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Włodzimierz GAŃSKI\*

## PROMOTION OF TOURISM AND RECREATION IN THE WILNO REGION IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

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### Promocja turystyki i rekreacji na Wileńszczyźnie w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku

#### Streszczenie

Celem niniejszej pracy jest zbadanie systemu promocji turystyki i rekreacji na terenie Wileńszczyzny w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku. Aby skutecznie osiągnąć wyznaczony cel, podczas prowadzenia niniejszego badania i przygotowania artykułu autor zastosował głównie metodę analizy źródeł historycznych. W artykule po raz pierwszy w polskiej i zagranicznej nauce historycznej przedstawiono charakterystykę głównych sposobów promocji turystyki i rekreacji na terenie Wileńszczyzny w latach 20. i 30. XX wieku, kiedy ten wielonarodowy i wielowyznaniowy region znajdował się w granicach międzywojennego państwa polskiego. W niniejszym opracowaniu przedstawiono system promocji turystyki i rekreacji na terenie tego regionu poprzez publikację specjalistycznej literatury turystycznej i przewodnikowej, innych promocyjnych materiałów poligraficznych; przedstawiono wkład krajowych i regionalnych organizacji, stowarzyszeń i związków w promocję i rozwój miejscowej turystyki i rekreacji; analizę promocji turystyki i rekreacji poprzez różnego rodzaju kampanie i akcje reklamowe, a także za pomocą różnych zniżek na bilety kolejowe na przejazdy do stacji zlokalizowanych na terenach rekreacyjnych regionu. Prezentowane opracowanie może w przyszłości stanowić przydatny materiał faktograficzny do dalszych interdyscyplinarnych badań poświęconych historii Wilna i Wileńszczyzny oraz historii turystyki i rekreacji w Polsce, na Litwie i na Białorusi.

**Słowa kluczowe:** turystyka, rekreacja, Wilno, II Rzeczpospolita, okres międzywojenny.

\* <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5906-6539>; PhD, DSc, Faculty of Tourism, Recreation and Health, Academy of Tourism and Hotel Management in Gdansk, Gdansk, Poland; e-mail: wlodzimierz.ganski@wstih.pl (corresponding author)

## Abstract

The purpose of the work is to study the system of tourism and recreation promotion in the Wilno region in the 1920s and 1930s. To fulfil the intended purpose of the study, the author used scientific methodology of a historical type. For the first time, the article presents a systematic description of the main methods of tourism and recreation development in the Wilno Region in the 1920s and 1930s, when this region was incorporated into the Second Polish Republic. This study presents the promotion of tourism and recreation in the region through the publication of specialized literature and other printed materials. It shows the contribution of various national and regional organizations, associations and unions to the promotion and development of tourism and recreation in the region. Moreover, the paper comprises an analysis of the promotion of recreation and tourism through promotions and advertising campaigns, as well as through the provision of discounts on railway tickets. In the future, the presented research may provide useful material for further research on the history of the Wilno region and the history of tourism and recreation in Poland, Lithuania and Belarus.

**Keywords:** tourism, recreation, Vilnius, the Second Polish Republic, the Interwar period.

## Introduction

The relevance of the research is determined by the growing role of tourism in modern social and cultural development. The study of the history of tourism and methods of its promotion allows us to re-evaluate the role and degree of influence of this multifaceted phenomenon on social and cultural development, to comprehend its contribution to education and enlightenment, to identify the importance that tourism acquires in the dissemination and strengthening of certain values and ideas in society.

The history of tourism is still rife with questions that require detailed study. The 1920–1930s are characterized by the emergence of tourism in the Wilno<sup>1</sup> region in its modern sense; the first tourist guides for the region are published for the first time. The Polish state, realizing the possibilities of tourism in integrating the annexed territories in the east into a single state and rooting the necessary values in the public mind, began to exert a targeted impact on this area, promoting tourism and leisure in the Wilno region. All this determined the unprecedented growth in the number of tourist arrivals to the territory of the region in the 1930s, as well as the intensification of the tourist movement among the local population. Therefore, the study of the historical experience of

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<sup>1</sup> In the text of the article, the names of cities, towns, lakes and streets are given in the form in which they were used in the 1920s and 1930s, that is, in Polish and in accordance with the Polish tradition. Since today these objects are located on the territory of Lithuania and Belarus, the official spelling of their names today is carried out according to the traditions and rules of the Lithuanian and Belarusian languages, respectively, and may differ from the historical ones and those used in this article.

promoting tourism in the current circumstances of active development of the national tourism industry is of particular relevance and significance.

