collapse of traditional export markets and poor management eventually brought this success story to an end. The factory finally ceased production in 2009. A similar fate befell many of Kowary's other industrial enterprises, including the porcelain factory, which closed in 1997, and the technical felt factory, which ceased operations in 2003.



Today, Kowary is no longer defined by heavy industry. Although several manufacturing companies still operate here, including KEMPF, which has been producing trailers and specialist vehicles in the town for more than thirty years, the local economy is increasingly centred on tourism and services. The twenty-first century has brought many positive changes. New tourist attractions have opened, guesthouses have expanded, and the historic Market Square has once again become a lively meeting place, filled with cafés, restaurants and visitors. The story of Kowary continues, and the next chapter introduces some of the attractions that make the town well worth exploring.

ATTRACTIONS

Whatever your interests, you'll find plenty to see and do in Kowary. To help you plan your visit, we've grouped them into the following categories:

- **Historic Sites & Heritage**
- **Scenic Walks & Nature**
- **Attractions with Limited Opening Hours**

Historic Sites

KOWARY OLD TOWN



Kowary's Old Town (Photo: R. Kotylak)

Stretching between the Town Hall and the Church of the Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kowary's colourful Old Town forms the historic heart of the town. Most of the buildings date from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, following the devastating fire of 1792 that destroyed much of the earlier town centre. After a difficult period of economic change at the turn of the twenty-first century, the Old Town has once again become a lively destination. Today, its cafés and restaurants make it an ideal place to enjoy lunch or simply relax over a coffee.

Location: 1 Maja Street (between Nos. 1 and 54)

CHURCH OF THE HOLY NAME OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



The parish church is Kowary's principal place of worship. According to tradition, the first church on this site was a wooden building erected during the first half of the thirteenth century. Around 1300, it was replaced by the present stone church. Originally built in the Gothic style, several medieval features have survived, including the sculpture of the Madonna standing on a monster on the western wall of the tower and fourteenth-century wall paintings preserved in the chapel at its base. The interior, however, is a magnificent example of Baroque craftsmanship. Highlights include the richly decorated high altar, impressive ceiling paintings and a monumental pipe organ. Directly opposite stands the Baroque Franciscan monastery, whose community continues to care for the church.

Location: 2 Franciszkański Square

TOWN HALL

Kowary's Town Hall has served as the seat of the municipal authorities for more than two centuries. Standing in the upper part of the Old Town, this elegant Neoclassical building was constructed between 1786 and 1789 on the site of an earlier, partly timber-built town hall. Its imposing exterior is matched by one of the town's hidden treasures: the Council Chamber, decorated with beautiful polychrome paintings depicting the traditional occupations of Kowary's inhabitants. During Town Hall opening hours, visitors may be able to view the chamber if it is not in use.

Location: 1a 1 Maja Street



Town Hall (Photo: R. Kotylak)

THE VENICE OF THE KARKONOSZE

Did you know that Kowary is home to more than fifty bridges and footbridges? Many have been restored in recent years and given names inspired by the town's history and traditional crafts. As you explore the town, you'll come across the Miller's Bridge, the Goldsmith's Bridge, the Felt Maker's Bridge near the former felt factory, and the Potter's Bridge beside the old porcelain factory. These charming crossings celebrate Kowary's industrial heritage while adding to the town's distinctive character. On a warm summer's day, take a seat beside the Jedlica stream, enjoy a coffee from one of the nearby cafés, and soak up the peaceful atmosphere. It's easy to see why this part of Kowary has earned the nickname "The Venice of the Karkonosze".

Location: Along the Jedlica Stream

Coat of Arms Bridge (Photo: R. Kotylak)

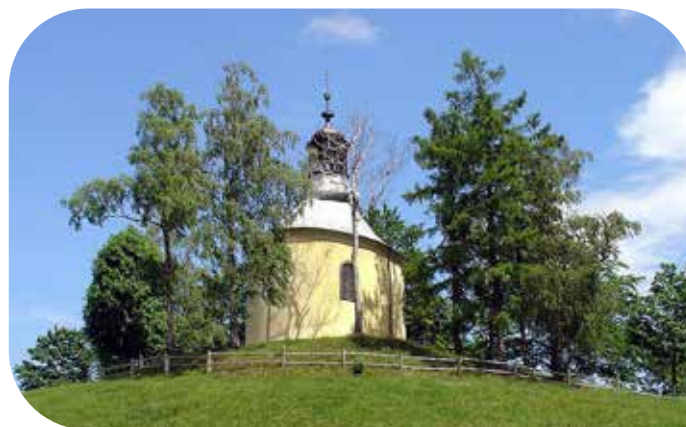


MUNICIPAL CULTURAL CENTRE

Kowary's main cultural venue is housed in a striking Socialist Realist building on the Mining Estate. The surrounding residential complex was built between 1949 and 1952 to provide housing for workers employed in the town's uranium mines and their families. It was the first housing estate constructed in Poland's Western Territories after the Second World War and today stands as an important reminder of that period in the town's history. Two statues of miners outside the entrance to the Municipal Cultural Centre commemorate the community for whom the estate was originally built.

*Municipal Cultural Centre
(Photo: R. Kotylak)*

Location: 2 Szkolna Street



St Anne's Chapel (Photo: W. Balik)

ST ANNE'S CHAPEL

According to local tradition, the first church in Kowary, a Romanesque building, may once have stood on this site. The present Baroque chapel, completed in 1727, occupies a picturesque position on Chapel Hill. Inside is an interesting nineteenth-century triptych transferred from the now-lost Chapel of St Joachim in the nearby Uroczysko district. The hill also offers delightful views across the surrounding area. In winter, its slopes have long been a favourite spot for local children to go sledding.

