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The Appeal of Western Pomerania (Poland) for Cycle Tourism

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Barbara Osóch[1]

Abstract:

Purpose: *The West Pomeranian Voivodeship possesses diverse natural and socio-cultural assets that create favorable conditions for the development of active tourism—including cycling tourism—within the region. Developing cycling tourism and recreation requires appropriate infrastructure; such infrastructure should not only facilitate efficient and safe bicycle travel but also offer opportunities to discover the area's tourist attractions and provide access to accommodation, dining, transport, recreational, and entertainment services. This study aims to present West Pomerania as a leader among Polish regions in terms of its appeal for cycling tourism.*
Design/Methodology/Approach: *The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining primary quantitative research conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) technique with qualitative expert opinions. The survey involved a nationally representative sample of 1,514 Polish adults aged 18–65, representative by gender, age, settlement size and region, and was conducted in June 2025 by 4P Group. The empirical analysis was complemented by an examination of reports of the Marshal's Office, data on cycling mobility and cycling routes in Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship, as well as a review of relevant literature, enabling the identification of cyclists' needs and the factors shaping the region's attractiveness for cycling tourism.*
Findings: *Research findings indicate a steady increase in the number of cyclists using cycling infrastructure in Western Pomerania, confirming the growing importance of cycle tourism and recreation in the region. A dynamic expansion in both the number and total length of cycling routes is evident, leading to improved accessibility across various parts of the province. A key feature of this infrastructure development is the increasing diversity of routes, encompassing local sections as well as routes of supra-regional and cross-border significance. Western Pomerania stands out among Polish provinces for the high level of connectivity within its cycling infrastructure, creating an increasingly cohesive network linking towns and areas of tourist interest. The aggregated data suggest that the expansion and integration of the cycling route network are key factors boosting Western Pomerania's tourism potential and its competitiveness as a destination for cycle tourism.*
Practical Implications: *The development and integration of cycling route networks should be a key element of regional tourism policy, with a particular focus on enhancing their coherence, accessibility, and diversity. A highly interconnected network of routes can be leveraged to boost the appeal and competitiveness of Western Pomerania as a destination for cycle tourism.*

[1]*Dr., University of Szczecin, Institute of Spatial Management and Socio-Economic Geography, ORCID: 0000-0002-8364-7904, e-mail: barbara.osoch@usz.edu.pl;*

Originality/Value: *The research findings offer significant insight, highlighting the dynamic development of cycling infrastructure and the growing importance of Western Pomerania as a region for cycle tourism. The results obtained can serve as a valuable basis for further research into the spatial development of the cycling route network, as well as for the planning and management of cycle tourism in the region.*

Keywords: *Active tourism, cycle tourism, cycle routes, Western Pomerania region.*

JEL Clasification: *L83, O35, Z32.*

Paper type: *Research article.*

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1. Introduction

A cycling trip usually has two purposes: relaxation and exploration. When we head to a particular place with the intention of visiting a protected area or a museum, we should remember to relax. Tourism is not just about clocking up kilometres and constantly discovering something new. It is also about relaxing in the great outdoors (Wojciechowska, 2025). The main benefit of cycle tourism is spending time in the fresh air, being in touch with nature, and exploring one's own (or a foreign) country.

A bicycle allows you to reach almost any corner of the country, park wherever you choose, and, if necessary, send it as railway luggage; moreover, it does not require calling out a specialist breakdown service to fix any faults. Cycling has become a form of recreation, a sport, and even a way of developing one's own style and image.

An increasing number of people are engaging in cycle tourism-not only while traveling but also in their local areas - aligning with the growing trend in developed societies to embrace a healthy lifestyle amidst nature and away from crowded locations. This shift necessitates the development of cycling infrastructure and a change in how leisure time is planned.

When organizing trips, the starting point is often the cycling routes themselves rather than just specific regions or cities; these routes dictate the choice of accommodation, restaurants, rest stops, and tourist attractions. A significant consequence of expanding cycling infrastructure is its impact on the local economy. Routes attract tourists to places that previously lay outside the mainstream tourism circuit.