So far, no universal scientific definition of tourism has been formed. The lack of unity on this issue is demonstrated by both the authors and acts of the 1920–1930s, and modern researchers. Therefore, the study uses the following as basic criteria for the tourism category: spatial movement from the place of residence to the destination for educational or recreational purposes, limited time of stay and no paid activity at the destination or material benefit from the trip. Such criteria are fully consistent with the spirit and letter of modern tourism legislation in most countries of the world and international documents, which also largely predetermined the author's interpretation of interrelated categories.

The chronological framework of the study covers the Interwar period, that is, the 1920–1930s, when the military confrontation between Poland and Lithuania ended in the region (on October 7, 1920, an agreement on a truce was signed in Suwałki) and the Second World War had not yet begun (on September 17, 1939, the Red Army invaded the Wilno region and on the night of September 19, occupied the city of Wilno). The geographical scope of the study includes the Wilno region (or Vilnius Region, in Polish *Wileńszczyzna*, in Belarusian *Віленшчына/Vilienščyna*), which includes mainly the territory of the Wilno Voivodeship as a part of the Second Polish Republic in its maximum territories as in 1939 and currently lying within the borders of Lithuania and Belarus.

In the Interwar period, the Wilno Voivodeship was inhabited mainly by Poles (60%) and Belarusians (23%), with a small admixture of Jews, Lithuanians and others.<sup>2</sup> Wilno was the fifth largest city in interwar Poland: in 1939 it was home to 200 thousand inhabitants. The most numerous national groups in the city were Poles (60%) and Jews (30%), several thousand Belarusians and Lithuanians also lived in the city.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of the article is to consider the system of tourism and leisure promotion in the Wilno region in the 1920s and 1930s. The object of the study is the socio-cultural and socio-economic spheres of life in the Wilno city and the Wilno region in the conditions of the interwar Polish state. The subject of the study is the promotion of tourism as a complex social phenomenon on the territory of the Wilno region in the 1920s–1930s.

An analysis of the works of Polish scientists shows that the consideration of certain aspects of the history of interwar tourism began in the 1920–1930s. The heritage of Polish authors of the Interwar period is represented mainly by publications in periodicals, most of which are descriptive. However, at that time, the

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<sup>2</sup> *Mały Rocznik Statystyczny 1938*, GUS, Warszawa, 1938, pp. 23.

<sup>3</sup> V. Stravinskienė, *Migruojantis Vilnius. 1915–1994 metai*, Lietuvos istorijos institutas, Vilnius, 2023.

first monographic studies were published, including those of a theoretical and methodological nature. Among the works of modern Polish authors, one should mention comprehensive and fairly detailed studies on the history of tourism in interwar Poland (M. Łazarek,<sup>4</sup> M. Lewan<sup>5</sup>), features of the organization and state regulation of tourism (J. Chelmecki<sup>6</sup>), activities of tourist, sport and other organizations and associations (K. Jędrzejczyk,<sup>7</sup> M. Kacprzak,<sup>8</sup> E. Małolepszy and T. Drozdek-Małolepsza<sup>9</sup>). As an example of Lithuanian scientific works devoted, among other things, to the promotion and development of the tourist-excursion movement in the academic environment on the territory of the Wilno Voivodeship in the Interwar period, one can include the study of L. Šabajevaitė.<sup>10</sup> In the last decade, separate publications of Belarusian authors began to appear, devoted directly to interwar tourism, its regional specifics in the 1920s–1930s (A. Biely,<sup>11</sup> W. Gański,<sup>12</sup> I. Mielnikau<sup>13</sup>). Ukrainian researchers (T. Kovalchuk,<sup>14</sup> N. Lytvyn<sup>15</sup>) devoted their works to certain aspects of tourism, the conditions of its development in the 1920s–1930s on the territory of the eastern regions of interwar Poland. The presented studies, on the one hand, create the basis for the analysis of tourism promotion, and on the other hand, confirm the need for its further study. The issues raised in the study have not yet found proper coverage in historical science. To date, there are no comprehensive special historical studies that would be directly devoted to the subject matter of promoting tourism in the territory of the Wilno region in the Interwar period.

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<sup>4</sup> M. Łazarek, *Śladami historii turystyki: od starożytności do współczesności*, Wyd. WSSP, Lublin 2005.

<sup>5</sup> M. Lewan, *Zarys dziejów turystyki w Polsce*, Wyd. Proksenia, Kraków 2004.

<sup>6</sup> J. Chelmecki, *Państwowe i społecznie inicjatywy rozwoju ruchu turystycznego i krajoznawczego w Polsce w latach 1919–1939*, „Przełomy w Historii. Pamiętnik” 1999, vol. 3, pp. 453–476.

<sup>7</sup> K. Jędrzejczyk, *Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze (1906–1950): zarys dziejów*, Wyd. Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej, Włocławek 2006.