Location: 28 Kowalska Street

"NOWY DWÓR" PALACE



Nowy Dwór (drawing: T. Blätterbauer, A. Duncker)

Although Kowary has never had a castle, it has been home to an impressive country residence since 1570, when the Schaffgotsch family, then owners of the town, built the original manor house. Over the centuries, the estate passed through the hands of several noble families. The most prominent were the von Reuss family, who owned the palace from 1826 until the end of the Second World War. They carried out the extensive alterations that gave the building its present Neo-Gothic and Neo-Renaissance appearance. The last owner, Heinrich von Reuss, was married to Feodora of Saxe-Meiningen, a granddaughter of Emperor Frederick III of Germany and a great-granddaughter of Queen Victoria. Today the palace is privately owned. Surrounded by a historic park, it can be admired from outside only.

Location: 2 Sanatoryjna Street



THE VON REUSS FAMILY MAUSOLEUMS

The burial place of the von Reuss family stands on a wooded hillside between Kowary and Wojków, just a few hundred metres from Nowy Dwór Palace. Heinrich XXX von Reuss (1864–1939) and his wife Feodora von Reuss (1879–1945) are buried here, while Heinrich's sister, Maria Clementine, rests in a separate mausoleum nearby.

Location: Wojska Polskiego Street
(behind the Executioner's House)

"WYSOKA ŁĄKA" HOSPITAL

Originally built as a sanatorium, this historic building continues to serve a medical purpose today. Located in the Wojków district, it was designed by the Kowary architect Karl Grosser, whose work includes several notable landmarks in Lower Silesia, such as the Monopol Hotel in Wrocław, the Spa House in Świeradów-Zdrój and the Karkonosze Museum in Jelenia Góra. Completed in 1902, the building was inspired by the sanatorium architecture of Davos in Switzerland and is surrounded by a historic park.

Location: 27 Sanatoryjna Street



"Wysoka Łąka" Hospital (Photo: W. Balik)

"BUKOWIEC" HOSPITAL

Originally built as a tuberculosis sanatorium, Bukowiec now functions as a hospital. The building is generally attributed to the Kowary architect Karl Grosser, who is also believed to have designed the neighbouring "Wysoka Łąka" sanatorium along with numerous other notable buildings across Lower Silesia. Completed in 1916, its imposing eclectic architecture gives it the appearance of a grand palace. The distinguished Polish graphic artist Józef Gielniak (1932–1972) spent many years here while receiving treatment for tuberculosis. Both the surrounding landscape and the architecture of the sanatorium became important sources of inspiration for his celebrated linocuts.

Location: 15 Sanatoryjna Street



"Bukowiec" Hospital (Photo: R. Kotylak)

CISZYCA PALACE AND RADZIWIŁŁÓWKA HILL

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this elegant residence became a meeting place for some of Europe's most influential figures. Built in the late eighteenth century as a modest country house for Count von Hoym, the palace enjoyed its most remarkable period under the ownership of the Radziwiłł family. Its head, Prince Antoni Radziwiłł, was Governor of the Grand Duchy of Posen and an accomplished composer. Among his distinguished guests was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, for whom Radziwiłł composed the opera *Faust*. Another frequent visitor was Prince Wilhelm of Prussia, who fell in love with Antoni's daughter, Eliza. The young couple often walked together through the romantic park laid out on nearby Radziwiłłówka Hill. Political considerations, however, prevented their marriage, and as heir to the Prussian throne Wilhelm was obliged to end the relationship. Despite this, Wilhelm (later Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany) is said to have kept Eliza's portrait on his desk for the rest of his life. Today, the palace is a private residence and cannot be visited. The remains of the romantic landscape park on Radziwiłłówka Hill, however, remain open to visitors.

Location: 38 Jeleniogórska Street

DID YOU KNOW?

The love story of Wilhelm and Eliza inspired the 1938 German film *Preußische Liebesgeschichte* (A Prussian Love Story). Because of censorship, the film was not released until 1950. It did not receive its Polish premiere until 2007.

Nature

KOWARY RESERVOIR

Originally built as an industrial reservoir for the town's carpet factory, Kowary Reservoir underwent a remarkable transformation between 2022 and 2024. Although it continues to play an important role in flood retention, it has also become one of the town's most popular places for walking and relaxation. A comfortable one-kilometre path circles the reservoir, with benches, reclining seats and interpretation boards along the way. Throughout the walk, visitors are rewarded with magnificent views of the Karkonosze and Rudawy Janowickie Mountains.

Location: Zamkowa Street



Kowary Reservoir (Photo: R. Kotylak)

BRZEŹNIK

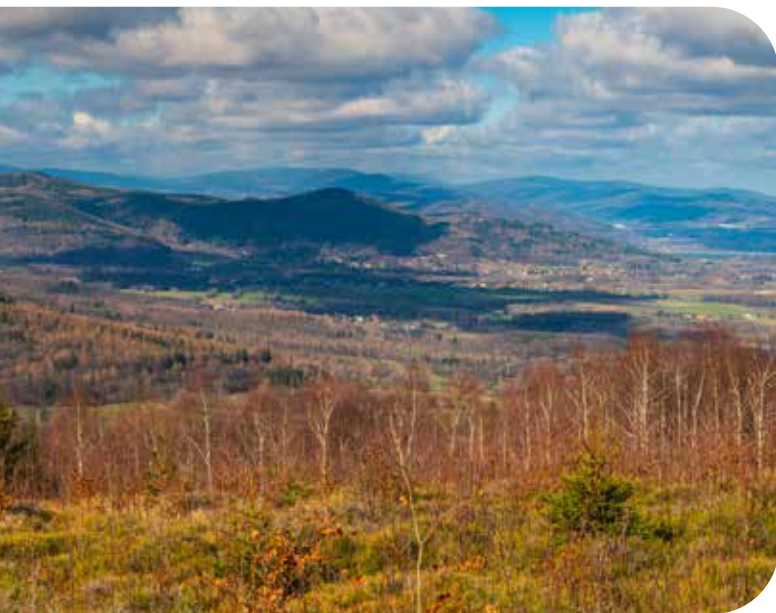
The viewpoint on the summit of Brzeźnik (555 m above sea level) probably dates back to the Romantic period, and traces of the original viewpoint can still be found among the summit rocks. Today, the panorama looks out primarily over Kowary, making this an excellent destination for a family walk. At the summit you'll also find a picnic table and an information board describing, among other things, the story of Friedrich and Friederike von Reden of nearby Bukowiec. The celebrated Romantic landscape park they created once extended as far as Brzeźnik, where its southern boundary lay.