The growth of cycle tourism fosters job creation and revitalizes peripheral areas that had not previously fully capitalized on their tourism potential. Notably, the cycling tourism season is extending; it is no longer confined to the peak summer months but spans from early spring to late autumn.

The future of cycle tourism in Poland depends on the ability to build cohesive, high-quality ecosystems and consistently raise standards. Poland boasts nearly 23,000 kilometers of bicycle paths (Statistics Poland, 2024). It also features nearly 5,000 km of the EuroVelo network - long-distance routes connecting the entire continent. This figure exceeds that of Spain, Austria, or the Czech Republic.

Cycling ranks third among Poles' favorite physical activities during vacations. As many as 80 percent of Poles aged 18 to 65 report that they cycle, meaning the country has 19 million active cyclists (Rowerowa Polska PZU). West Pomerania is the national leader in implementing cycling projects.

For several years, the region has consistently pursued a cohesive concept for developing a bicycle route network - unique on a European scale - comprising 892 km of signposted routes and over 1,100 km of routes ready for use by 2025. This creates a cyclist-friendly environment that prioritizes mobility, eco-tourism, and sustainable transport..

2. Literature Review

Research has demonstrated the positive impact of engaging in various forms of physical activity (e.g., cycle tourism) - including in protected areas (Shaker, 2021) - on mental and physical health and on a health-promoting lifestyle (Temjanovski, 2020; Mosser, 2025).

The literature addresses the motivations driving recreational cyclists and athletes -for instance, to participate in a sporting event again in the future (Rejon-Guardia, 2023). Bicycle tourism offers a way to discover the appeal of city centers. The authors examine the digital identification of cyclist stopping points along bicycle routes in Kraków (Banet, 2022) and Beijing (Li, 2023). The analysis reveals that cyclists make stops of varying durations in the immediate vicinity of tourist attractions - both natural and anthropogenic.

Bicycle tourism is an activity that, due to its specific nature, can help mitigate the seasonality of tourism demand in destinations with rigidly defined tourist seasons. Furthermore, it can foster the decentralization of tourist and recreational traffic - shifting it from urban centers to rural areas - and support the inclusion of new entities in the tourism sector (Mundet *et al.,* 2022).

Another example is the analysis of cycling tourism as a factor in destination development, illustrated by the Spanish town of Calpe - a key location for

professional cycling teams and amateur athletes (Bursch, 2026). High-quality sports and recreational infrastructure can help promote an active lifestyle, enhance safety and comfort, attract tourists, and foster the promotion of heritage and sustainable development in a given area, such as Portugal (Carvalhinho, 2024).

The subject under discussion is bicycle-sharing systems (BSS), which have been implemented in many major cities worldwide. Driven by environmental and health benefits, the popularity of BSS as an eco-friendly mode of transport is surging, and these systems are increasingly being introduced in smaller cities as well. However, a key challenge lies in managing the vast amounts of data generated by these systems and analyzing that data to optimize services and encourage their use among residents (Cortez-Ordoñez, 2023).

The use of electric bicycles for mobility purposes has increased, particularly in urban settings, where they have become a key element in the transition toward more sustainable cities. Research is being conducted to identify the factors influencing intentions and preferences regarding electric bicycle adoption (Mina, 2024).

The literature on the subject has analyzed the factors influencing the choice of a bicycle as a daily mode of transport - taking into account, among other things, travel time, costs, comfort, service levels, and cyclist safety - as exemplified by studies conducted in Colombia.

The results indicated that a key barrier to daily cycling is a sense of insecurity, which can outweigh the importance of potential economic and health benefits. The quality of supporting infrastructure - including bicycle parking, sanitary facilities, and appropriate route surroundings - also plays a significant role (Gutiérrez, 2020).

3. Research Methodology

The aim of this article is to present the region's appeal for cycle tourism. The study was based on original research conducted using the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interview) method. The survey covered a nationwide sample of Polish adults aged 18–65, representative in terms of gender, age, place of residence size, and region. A total of 1,514 respondents participated in the study, which was carried out in June 2025 by the 4P Group.