<sup>8</sup> M. Kacprzak, *Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich, 1933–1939*, Wyd. Ibidem, Łódź 2005.

<sup>9</sup> E. Małolepszy, T. Drozdek-Małolepsza, *Kultura fizyczna i turystyka w województwie wołyńskim w latach 1921–1939*, Wyd. Nauka i Innowacje, Poznań, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Л. Шабаявайте, *Развитие исторической науки в Вильнюсском университете Стефана Батория (1919–1939 гг.)*: автореферат диссертации кандидата наук, Институт истории Академии наук Литовской ССР, Вильнюс 1987.

<sup>11</sup> А. Бєлы, *Развіццє турызму ў паўночна-ўсходніх ваяводствах міжваеннай Польшчы: пачатак складання мазаікі*, „ARCHE Пачатак” 2014, no 7–8, pp. 259–294.

<sup>12</sup> W. Gański, *Tourist Routes of the Wilno Voivodeship in the Interwar Period*, „Sport i Turystyka. Środkowoeuropejskie Czasopismo Naukowe” 2023, vol. 6, no 2, pp. 11–27.

<sup>13</sup> І. Мельнікаў, *Заходнебеларуская Атлантыда 1921–1941 гг.: паміж Варшавай і Масквой*, Выдавецтва Галіяфы, Мінск 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Т. Ковальчук, *Регіональний туризм у Польській Республіці в міжвоєнний період: Волинське воеводство: диссертация кандидата наук*, Національний університет Києво-Могилянська академія, Київ 2012.

<sup>15</sup> Н. Литвин, *Розвиток масового туризму у Польщі у XIX – другій половині XX ст.*, „Україна: культурна спадщина, національна свідомість, державність” 2008, no 17, pp. 88–98.

## **Research Problems and Methods**

While working on the article, the following research questions were formulated:

- How did the publication of tourist literature, publications of a special and informational nature, as well as other printed products help in promoting tourism and recreation in the Wilno region?
- What contribution did national, regional and local tourism associations and non-profit organizations make to the promotion of tourism and recreation in the Wilno region? What was the focus of their activities in this area?
- What tourist actions aimed at attracting tourists from other regions of Poland to the region were held in the territory of the Wilno region? By whom were they organized, what was their essence and what results did they render?
- How did the regional authorities try to increase the number of tourists in the region with the help of exhibition activities and international trade fair? What tools did they use?
- How significant a tool for promoting recreation and tourism in the Wilno region were discounts on train tickets? Who could use these discounts and under what conditions?

These research questions were answered by the historical analysis of primary sources, documents and materials, which are now stored in the Archive of Science of Polish Academy of Sciences and Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cracow (Poland), the Lithuanian Central State Archive in Wilno (Lithuania) and the State Archives of the Brest Region in Brest (Belarus), as well as the analysis of tourist publications of the Interwar period and modern scientific research by Polish, Belarusian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian authors. Information from these sources made it possible to form a holistic view of the tourism and leisure promotion system in the region and created a factual basis for answering the research questions posed above.

The degree of study of the research topic, the purpose of the study and research questions determined the pluralistic nature of its methodological approach. During the research and writing of the article, the principle of historicism, the objectivity principle and the consistency principle were applied. Methodologically, the article is based on the systematic approach combining the structural-functional, dialectical and hermeneutical methods. The author used the systemic and institutional approaches, as well as special historical methods: the typological method, the descriptive method, as well as the historic-geographic method. The methods of analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, comparison and generalization were used as for general logical methods in the study.

## Publication of Tourist Literature

The publication of tourist (or rather proto-tourist) literature dedicated to the city of Wilno and the Wilno region had long traditions and its roots go back to the initial stage of the modern period. Even when Wilno was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, foreign diplomats and travelers published their memories and impressions of the city and its surroundings. The first tourist guides to Wilno and the surrounding area began to be published back in the 1850s, despite the Russian occupation and permanent uprisings, which significantly hampered the development of tourism in the region. These are, among others, publications by A. H. Kirkor, W. Syrokomla, J. I. Kraszewski, T. Tripplin, E. Pawłowicz, W. Studnicki, W. Zahorski,<sup>16</sup> etc. However, the importance of the Interwar period in this context lies in the fact that the period of the 1920s and 1930s saw the beginning of the publication of travel literature aimed at the relatively mass reader and tourist. Tourist literature is finally moving from the category of memoir prose into the category of applied literature.

Throughout the Interwar period, state institutions implementing tourism policy in practice, together with tourism and sightseeing societies and organizations, were actively involved in the publication of various travel literature. The most popular type of literature of a tourist nature were reference guidebooks and handbooks for travelers.