Location: Around 20–30 minutes from the blue hiking trail between Bukowiec and Kowary, following the blue triangle waymarks.

RUDNIK

At 853 metres above sea level, Mount Rudnik is best known for its mining heritage. Beneath its slopes lies an extensive network of former iron and uranium mines, with tunnels stretching for many kilometres. The summit itself is equally rewarding. A grassy paragliding launch site offers magnificent views towards the north-west, with Kowary clearly visible below. Visitors will also find a picnic table and an information board describing the town's mining history. For the most memorable experience, visit in the evening to enjoy one of Kowary's finest sunset viewpoints.

Location: Around 30 minutes' walk from Kowary Pass. Follow the yellow trail towards Rozdroże pod Bobrzakiem, then after 15–20 minutes turn left and follow the blue triangle waymarks.



View from the summit of Rudnik (Photo: R. Kotylak)

WOŁOWA GÓRA

At 1,040 metres above sea level, Wołowa Góra is the second popular paragliding launch site above Kowary and considerably higher than nearby Mount Rudnik. Its launch meadow is also more technically demanding, making it a favourite among experienced paragliders. For walkers, however, the main attraction is the scenery. Facing roughly north, the meadow offers sweeping views across the Jelenia Góra

Valley and the Kaczawskie Mountains. As you continue towards the summit, the highest peaks of the Karkonosze come into view to the left, dominated by the silhouette of Śnieżka.

Location: Around 10–15 minutes from the green hiking trail between Budniki and Okraj.

DID YOU KNOW?

Two uranium exploration shafts, the highest in the Karkonosze Mountains, were once located close to the summit of Wołowa Góra.

OKRAJ PASS

At 1,046 metres above sea level, Okraj Pass is home to Poland's highest road border crossing. The scenic road from Kowary climbs around 500 metres over a distance of approximately 12 kilometres before crossing into the Czech Republic. On the Polish side of the pass are two accommodation providers, including the PTTK Mountain Hostel and Amelkowa Chata. Just beyond the border lies the picturesque village of Malá Úpa. Traditional mountain cottages, known locally as boudy, are scattered across the surrounding alpine meadows, and many serve traditional Czech cuisine. In winter, the meadows become popular ski slopes, while throughout the year Okraj Pass provides an excellent starting point for walks into the higher parts of the Karkonosze Mountains.

Location: 1 Przełęcz Okraj Street



PTTK Mountain Hut at the Okraj Pass (Photo: R. Kotylak)

Museums & Visitor Attractions

“PRZYSTANEK KOWARY” MUSEUM

Opened in April 2026 in the beautifully restored former railway station, next to the Tourist Information Centre, this modern exhibition tells the story of Kowary's rich and varied past. Its displays include hundreds of artefacts connected with the town's industrial heritage, some dating back several centuries. Visitors can discover how many kilometres of underground workings extend beneath Kowary, learn about the town's unexpected links with the Orient, and explore the fascinating history of Kowary as a secret “closed town” during the Cold War. Historic nineteenth-century interiors have been carefully



'Przystanek Kowary' Museum (Photo: D. Cybulski)

combined with modern multimedia displays to create an engaging visitor experience. The exhibition can be explored independently using an audio guide or as part of a guided tour. Audio guides are available in Polish, Czech, German and English, with separate versions for adults and children. Admission: Free.

Location: 8 Dworcowa Street

HOUSE OF TRADITION



Located in a charming townhouse on the edge of Kowary's Old Town, the House of Tradition is home to the Kowary Heritage Association. Its exhibition presents the history of the town through a wide range of artefacts relating to industry, mining, art, tourism and healthcare. Perhaps the museum's greatest asset, however, is its volunteers. Their extensive knowledge of Kowary's past and their enthusiasm for sharing local stories make every visit a memorable experience.



Location: 1 Górnicza Street

LOWER SILESIA MONUMENTS MINIATURE PARK



There's no better introduction to Lower Silesia. Here you'll find beautifully crafted scale models of the region's finest castles, palaces, churches and other historic landmarks, all recreated at a scale of 1:25. The remarkable attention to detail makes every model worth a closer look. Children, see if you can spot all the dachshunds hidden throughout the exhibition! Open all year round, whatever the weather, the park offers a unique opportunity in winter to "climb" Śnieżka in under a minute, without ice cleats, difficult trails or the mountain weather. Better still, from the miniature summit you can still admire the real Queen of the Karkonosze rising in the distance.



Location: 9 Zamkowa Street

PALACE PLAY PARK



Travelling with children? If younger visitors need a break from museums and mountain walks, the Palace Play Park is the perfect place to let off steam. Open during the summer season alongside the Lower Silesia Monuments Miniature Park, it features inflatable play equipment, slides and water attractions for younger children. Parents and carers can also relax with refreshments while the little ones enjoy themselves.



