



OUTCAN Guide | Life in Bydgoszcz, Poland

LOCATION

Country: Poland

Town: Bydgoszcz

Base: The Joint Force Training Centre (JFTC)

Other info to Consider:

- Foreigners must register their stay in Poland within 48-hours of arrival if the stay is to exceed 14-days
- To stay longer than 90 days, Canadians must apply either for a Polish visa in Canada before arriving in Poland or for a temporary residence permit while in Poland and must have a valid reason for extending their stay, such as education or employment.
- Family (non-dependants) can visit and stay 90 days **without visa** (Schengen Area).

POPULATION

Size: Bydgoszcz – 400,000. Bydgoszcz metropolitan area – 850,000

Ethnicity: over 97% Polish

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: Polish

Prevalence of French or English speaking: Very limited. Some establishments will have an English-speaking employee; however, English is not spoken freely and commonly. Limited to no French.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Polish Zloty (PLN). 1 CDN=2.96 PLN (February of 2024)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- The climate is moderately continental, characterized by cold winters, with temperatures often below freezing, and mild or pleasantly warm summers.
- In Bydgoszcz, the summers are comfortable and partly cloudy, and the winters are long, freezing, snowy, windy, and mostly cloudy. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from -4c to 22c and is rarely below -5 or above 27c.

Laws and Culture:

- Penalties for possession, use or trafficking of illegal drugs are severe. Convicted offenders can expect lengthy jail sentences.
- It is illegal to consume alcohol in public places. If you are found intoxicated in a public area, you may be detained and could be taken to a sobering-up centre, where you may need to spend the night. You will be responsible for paying the cost of the stay.
- Penalties for drinking and driving are severe. The legal blood alcohol limit is 0.02 percent. Convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and jail sentences.

- If local authorities consider you a citizen of Poland, they may refuse you access to Canadian consular services.
- Riding a bike under the influence of alcohol is illegal and subject to detention and fines.
- Poland is a predominantly Catholic country, with around 90% of Polish people identifying as Roman Catholics. This means that Catholic values and the Catholic Church influence social, artistic, and political life. Close to 1% of the Polish population is Eastern Orthodox.
- The Polish culture values collectivism over individualism, though this is changing. Community is very important to Polish people, which has both its advantages and disadvantages.

Safety and Security:

- Foreigners may be required to pay traffic violation fines on the spot.
- The overall risk is low, since violent crime is not present in Bydgoszcz, while opportunistic crimes like theft, pick-pocketing and purse snatching are frequent as in any other tourist place.

Level of isolation:

- There are 2 Canadian family posted to this location.
- May feel very isolated due to the language barrier.
- NATO community (18 nations, 100 members)

HOUSING

- Houses are generally of a good standard, equipped with a completed fitted kitchen, patio and/or balcony, storage room and secure parking
- Apartments will be more available within the city center and bigger homes in the suburbs around.
- It is imperative that members do not secure any type of housing without obtaining prior approval from CFSU(E) Housing Officer.

EMPLOYMENT

Are there employment opportunities for spouses? Due to tax and legal implications, spousal employment on the economy is not a realistic option.

- Limited, language barrier.
- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS, families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting.

Op Tempo: The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: Satisfactory medical care is available in Poland.

- Highly accessible via private clinic (almost no wait times), public access very similar to Canada, incl. wait times.
- English services are available, French is very limited.
- Access to JFTC Medical Officer for all family members.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP. [PSHCP Member Portal \(pshcp-msh.ca\)](https://pshcp-msh.ca)

Special needs:

- Depending on language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed.

- It may be a wait before finding an appropriate match and at times may not be possible based on availability of English/French speaking providers or resources.
- It is highly advised that the family consult with Medical Screening Officer in Canada and / or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.

Consideration for pregnancy / birth: Health care for pregnancy and birth is available on the economy, private care.

Dental: Dental care can be accessed in town. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses.

SCHOOLING

- Schooling is typically the International School of Bydgoszcz (IB) for grades JK-12, Sokrates International School of Bydgoszcz for grades JK-8.
- There are no French language schools indicated for this mission.
- British curriculum is only deemed compatible up to gr 8; access to British curriculum beyond gr 8 requires WG B approval

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- The Curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography at the elementary level.

Resources for special need children:

- Access to Special needs services is depending on the choice of school, language required (English/French), area of specialization and degree of support needed, it may be very limited.
- Consult with CEM and school prior to any commitments.
- For an approved list of schools, please contact Children's Education Management at:

CEMGEE@forces.gc.ca

- Children's Education Management - Canada.ca
- Gestion de l'éducation des enfants - Canada.ca

CHILDCARE

Things to Consider:

- Local childcare is available, no guarantee that staff will be English or French speaking.

TRANSPORTATION

Things to Consider: Airport: Bydgoszcz Ignacy Jan Paderewski (BZG)

- It lies only 3.5 km from the city centre and around 50 km from the city of Toruń. It is the eleventh largest airport in Poland in terms of passenger traffic.
- You must carry an international driving permit. It must be obtained prior to arrival in Poland.

Public Transport:

- Very accessible public transportation throughout the city.
- Moving around Bydgoszcz is facilitated by 35 bus lines, 8 tram lines and 2 water tram lines.
- Ticket prices in Bydgoszcz are PLN 3.00 (normal ticket) and PLN 1,50 (discount ticket). An hour ticket costs PLN 4.20 (normal) and PLN 2,10 (discount).
- Public transport timetable in your cell phone -->> [Bydgoszcz Official Mobile App](#)

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

- **Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?**

- No physical centre. Families in Poland are supported by the Remote Team:
MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com

Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. The Padre is located at SHAPE, Belgium.

Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection): Very good service & very reasonable prices.

ACTIVITIES

- **Access to sports or other leisure activities:** Yes.
- Bydgoszcz Information Centre (Tourist Information and Convention Bureau) 2 Batorego Street / 1 Niedzwiedzia Street; 85-104 Bydgoszcz

Availability of playgrounds:

- Yes, many – though they are not at the same safety standard to Canadian playgrounds.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

- **Are common law relationships recognized?** Yes, but not supported.
- **Are same sex couples recognized?** Yes, but not legally supported. Same sex relationships are legal but same sex marriage or civil unions are not recognized.
- **Medications that are illegal in the country:**
- Use without a prescription, narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances is illegal. Cannabis is illegal.
- CBD is legal in Poland if it is derived from hemp with less than 0.2% THC level. Companies growing, selling or processing hemp need appropriate permits from the authorities. Consumers need to be properly informed about the CBD content in the products, as well as about their use.
- THC products are illegal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **European Commission Country Reports (2023)**
https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/publications/2023-european-semester-country-reports_en
- **Canadian Travel Advisories**
<https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/poland>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**
<https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/poland/>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**
<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/poland>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below

- MFS(E) Social Worker: MFSSocialWork@cfmws.com
- CAF Social Worker: GKMedicalClinic@forces.gc.ca
- MFS(E) Team: MFSE.Remotes@cfmws.com
- MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com