Conventionally, all tourist publications can be classified into three groups: national, regional, and by individual cities and localities. Practically the only national handbooks for travelers published in the second half of the 1930s was the 4-volume Handbook on Poland, edited by S. Lenartowicz. The 1<sup>st</sup> volume entitled "Northeastern Poland" and published in 1935<sup>17</sup> was dedicated to the Wilno region. It is worth noting that it was written at a fairly high scientific level. The handbooks were useful both for tourists and for those who were interested in the history of the region. The aforementioned one contained a number of maps and plans of cities and places, including Wilno and the surroundings of Lake Narocz. Among other things, the handbook contained a very valuable section devoted to practical advice for tourists regarding the state and features of the functioning of the tourism and transport infrastructure of the region.

Guidebooks for individual cities and localities were quite well-known. The most popular place among tourists in the region was the city of Wilno and its environs, which most of the guidebooks are devoted to. The tradition of their

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<sup>16</sup> J. Januszewska-Jurkiewicz, *Podróże do Wilna i początki wileńskiej turystyki w drugiej połowie XIX wieku i w początkach XX stulecia (do 1914 roku) w świetle bedekerów i relacji*, [w:] Z. Hojka, K. Nowak (eds.), *Turystyka historyczna*, vol. 1, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2017.

<sup>17</sup> S. Lenartowicz, *Przewodnik po Polsce*, vol. 4: *Polska Północno-Wschodnia*, Wyd. Nasza Księgarnia, Warszawa 1935.

publication had been going on since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and resumed immediately after the First World War. Already in 1923, J. Kłos, an architect, architectural historian, professor at Stefan Batory University in Wilno, published the work "Wilno. Local History Guidebook,"<sup>18</sup> written, however, from an extremely national Polish standpoint. In 1927, W. Zagórski published his work "Handbook of Wilno," in 1929 J. Kłos published "Sightseeing of Wilno," and in 1930 they published the collective work "Wilno City and Wilno Region". These solid works contained almost all the material necessary for tourists: descriptions of sights, developed routes, information about museums, etc. In 1932, the Wilno Sightseeing Society financed the publication of a large-scale work by S. Lorentz "Excursions in the Wilno Voivodeship". In 1933, with the support of the same society, the work of G. Pawłowski "Narocz and Surroundings" was published. In 1937, the work of P. Krasnopolski "Wilno City and Wilno Voivodeship" was published.<sup>19</sup>

In 1934, J. Szukiewicz published a guidebook to the Wilno region and the Nowogródek region.<sup>20</sup> The publication briefly described the main tourist routes through the territory of the Wilno Voivodeship and the Nowogródek Voivodeship, contained information about possible overnight stays, recommendations for backpackers, and also provided background information about the Northern Trade Fairs.

In addition, a significant number of books were devoted to resort places in the region. In 1934, an extremely popular publication in interwar Poland, "On the Braślav Lakes and Rivers", authored by A. Wislocki, was published. For tourists, not only monographic publications and books were useful, but also individual publications in periodicals. L. Leszko's article "Land of 1000 Lakes" about tourism and leisure opportunities of the Braślav County was very popular.<sup>21</sup>

Just before the outbreak of World War II, in 1939, Z. Szyk's large-scale (more than 500 pages) guidebook "A Thousand Years of Wilno" was published in Yiddish.<sup>22</sup> In this publication, the author, using an interdisciplinary approach based on historical, literary and folklore sources, described in detail the urban space in the form of tourist routes in the context of all the cultures and religions then existing in the city.

In addition to guide books and handbooks, in the Interwar period, various brochures, booklets, posters and leaflets were massively published to promote tourism. The activity of the Department of Tourism of the Ministry of Public

<sup>18</sup> J. Kłos, *Wilno. Przewodnik krajoznawczy*, Wyd. Oddz. Wil. PTK, Wilno 1923.

<sup>19</sup> *Turystyka*, „Wiadomości Krajoznawcze i Turystyczne” 1933, no. 8–9, pp. 3–5.

<sup>20</sup> J. Szukiewicz, *Przewodnik turystyczny po Wileńszczyźnie i Nowogródzczyźnie*, Zakłady graficzne „Znicz”, Wilno 1934.

<sup>21</sup> А. Бель, *Развіццё турызму ў паўночна-ўсходніх ваяводствах міжваеннай Польшчы: пачатак складання мазаікі*, „ARCHE Пачатак” 2014, no. 7–8, pp. 259–294.

<sup>22</sup> J. Degler, *Niezrealizowane spotkania kultur, czyli przewodnik-archiwum po Wilnie Zelmana Szyka na tle polskiego dyskursu krajoznawczego*, „Teksty Drugie. Teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja” 2021, no 5, pp. 320.