Location: 9 Zamkowa Street

MUSEUM OF MEMORIES



A journey back in time in a place with a remarkable story. The Museum of Memories occupies part of the former Kowary Carpet Factory, and several rooms have been carefully preserved to recreate their appearance during the factory's heyday. Visitors can step inside the director's office, the laboratory and other original interiors, where even the carpets have remained in place for decades, and still look remarkably well preserved. The museum also recreates everyday life in Poland across several decades, with faithfully furnished rooms including a grandmother's kitchen, a 1980s living room, a 1990s teenager's bedroom and a traditional classroom. For many visitors, the exhibition brings back cherished memories, while younger generations gain a fascinating insight into the everyday lives of their parents and grandparents.



Location: 9 Zamkowa Street

EXECUTIONER'S HOUSE

Prepare for one of Kowary's most spine-chilling attractions. Discover how criminals were punished in centuries past through an extensive collection of historical torture devices and instruments of punishment. The exhibition is thoughtfully presented in atmospheric surroundings that evoke the world of the Middle Ages. Fortunately, none of these devices remain in use today. Even so,



hearing the stories behind them brought vividly to life by the museum's knowledgeable host is enough to send a shiver down your spine. An excellent choice for anyone with an interest in darker history.

Location: 4 Zamkowa Street

FROZEN IN TIME

History and cinema come together in this intimate exhibition devoted to the Second World War. Detailed miniature dioramas, military vehicles and model soldiers recreate scenes from one of the most significant



conflicts in modern history. Visits are led by the museum's enthusiastic owner, whose passion for history brings every display to life with fascinating stories and insights. Film enthusiasts should also keep an eye out for a hidden surprise: several well-known Hollywood actors are concealed among the miniature figures. Whether you're interested in military history or classic cinema, this is a museum well worth visiting.

Location: 12 1 Maja Street

PODGÓRZE MINE

Once one of Poland's most secret uranium mines, Podgórze Mine is now one of Kowary's most fascinating visitor attractions. Today, visitors can explore Adit No. 19a on a guided tour through the second-largest



uranium mine in Poland in terms of total production. The tour reveals the story of Kowary's years as a closed town, features Poland's largest collection of uranium glass, and offers a glimpse of the country's deepest underground diving site. It was here that Polish cave divers set a national depth record of almost 230 metres. Those looking for an even greater challenge can also book the Extreme Route through Adit No. 19, offering a more adventurous underground experience!

Location: 54 Podgórze Street

"SZTOLNIE KOWARY" URANIUM MINE

Interested in Kowary's mining heritage? At the "Sztolnie Kowary" Uranium Mine, visitors can explore the history of local mining, experience a realistic simulation of underground blasting, and discover the remarkable mineral wealth hidden beneath the surrounding mountains. The tourist route follows Adits 9 and 9a of the former Liczyrzepa fluorite and uranium mine. These underground passages are now open to visitors. The tour also features an impressive multimedia laser presentation exploring the story of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. With its fascinating stories and knowledgeable guides, the tour is an experience that is sure to leave a lasting impression.



Location: 55 Podgórze Street

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The countryside surrounding Kowary offers outstanding opportunities for outdoor adventure. Hiking is particularly popular, with trails leading through some of the quietest and most scenic parts of the Karkonosze and Rudawy Janowickie Mountains. To help you make the most of your visit, we've selected three walks of varying difficulty. Pack your walking boots and discover some of the region's finest mountain scenery.

Walk 1

The Mysterious Kowary Ridge

► Kowary ► Budniki ► Skalny Stół ► Okraj Pass ► Uroczysko ► Kowary



Distance:
18,9 km



Ascent:
830 m



Walking time:
6,5 hour



Difficulty:
III Difficult

*Open the route on
your phone*



The Kowary Ridge is one of the least-visited parts of the Polish Karkonosze, yet it rewards walkers with some of the region's finest scenery. The viewpoints at Skalny Stół and Czoło offer magnificent panoramas, while the abandoned settlement of Budniki still retains an unmistakable air of mystery. The walk begins at the Tourist Information Centre, following the yellow trail through Budniki, where you'll find a picnic shelter, before climbing to Skalny Stół. The final 45 minutes of the ascent are steep and demanding, but the views from the summit more than reward the effort. From there, follow the blue trail across gently undulating terrain to Czoło before descending to Okraj Pass. The mountain hostel or nearby Malá Úpa, just across the Czech border, are excellent places to stop for lunch before beginning the return journey. Return to Kowary by following the yellow trail to Uroczysko, then the green trail to a wide forest track, which leads back to the original yellow route into the town.



NOTE!

To protect the endangered black grouse, the section of the blue trail between Skalny Stół and Okraj Pass is closed from mid-March until at least the end of May each year. During this period, descend via the blue trail to Sowa Pass, then follow the red trail to Okraj Pass.

Walk 2

Views from Skalnik

► Kowary ► Ostra Mała ► Skalnik ►
Bobrzak Pass ► Kowary



Distance:
15,3 km



Ascent:
485 m



Walking time:
ca. 5 hours



Difficulty:
II Moderate

*Open the route
on your phone*



The walk to Skalnik, the highest peak in the Rudawy Janowickie Mountains, begins at the Tourist Information Centre. Follow the blue and yellow trails towards Kowary's Old Town before joining the green trail, which leads almost all the way to the junction below Ostra Mała. A short detour, marked by blue triangle waymarks, leads to the viewpoint itself. From here you'll enjoy sweeping views across the Karkonosze, the Jelenia Góra Valley, the Rudawy Janowickie, the Kaczawskie Mountains and the Iżera Mountains. On exceptionally clear days, you can even see into Germany. Return from Ostra Mała the same way to the blue trail, then follow it to Skalnik and back to collect the summit stamp. From Skalnik, descend along the red trail to Bobrzak Pass, where you turn right onto a broad forest track. Continue until you rejoin the green trail, following the same route back towards Kowary.