Full results are available in the report titled "PZU Cycling Poland: Report on Riding Habits, Safety, and Education." The study was supplemented by expert opinions, providing insights into how Poles use bicycles and their needs as cyclists.

Reports from the Marshal's Office were analyzed, covering the characteristics of cycling mobility and bicycle routes in Western Pomerania. An inventory and literature review served to broaden the research context.

4. Research Results and Discussion

Compared to the rest of Poland, the West Pomeranian Voivodeship does not lead in terms of total route length (1,421.6 km). However, it is distinguished by a nationally acclaimed, well-developed, and spatially coherent network of cycling routes that provides convenient connections between towns, tourist attractions, and areas of high natural value.

The high level of connectivity within the cycling infrastructure facilitates the integration of individual route sections into a functional tourism system, thereby enhancing the region's accessibility for cycle tourism. Figure 1 illustrates the length of bicycle paths by voivodeship in Poland between 2011 and 2025 (Statistics Poland 2026).

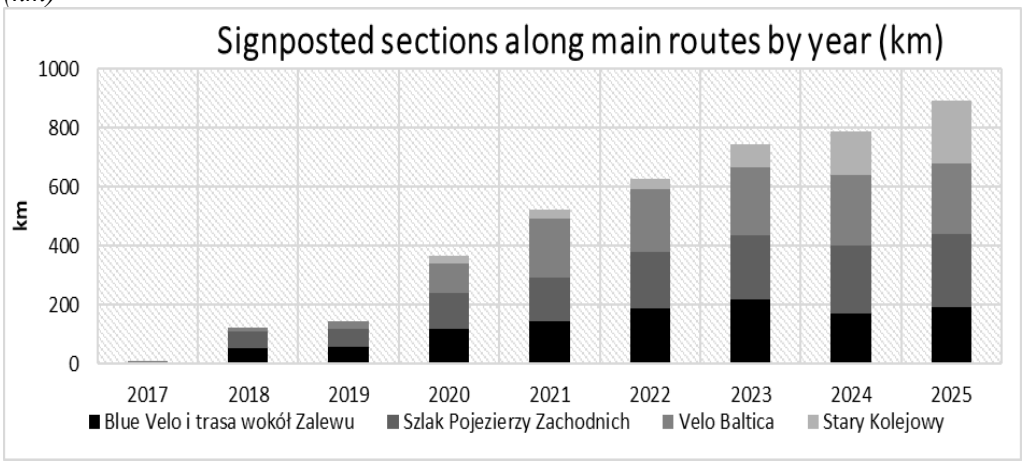
Figure 1. *Total bicycle paths in Polish voivodeships, 2011–2025*



Source: *Own study.*

Western Pomerania features a diverse and extensive network of cycling routes that spans both the Baltic coast and the region's interior. Some routes run away from the heavily trafficked coastal strip and major urban centers, allowing cyclists to discover the region's natural beauty and landscapes, including forest complexes, lakes, and small towns in the south (Figures 3 and 4). Another key feature of the network is its relatively flat terrain, making it suitable for various forms of cycle tourism.

Figure 2. *Signposted sections of the West Pomerania main cycling routes by year (km)*



Source: *Own work based on http://rowery.wzp.pl*

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The network of cycling routes is complemented by the "Cyclist-Friendly Places" (MPR) regional certification system, which covers accommodation, dining establishments, tourist attractions, and service points tailored to the needs of cyclists.

There are 187 MPR-certified facilities in the region, including 110 accommodation providers, 53 dining establishments, 32 tourist attractions, 24 retail and service outlets, and 15 tourist information points.

Facilities within the MPR system offer cyclists amenities such as secure bicycle storage and the ability to carry out basic repairs and maintenance using standard consumables. Self-service bicycle repair stations located along selected routes further support the cycling tourism infrastructure.