Works and the General Department of Tourism of the Ministry of Communications was the most effective in this area. In particular, the first institution issued an order that the regional tourism commissions, together with tourism referents, develop and publish brochures and booklets about tourist areas, tourist sites that are located on the territory of the respective region, about the current state of the tourism industry. In 1930, for the same purpose, funds were allocated from the state budget for the publication and distribution of tourist posters.<sup>23</sup> Brochures and booklets were developed both for regions and for individual areas that were most attractive to tourists. Campaign posters were placed at railway stations and other public places.<sup>24</sup> Once local tourist associations or branches of national organizations and societies in the field of travel, tourism and sightseeing appeared in the region, publishing activity significantly intensified.

In order to popularize the Wilno region as a tourist destination, photo albums with picturesque landscapes, images of historical and cultural monuments and tourist attractions were published.<sup>25</sup> But it should be noted that they were not available to the general public, and basically they could only be seen during international tourism exhibitions and fairs. For the same purposes, numerous postcards and stamps with historical and cultural objects of the region were published and distributed.

## Associations and Organizations

An important contribution to the promotion of tourism in the interwar years was made by varied associations and organizations. They can be classified into two groups: national, which had their branches in the region, and regional, which were directly founded and operated on the territory of the Wilno region.

Organizations and associations in the field of tourism functioned in all significant tourist centers of the region. So, in Wilno in the mid-1930s. in the field of tourism, the following were active: The Wilno branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze), which was located on the first floor in the courtyard of the house at 9 Ostrobramska Street in the premises of the trade union of Polish writers; Union of Tourism Promotion of Wilno City and Wilno Land (Związek Propagandy Turystycznej Wilna i Wileńszczyzny), located at 32 Mickiewicza Street; Wilno Rowing Society (Wileńskie Towarzystwo Wioślarskie) at 32 Kosciuszko Street, the Eastern Lands Hunting Society (Towarzystwo Łowieckie Ziemi Wschodnich) at 42 Mickiewicza Street, branch of

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<sup>23</sup> J. Gaj, *Dzieje turystyki w Polsce*, Wyd. Almamater, Warszawa 2006.

<sup>24</sup> *Letter of 15 April 1930 on the placement of tourist promotional posters*, "Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych" 1930, no 7, p. 133.

<sup>25</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sign. II, inv. B, vol. 28.



Scout Association (Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego) at 16 Zawalna Street (men's department) and 4 Mała Pohulanka Street (women's department), Sailing Club (Klub Żeglarski) with its registered office at 10 Belana Street and the secretariat at the Bim Camp in Troki, Academic Travel Club (Akademicki Klub Włóczęgów Wileńskich) at 14 Wskazówki Street, Wilno Department of the Jewish Sightseeing Society (Żydowskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze) at 3 Gdańska Street. Tourist information services, as well as accommodation and meals on Lake Narocz and Lake Miastro, were provided to vacationers by the local Society of Friends of Lake Narocz (Towarzystwo Miłośników Jeziora Narocz).

A very significant contribution to the promotion of tourism in the Wilno region among national organizations and associations was made by the Eastern Lands Development Society (Towarzystwo Rozwoju Ziem Wschodnich), which was formed on November 11, 1933 under the chairmanship of the Speaker of the Polish Senate, A. Pristor.<sup>26</sup> According to its structure, the society was divided into districts (coincident with the borders of regions / voivodeships), which in turn had their own branches (by counties). The goals of the society were to promote the development of culture, science, economy in the eastern lands of Poland.<sup>27</sup> Tourism and leisure have become an important means of achieving them. The society promoted the lands of the eastern voivodeships as a promising tourist region. It published brochures, books, yearbooks, magazines, newspapers, which contained information about the region and called for visiting these picturesque lands. Another way to promote the region as a tourist destination was theme nights, concerts, exhibitions and fairs.

Starting from 1934, the Eastern Lands Development Society, in order to increase the number of tourists who would visit the eastern regions of Poland, annually organised the action "Summer in the Eastern Lands."<sup>28</sup> As part of this action, in cooperation with the Ministry of Communications, the Eastern Lands Development Society provided tourists visiting this region with discounts of up to 75% on rail travel through the region.<sup>29</sup> The Society acted as the initiator and organizer of other actions, exhibitions and events.

Since 1909, the Polish Automobile Club (Automobilklub Polski) has been operating.<sup>30</sup> In its structure, the club had a tourist office, which, among other things, provided tourists with information about the state of roads, places for overnight stays and meals, and also developed automobile tourist routes on request. In addition to its own regional branches, the club united several more

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<sup>26</sup> CAMR, zesp. 2678, sign. 2.

<sup>27</sup> CAMR, zesp. 2678, sign. 9.

<sup>28</sup> CAMR, zesp. 2678, sign. 8.