DID YOU KNOW?

Ostra Mała is a striking granite rock formation on one of Skalnik's summits. It is widely regarded as one of the finest places in the region to watch the sunset, whatever the season.

Walk 3

Like the Aristocracy in a Landscape Park

► Kowary ► Kowary Reservoir ► Klöber Gate ► Bukowiec ► Staw Kąpielnik ► Mysłakowice ► bus ► Kowary



Distance:
8,7 km



Ascent:
82 m

*Open the route
on your phone*



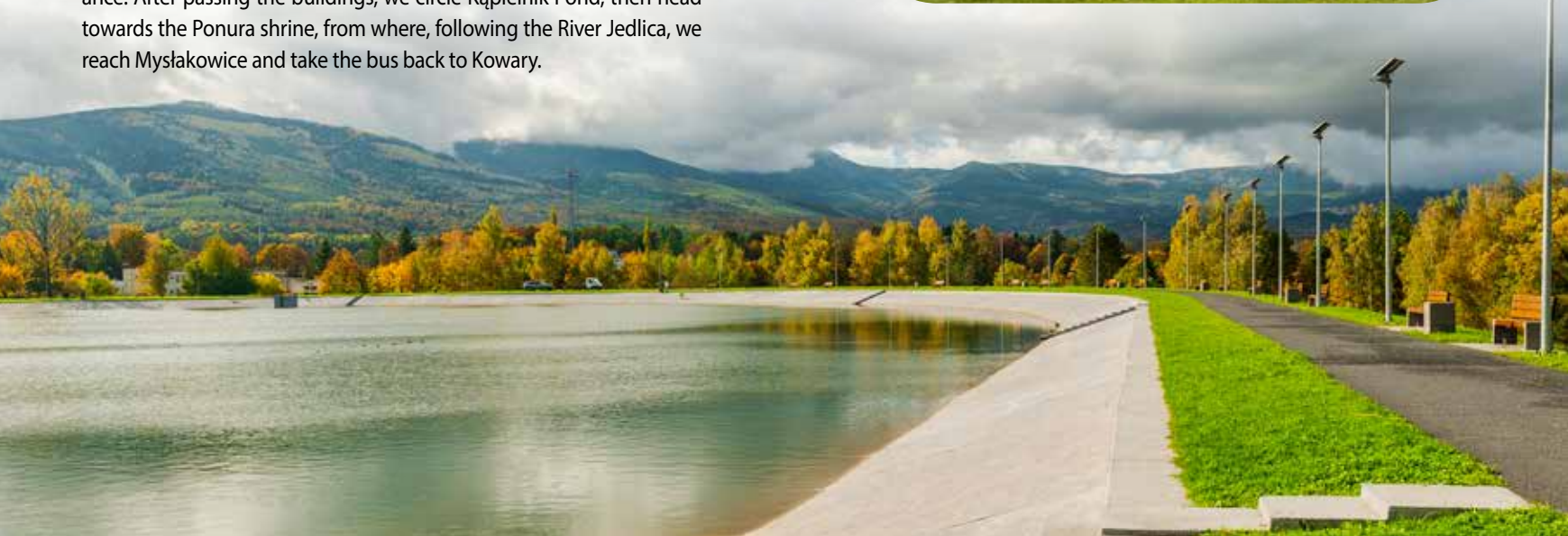
Walking time:
2,5 hours



Difficulty:
I Easy



The Jelenia Góra Valley is famous, amongst other things, for its palaces and their accompanying parklands. One of the most interesting is Bukowiec Palace, together with its extensive, ro-mantic 18th–19th-century landscape park, whose boundaries extend all the way to Kowary. From the Tourist Information Centre, we set off in its direction along the blue trail, which runs alongside the Kowary Reservoir. At the Pod Brzeźnikiem Pass, we turn left, following the red signposts, which will lead us through the rocky Klöber Gate to Bukowiec. The palace and park enjoyed their heyday during the time of the von Reden couple – Frederick and Frederica – who largely shaped the complex's current appearance. After passing the buildings, we circle Kąpielnik Pond, then head towards the Ponura shrine, from where, following the River Jedlica, we reach Mysłakowice and take the bus back to Kowary.



As you've discovered throughout this guide, Kowary is a town full of surprises, with a rich history stretching back to the Middle Ages, where reminders of its proud industrial heritage can still be found at every turn.

Nestled between the Karkonosze and Rudawy Janowickie Mountains, it is also the perfect base for exploring some of the finest walking routes in south-west Poland.

We hope this guide has inspired you to discover Kowary for yourself. Perhaps we'll meet one day at the foot of Śnieżka or on the trails leading to Skalnik.

We look forward to welcoming you to Kowary!



FOOD & DRINK

Lunch? Ice cream? Or perhaps coffee and cake? Whatever you're in the mood for, Kowary offers plenty of welcoming places to eat and drink, from restaurants and cafés to bars, fast-food outlets and ice cream parlours. You'll find them all on our website. Simply enter the web address below or scan the QR code to access our interactive map of Kowary's food and drink venues. **Enjoy your meal!!**



ACCOMMODATION

Kowary is an excellent base for exploring the surrounding area, whether you're setting out on foot or travelling by car or public transport. Most accommodation in the town consists of fully equipped apartments and guesthouses. A list of accommodation providers registered with the municipality, together with an interactive map, is available on our website.