Data from 24 bicycle counters along routes in Western Pomerania (Figure 3) show 975,385 bicycle trips recorded during the 2026 summer season (June–August), resulting in an average of 14,779 trips per day (Table 1).

The coastal Velo Baltica route (EuroVelo 10 and EuroVelo 13) is the most popular. The highest number of cyclists was recorded in Świnoujście (over 287,000 trips). Podczele, near Kołobrzeg, ranked second with over 190,000 trips.

A single-day record of 23,535 trips was set on August 16, 2026. Tourist choices are dominated by shorter rides lasting either a single day or just a few hours. This reflects the holiday nature of the coastal trail, where cycling often serves as an appealing complement to a seaside vacation.

Figure 3. *Spatial distribution of bicycle routes and trip-counting devices*



Source: *Own work based on Report RBGPWZ 2015-2018.*

Cycling activity is highly seasonal, peaking during the summer months of June through August. In 2026, the months with the highest number of cycling trips were August (over 377,000), July (over 337,000), and June (over 266,000) (rowery.wzp.pl).

According to the report of Balik (2024), the West Pomeranian Voivodeship leads other regions in the number of tourist equipment rental outlets (including bicycles) located at accommodation facilities (235 in 2021).

This high figure indicates a relatively well-developed service infrastructure for cycle tourism in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship, creating favorable conditions for its continued growth.

Figure 4. *Diversity of landscapes and cycling route surfaces in Western Pomerania*



Source: *Own resources.*

Table 1. *Number of bicycle trips at 24 monitoring stations in Western Pomerania during the 2025 and 2026 summer seasons*

Counter	**Summer season 2026**	**Summer season 2025**	**Change**
Świnoujście	287 409	286 513	0%
Podczele	190 999	-	-
Sarbinowo	125 670	122 968	2%
Rogowo	114 987	114 504	0%
Darłowo	47 522	47 794	-1%
Kołczewo	42 706	38 014	12%
Pilchowo	21 529	22 036	-2%
Most Siekierki	14 963	-	-
Dąbie	13 878	12 687	9%
Kołbaskowo	13 446	-	-
Mielno*	12 841	43 385	-
Borne Sulinowo	12 195	12 155	0%
Nowe Objezierze	9847	9028	9%
Mostkowo	8257	7764	6%
Toporzyk	8002	7325	9%
Kozy	7478	-	-
Czarnocin	5648	5017	13%
Chwarstnica	5541	6036	-8%
Nowe Warpno	5124	3633	41%
Ińsko	4871	-	-

Karlino*	4741	5012	-
Rymań	3452	-	-
Rudki*	2299	4266	-

Source: based on http://rowery.wzp.pl

5. Conclusions, Proposals, Recommendations

The cross-border nature of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship is a key factor enhancing the appeal of cycle tourism. It enables the creation of supra-regional and international routes connecting areas with diverse natural, cultural, and landscape assets. The development of cycling infrastructure and its integration with the route network on the German side facilitate the creation of a cross-border tourism product, expanding opportunities for organizing longer and more spatially diverse cycling journeys.

The primary motivations for engaging in cycle tourism are physical activity and health, a desire to be close to nature, and freedom of movement (West Pomerania Cycle Route Network Concept 2015-2018; PZU Cycling Poland, 2026). Additionally, low traffic volume, route signage, and route diversity are key factors for respondents when choosing cycling routes.

Measures supporting the rapidly growing cycling tourism sector in Western Pomerania include: the expansion and modernization of the cycling route network; the creation of seamless connections between existing routes; the development of cross-border cycling routes linking Western Pomerania with Germany; improvements to trail signage and the availability of tourist information; the construction of rest areas equipped with shelters, benches, bike racks, and repair stations.

Also the development of secure bicycle parking and storage facilities; the integration of cycling routes with rail and bus transport; the development of cyclist-friendly infrastructure at accommodation and dining establishments; the promotion of the region's natural, scenic, and cultural assets through cycling tourism; and the creation and promotion of cross-border tourism products and packages for cyclists.

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