<sup>29</sup> *Tourist chronicle*, "Wiadomości Z.T.K." 1934, no 7, pp. 8–11.

<sup>30</sup> CAMR, zesp. 9, sygn. 10.

societies as separate legal entities, including the Wilno Automobile Club, founded in 1928.<sup>31</sup>

In the Interwar period, the Jewish community was numerous in the Wilno region. In 1926, the Jewish Sightseeing Society (Żydowskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze) was founded by its representatives.<sup>32</sup> The Jewish Sightseeing Society had similar goals to the Polish Sightseeing Society (Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze), but the main distinguishing feature was that it focused its activities on the preservation of Jewish cultural monuments. In each region there were branches of the society numbering from several dozens to several hundred members, the largest of which was the Wilno branch. Since 1930, the Jewish Sightseeing Society has published the monthly "News of the Jewish Sightseeing Society", and as an appendix to the Saturday issues of the newspaper "Our View", the brochure "Tourism and Sightseeing".

A significant contribution to the promotion of tourism in the region under study was made by the Wilno Sightseeing Society (Wileńskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze)<sup>33</sup> and the Society of Friends of Sciences in Wilno (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie).<sup>34</sup> Their activities were beneficial to the Polish authorities, since it was thanks to these societies that work was carried out to popularize Polish culture, including through tourism activities.

Quite debatable is the question of the creation and name of the Wilno Sightseeing Society (Wileńskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze). Some researchers note that it was created as a branch of the Polish Sightseeing Society. In their opinion, the creation of the Wilno Sightseeing Society took place within the framework of the formation of the nationwide Polish Sightseeing Society in the second half of the 1920s–1930s. However, this statement is not entirely correct, because the Wilno Sightseeing Society was formed as an independent association. And only in 1928 it changed its name and became known as the Wilno Department of the Polish Sightseeing Society. This finding is confirmed by the fact that since 1923 in Wilno the publication of tourist literature has been carried out on behalf of the Wilno Sightseeing Society. At the same time, the Polish Sightseeing Society already existed (founded in 1906),<sup>35</sup> but it did not have regional branches and departments, because this was not provided for by the charter in force at that time. In addition, in the early 1930s, the Polish Sightseeing Society, which at that time really turned into a national organization, included already existing similar independent organizations in other cities. Thus, the Wilno Sightseeing

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<sup>31</sup> LCSA, fond 51. inv. 5. file 63.

<sup>32</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. 88, sign. 1(2a).

<sup>33</sup> P. Krasnopolski, *Wilno i województwo Wileńskie*, Nakł. Wiktorii Krasnopolskiej, Wilno 1937.

<sup>34</sup> H. Ilgiewicz, *Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie (1907–1939) i jego poprzednicy*, Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>35</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sygn. III, inv. A, vol. 40.

Society actually became a branch or department of the Polish Sightseeing Society, and it was from that time on that two names of this society were used in parallel in periodicals, literature and even in documents: the Wilno Sightseeing Society and the Wilno Department of Polish Sightseeing Society. At the same time, it should be noted that there were no significant changes in the organizational structure and activities of the society after joining the Polish Sightseeing Society.<sup>36</sup>

The Wilno Sightseeing Society was founded on November 1, 1919 and had its headquarters in Wilno and local branches in the largest cities of the region (Brasław, Święciany, Postawy, Mołodeczno, Głębokie). In their charge there were youth associations that were engaged in the development of tourism among the youth. Members of the Wilno Sightseeing Society united in the following sections: excursion, sightseeing, environmental protection and museum. They were formed with the consent of the regional council of the society, were to be guided by the principles and provisions of the charter, submit to the regional council of the society information on the number of members, annual reports on their activities.<sup>37</sup> To maintain contact with all its regional branches, the society held annual and semi-annual congresses of delegates. They usually approved the program of the society, discussed and approved reports for the previous year, the annual budget, evaluated the results and achievements of the tourist movement in the region.<sup>38</sup>

The Wilno Sightseeing Society was engaged in planning and organizing tourist routes, regional, interregional and international trips, and also organized advanced training courses for guides, initiated conferences, seminars and round tables. In the spring of 1933, the excursion section headed by A. Krzemień began an active campaign to promote tourist trips and excursions around the Wilno region. Together with the city administration, the Wilno Sightseeing Society created a travel agency that provided guide services, as well as the development and promotion of tourist routes using rail transport. At the same time, the society conducted educational courses for all comers, which were attended by 100–150 people a year.<sup>39</sup>

Members of the Wilno Sightseeing Society took part in national and regional congresses, which were devoted to the development of tourism. For example, they took part in the Congress on Supporting the Development of Tourism and Tourism Activities (March 17, 1931 in Warsaw),<sup>40</sup> the Congress of Tourism Offi-

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<sup>36</sup> J.B. Twarog, *Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze. Oddziały 1908–1950 (as of 2003)*, Nakł. PTTK, Warszawa 2003.