USEFUL CONTACTS

Kowary Town Hall

ul. 1 Maja 1a
Phone: +48 75 64 39, 222
bok@kowary.pl

Tourist Information Centre

ul. Dworcowa 8
Phone: +48 75 64 56, 111
turystyka@kowary.pl

Municipal Cultural Centre

ul. Szkolna 2
Phone: +48 75718 25 77
mok@mokkowary.pl

Public Library

ul. Szkolna 2
Phone: +48 75718 25 71
sekretariat@mbpkowary.pl

Bukowiec Hospital – District Health Centre (NZOZ)

ul. Sanatoryjna 15
Phone: +48 75641 57 15
sekretariat@pcz-kowary.pl

Wysoka Łąka Hospital – Lower Silesian Hospital Centre, Jelenia Góra Valley (Department of Pulmonary Diseases and Tuberculosis)

ul. Sanatoryjna 27
Phone: +48 75645 88 66
kowary@spzoz.jgora.pl

District Health Centre Medical Clinic (NZOZ)

ul. Jeleniogórska 14d
Phone: +48 75641 57 67
sekretariat@pcz-kowary.pl

Cito-Med Medical Centre

ul. 1 Maja 2a
Phone: +48 75718 29 99
nzozcito_med@op.pl

Kowarska Pharmacy

ul. 1 Maja 2a
Phone: +48 75718 35 00

Przy Fontannie Pharmacy

ul. 1 Maja 8
Phone: +48 75761 53 10

Biedronka Pharmacy

ul. 1 Maja 31
Phone: +48 733 950 220

Śnieżka Pharmacy

ul. 1 Maja 45
Phone: +48 75761 34 05

Parish of the Church of the Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Plac Franciszkański 1
Phone: +48 75718 23 50
kowary@franciszkanie.pl

Kowary Police Station

ul. Władysława Grabskiego 7
Phone: +48 47 87 382 20

Municipal Rescue Service

ul. Zamkowa 2a
Phone: +48 695 118 998

EMERGENCY NUMBERS:

Emergency services: **112**
Karkonosze Mountain Rescue (GOPR): **985** or **+48 601 100 300**
Police: **997**
Fire Service: **998**
Ambulance: **999**

TIMELINE OF KOWARY'S HISTORY

- 1148** According to legend, the Walloon miner Laurentius Angelus discovers iron ore deposits on the slopes of Mount Rudnik.
- 1355** Bolko II grants Jelenia Góra the right to trade iron ore from Kowary. This is the earliest surviving document confirming the existence of the settlement.
- 1401** Kowary becomes the hereditary property of the Schaffgotsch family.
- 1513** King Vladislaus II of Bohemia and Hungary grants Kowary its town charter.
- 1564** King Sigismund II Augustus of Poland commissions 200 gun barrels from Kowary's gunsmiths.
- 1618–1648** The Thirty Years' War brings repeated military occupations, looting and forced conscription. The resulting depopulation leads to the decline of mining and traditional crafts, while mountain settlements such as Budniki are established above the town.
- 1635** Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch is executed after being accused of treason against the Emperor, bringing the family's rule over Kowary to an end.
- 1639** Emperor Ferdinand III sells Kowary and the surrounding villages to the Bohemian Count Hermann Czernin.
- 1747** King Frederick II of Prussia purchases the Kowary estate from the Czernin family. The town receives the title of Royal Mining Town and adopts a new coat of arms featuring the Prussian eagle.
- 1786–1789** Construction of the present Neoclassical Town Hall.



- 1792** A devastating fire destroys almost the entire town centre. It is rebuilt in stone, creating the street layout that survives today.
- 1810** Kowary is struck by a major flood.
- 1815** The first horn sledge descent from Okraj Pass to Kowary takes place.
- 1837** A group of 422 Tyrolean Protestant refugees arrives in Kowary from the Ziller Valley.
- 1854** The Bergfreiheit iron ore mine opens.
- 1855–1857** As part of a government employment scheme, local weavers build the road across Kowary Pass, later known as the Hunger Road, receiving a loaf of bread for each day's work.
- 1856** The Turkish and German Carpet Factory is relocated from Wleń to Kowary.
- 1863** Carl G. Güttler establishes a carpet factory in Upper Kowary. More than thirty years later, it begins producing technical felt.
- 1871** The Pohl brothers establish a technical porcelain factory.
- 1882** The railway reaches Kowary from Jelenia Góra.
- 1897** A major flood causes extensive damage throughout the town, including the porcelain factory, and floods part of the Bergfreiheit mine for several months.
- 1902** "Wysoka Łąka" Sanatorium opens.
- 1905** The railway is extended towards Kamienna Góra.
- 1910–1912** Uranium mineralisation is discovered in the Kowary area.
- 1916** "Bukowiec" Sanatorium opens.
- c. 1933–1935** The state takes over Weinstein's furniture factory and converts it into a Reich Labour Service camp.

- 1939** The labour camp is replaced by a prisoner-of-war camp. Its inmates later work in several local industries, including the Bergfreiheit mine.
- 1940** A prisoner-of-war labour camp is established at the Peschel Bleaching Works in Krzaczyzna. Three years later, the site is taken over by Schmidding Jr., and production is redirected to support the German armaments industry.
- 1945** Soviet forces enter Kowary and temporarily assume control of the town's industrial plants.
- 1948–1956** Uranium mining by a Polish-Soviet joint venture places Kowary under strict security. The Public Security Office occupies Nowy Dwór Palace, while the Kowary Special Battalion of the Internal Security Corps (KBW), numbering around 750 personnel, is stationed on Kowalska Street.
- 1949–1952** Construction of the Mining Estate, the first post-war housing estate built in Poland's Western Territories.
- 1950** Podgórze Mine opens. It closes eight years later.
- 1956** With the end of the Stalinist period, Kowary ceases to be a closed town. The KBW Special Battalion and the Soviet personnel of the R-1 Industrial Works leave the town.
- 1968** A decision is taken to close the Lower Silesian Smyrna Carpet Factory because of the poor condition of its buildings and machinery. Following public protests, the closure is cancelled and the factory is modernised.
- 1974** One of the world's first underground radon inhalation centres opens in the former workings of Podgórze Mine. It remains in operation until 1989.
- 1986** Passenger services on the railway through Kowary are suspended.
- 2000** The Sztolnie Kowary underground tourist route opens in the former Liczyrzepa Mine.
- 2003** The Lower Silesia Monuments Miniature Park opens on the site of the former carpet factory.
- 2009** – The carpet factory ceases production.
- 2011** A second underground tourist route opens at the former Podgórze Mine.
- 2018** The Museum of Memories opens on the site of the former carpet factory.
- 2025–2026** The Tourist Information Centre and the Przystanek Kowary Museum open in the restored former railway station.