<sup>37</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 10, file 26.

<sup>38</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 10, file 248.

<sup>39</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sign. IV, vol. 271.

<sup>40</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sign. III, inv. A, vol. 39.

cials (July 2-3, 1931 in Tarnopol),<sup>41</sup> the congresses of the departments of the Polish Sightseeing Society in Równe and Sarny.<sup>42</sup> Representatives of the Wilno Sightseeing Society also took part in a conference on the training and advanced training of guides, which took place on December 13 1931, in Warsaw. In subsequent years, members of the society themselves organized courses for guides in Wilno. As a result of training and passing exams, guides received diplomas of I and II degrees. The last such courses took place in the spring of 1939. Exhibitions were one of the forms of promotion of the tourist movement. The Wilno Sightseeing Society took an active part in their organization. It was also engaged in the publication of guidebooks, booklets, leaflets and tourist maps.<sup>43</sup>

A significant contribution to the development and popularization of tourism in the region in the interwar period was made by the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie). This society was formed in 1906.<sup>44</sup> The purpose of the society was the development of regional studies: the study of history, ethnography, architecture and nature of the region. Since 1907, it published the Yearbook of the Society of Friends of Science in Wilno, and since 1923, the third department of the society published the journal "Wilno Atheneum". In 1919, the society played a significant role in the resumption of the activities of Stefan Batory University, with which cooperation was established over the next two decades. The Society of Friends of Sciences in Wilno maintained close contacts with the Academy of Arts, the State Archives, the Union of Museums, the Eastern Lands Development Society, the Numismatic and Archaeological Society and other scientific institutions and public associations of this profile.<sup>45</sup>

The Society of Friends of Science in Wilno, as well as the Wilno Sightseeing Society, took part in organizing all kinds of tourist trips. Both societies conducted their own trips, mainly among young people, with exploring historical and architectural monuments. The peculiarity of the trips was that they covered the territory not only of the Wilno region, but also of the adjacent regions of interwar Poland (Nowogródek, Białystok and Polesie Voivodeships).

On November 20, 1934, the Union of Tourist Propaganda of Wilno City and Wilno Land (Związek Propagandy Turystycznej Wilna i Wileńszczyzny) was founded. Dr. W. Maleszewski was elected its chairman, Dr. S. Lorentz became the referent of the union. The main tasks of the union were declared as follows: to prepare accommodation and catering facilities, including apartments and

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<sup>41</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sign. III, inv. C, vol. 177.

<sup>42</sup> ASPAS & PAAS, chapter I, zesp. K I-6, sign. III, inv. C, vol. 176.

<sup>43</sup> *Z życia okręgów i oddziałów P.T.K.*, "Ziemia" 1932, no 4-5, pp. 155.

<sup>44</sup> H. Ilgiewicz, *Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk w Wilnie (1907-1939) i jego poprzednicy*, Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, Warszawa 2008.

<sup>45</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 10, file 1167.

houses, for an increase in the number of tourists, to seek group and individual discounts for tourists on transport as well as in catering and accommodation establishments, to organize tourist stations and others. The charter of the union itself spelled out the fact that it is intended to serve as a continuation of the general tourism policy of the Polish state.<sup>46</sup> The achievement of the statutory goals of the union was carried out through organizing and conducting various actions to popularize leisure in the Wilno region both among local residents and other regions of the country, conducting city and country excursions (including free ones), publishing various travel literature, guidebooks and propaganda materials. The costs of implementing these activities were supposed to be compensated both through budget subsidies and through membership fees. The one-time fee for joining the organization was 25 Polish zlotys, the annual membership fee was 50 Polish zlotys.<sup>47</sup>

## Tourism Campaigns and Actions

In order to increase the number of tourists and sightseers in the Wilno region, various campaigns were constantly carried out. It should be noted that they became most effective and truly massive in the mid-1930s. This is due to a number of reasons. First, the growing interest of the state authorities in the development of tourism. The Polish government began to consider tourism as an effective tool for promoting the necessary ideological messages in public consciousness. At this time, the Ministry of Communications developed and implemented a system of discounts for tourists on travel.<sup>48</sup> This was greatly facilitated by the activities of Deputy Minister A. Bobrowski. Secondly, the Eastern Lands Development Society made a significant contribution to the organization of tourism events. It was that organization that ran most of the events aimed at promoting the tourist movement. Third, in the 1930s, compared to the previous decade, the state of the tourism industry improved significantly (new hotels were opened, the system of holiday homes expanded, new roads and railways were built), which made it possible for the region to receive more visitors.<sup>49</sup>

The most popular tourist campaign in the Wilno region was "Summer in the Eastern Lands", which was carried out by the Eastern Lands Development Society in cooperation with the Ministry of Communications during 1934–1939. The campaign "Summer in the Eastern Lands" provided for the rest of Polish citizens

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<sup>46</sup> SABR, fond 1, inv. 10, file 579.