The Karkonosze Local Brand

brings together local producers, craftspeople and service providers who are passionate about preserving the region's traditions and identity. Their products, cuisine and services draw inspiration from the cultural heritage of the Karkonosze, often combining pre-war traditions with the region's modern character.

The **"Treasures of the Mountain Spirit"** quality mark guarantees an authentic local product, protected by law and rooted in the history and traditions of the beautiful region at the foot of Śnieżka.



KOWARY

– A TOWN OF INSPIRATION

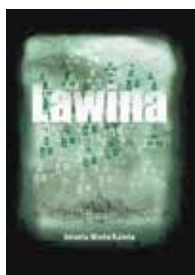
Kowary's remarkable history, distinctive atmosphere and beautiful setting have inspired far more than visitors alone. For many years, the town has also captured the imagination of writers, historians and filmmakers.

Its mining heritage, industrial past, striking architecture and spectacular location between the Karkonosze and Rudawy Janowickie Mountains have provided the backdrop for novels, historical studies and film productions alike.

Whether based on carefully researched history or works of fiction set in the town, each offers a different perspective on Kowary and its unique character.

Kowary in Literature

- **Farma lalek** – Wojciech Chmielarz
- **Kolejność** – Hubert Hender
- **Lawina** – Jolanta Maria Kaleta
- **Tak blisko** – Wiesław Waszkiewicz
- **Prosta sprawa** – Wojciech Chmielarz
- **Schronisko, które zostało zapomniane** – Sławek Gortych



Books on the History of Kowary

- **Dzieje Kowar. Zarys monograficzny do 2010 roku** edited by Wiesław Wereszczyński
- **Zakłady Przemysłowe R-1 w Kowarach** – Bogusław Dąbrowski
- **Historia Miasta Kowary w Karkonoszach** – Theodor Eisenmänger (Polish translation by Tomasz Pryll)
- **Śląsk w zabytkach sztuki Kowary** – Wojciech Kapańczyński
- **Lisowczycy w Kowarach. Opowieść z czasów wojny 30-letniej** – Romuald Witczak
- **Atomowa Tajemnica Sudetów** – Robert Klementowski
- **Taniec na Uranie. Z Kowar do Kopalni "Podgórze". Przewodnik emocjonalny** – Jarosław Szczyzowski

Films and Television Shot in Kowary

- **Prosta Sprawa** (2024) – crime drama series based on the novel of the same name by Wojciech Chmielarz
- **Parasol** (2026) – short film directed by Hubert Górski



Radociny

KOWARY

Centrum

1 : 10 000

Pałac Nowy Dwór

Zamkowa

Zamkowa

Grobowiec Marii Klementyny
Grobowiec rodziny von Reuss
Grobowiec Feodory i Henryka

Zalew

Miejski Ośrodek Pomocy Społecznej

Apartment Joanna

Muzeum Syntymontów

Jelenia Plast magazyn

1 Maja

Dworcowa

Ogrodnia

Willa Smyrna

KEMPF

Pałac Miejski Smyrna

Palacowa Bawialnia

Kowary 1 Maja / Szkoła

pl. Franciszkański

Imienia NMP

Kowary Biedronka

Na Szwarcu

Biedronka

Siedzka dydaktyczna

Skansen Gorzowa Kowarskiego

Boczna

M. Reja

Gornicza

Szkolna

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Pogotowie Ratunkowe Miejska Sluzba Ratownicza

Okregowa Stacja Kontroli Polazdow Juro-Trans

C-FORM C-TECH

Park Miniatur Zabytkow Dolnego Slaska

Palacowa Bawialnia

Kowary 1 Maja / Szkoła

pl. Franciszkański

Imienia NMP

Kowary Biedronka

Na Szwarcu

Biedronka

Siedzka dydaktyczna

Skansen Gorzowa Kowarskiego

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Park Rekreacji Rodzinniej

Kompleks WYSPA.fun

Kowary Dworcowa / Dworzec

Zajazd Przywodzie

apart. Nlebo

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Przy Boczce

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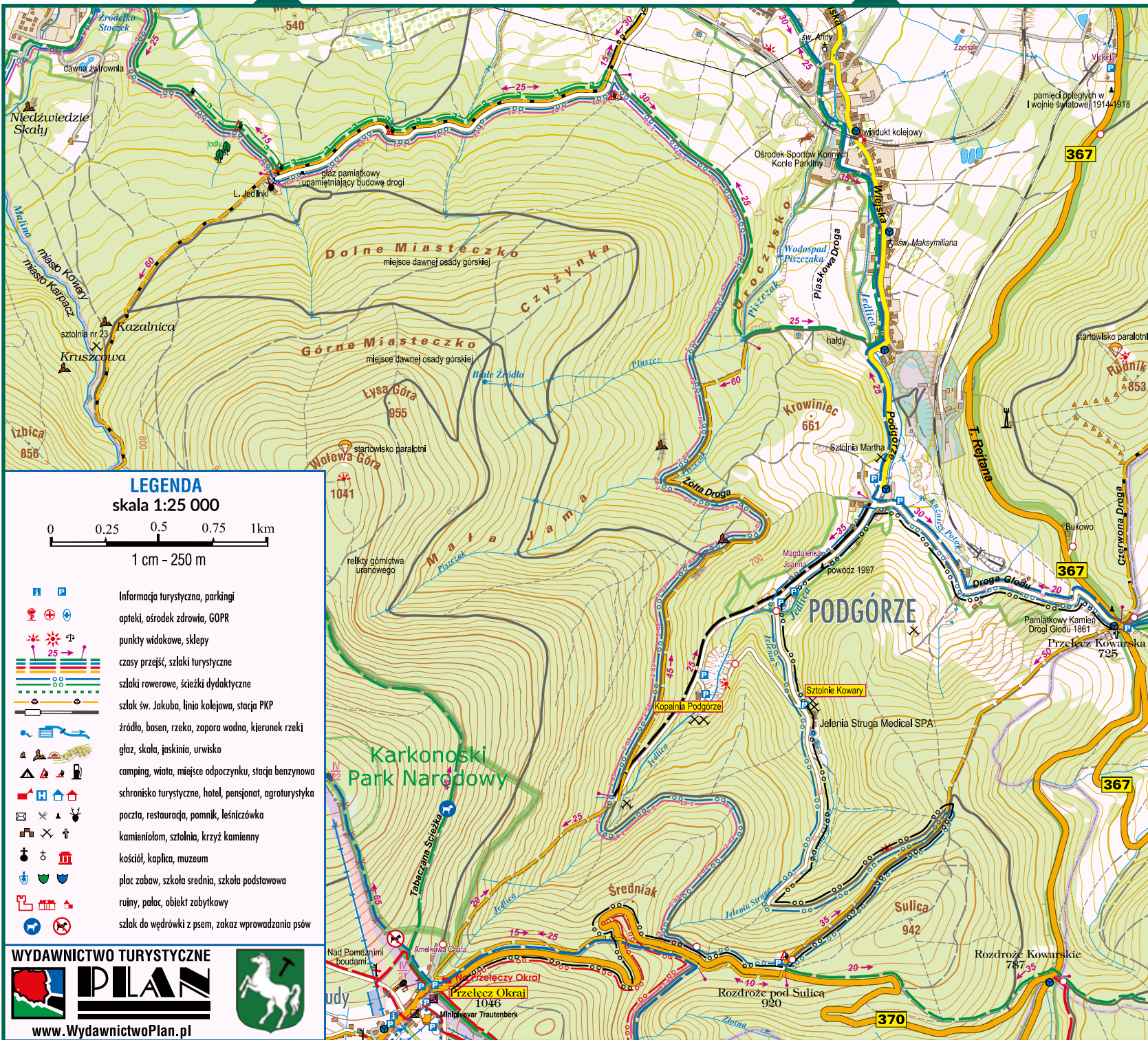
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Map continues on the following pages



We also invite you to visit our partners in

Schönau-Berzdorf auf dem Eigen

Here are a few fascinating facts about this remarkable municipality.

Schönau-Berzdorf auf dem Eigen is located in the eastern part of the German state of Saxony, within the Görlitz district, around 20 km from the Polish border town of Zgorzelec.

Schönau-Berzdorf auf dem Eigen and the other villages that make up the municipality are peaceful ribbon villages, a traditional settlement pattern characteristic of the region.



The municipality's double name reflects the former Berzdorf lignite mine, which no longer exists.

Between 1962 and 1965, the village of Berzdorf and the lower part of Schönau had to be abandoned to allow the expansion of open-cast lignite mining. Most residents relocated to Schönau or nearby Görlitz.

The municipality does not have an official coat of arms. Since 1990, the municipality has used a logo featuring Hutberg Hill and a plant from the Arum genus as its symbol.

The first written record of Schönau dates from 1264, while Berzdorf was first mentioned in 1280. Until the nineteenth century, the surrounding villages belonged to the Cistercian convent of St Marienstern Abbey. On 30 March 1850, the people of Schönau purchased their homes and farmland from the convent.

At the heart of the village stands St George's Evangelical Church, first mentioned in 1296. Its most striking features are its 47.52-metre tower, the tallest church tower in Upper Lusatia, and the substantial defensive wall surrounding the churchyard.



The village also has a First World War memorial depicting a kneeling woman beside a dying soldier. The names of 36 residents of Schönau are engraved on its base.



Near the entrance to the church, another memorial commemorates the residents of Schöнау and Berzdorf who lost their lives during the Second World War, together with Soviet soldiers who were killed in the surrounding area.



On Hutberg Hill (309 m above sea level) stands a granite obelisk erected in June 1889 to mark the 808th anniversary of the House of Wettin. At its summit is a relief depicting *Arum maculatum* (cuckoo-pint), the plant that has become the symbol of Schöнау-Berzdorf.

One of the municipality's main attractions is Berzdorfer See, a recreational lake created on the site of the former lignite mine, which closed in 1997. Today, the lake is surrounded by an extensive network of cycling routes and several beaches, including the popular Blaue Lagune ("Blue Lagoon").



Across the municipality, around 70 historic Upper Lusatian timber-framed houses have been preserved. One of them, the Heimathaus, is home to the Heimatverein, the local heritage association dedicated to preserving the area's traditions and history.





PODGÓRZYN

Głęboczek

Sosnówka

Milków

Borowice

Karpacz Górny

KARPACZ

OKOLICE KOWAR



Fotografie na okładce: Rafał Kotylak