<sup>47</sup> SABR, fond 1, inv. 10, file 579.

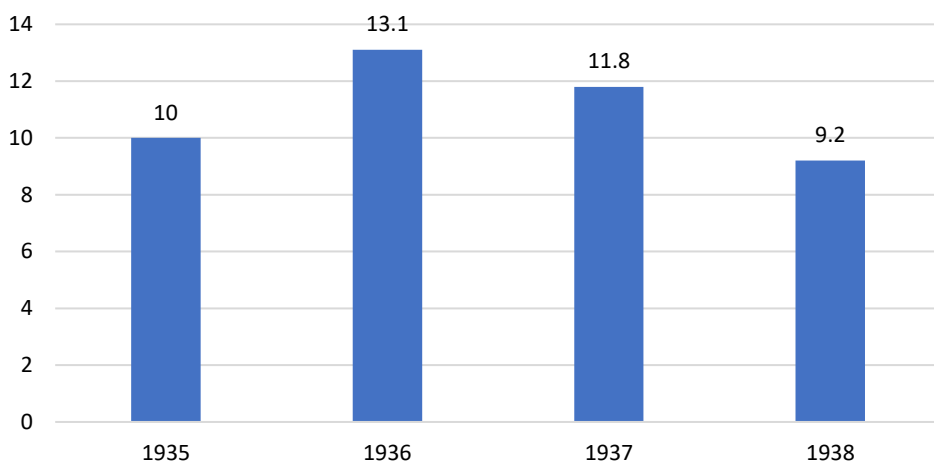
<sup>48</sup> *Ulgowe przejazdy autobusami*, "Ziemia Wołyńska" 1939, no 3, pp. 48.

<sup>49</sup> T. Wilgat, *Rozmieszczenie przemysłu pensjonatowo-hotelowego w Polsce*, "Komunikaty Studium Turyzmu Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego" 1939, no 22.

in 1935 on the territory of the Wilno region. This campaign was held annually from June 1 to September 30. At that time, participants of the campaign were provided with discounts for rail travel in that area. The fare discount was 45–75% of the total ticket price.<sup>50</sup>

It should be noted that the summer vacation in the territory where the campaign “Summer in the Eastern Lands” was held was the cheapest in the whole country, and the level of its organization was quite high.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, each tourist could independently choose the form and place of recreation in the territory determined by the conditions of the campaign. During this action, various tourist routes were developed. Most of the trips were organized through the Orbis travel agency, which the Eastern Lands Development Society has actively cooperated with throughout its existence.

The fact that the campaign “Summer in the Eastern Lands” was very popular among tourists in interwar Poland is clearly evidenced by statistics<sup>52</sup> (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** The number of participants in the campaign “Summer in the Eastern Lands” in 1934–1938 (in thousands of persons)

Source: compiled by the author based on data of Lithuanian Central State Archives in Vilnius.

Apparently, in the late 1930s the campaign “Summer in the Eastern Lands” was beginning to lose popularity. The main reason was that it was designed for a long stay of tourists in the territory where the action was held, and with the development of transport and communications, tourists were beginning to be attracted by more frequent but shorter trips and excursions.

<sup>50</sup> *Bilety okręgowe i ich opłacalność dla nabywców*, “Jedziemy” 1939, no 14, p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCSA) in Vilnius, fond 51, inv. 6, file 588.

<sup>52</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 10, file 1170.

## Exhibition and Fair Activities

Starting from 1928, Northern Trade Fair was held in Wilno.<sup>53</sup> This was the only initiative of this kind in the Wilno region during the researched period. It was an exhibition of Polish and foreign industry, which was held in late August – early September. Its main purpose was to create a trade center with the Baltic countries and Northern European countries in Wilno. Northern Trade Fair was a means of promoting the industrial products of the region and the leading place among the exhibits was occupied by industrial products. However, Northern Trade Fair was also a way to promote tourism and excursions among foreign guests and residents of the region. Northern Trade Fair was widely promoted among residents of neighboring regions of interwar Poland. The last Northern Trade Fair, which was supposed to take place between August 19 and September 3, 1939, was terminated ahead of schedule due to the German attack on Poland and the outbreak of World War II. Each year, a special organizing committee was created for the preparation and holding of Northern Trade Fair. Within its structure, there was also a separate sector that was engaged in promoting tourism, organizing and conducting excursions. In addition, tourism exhibitions were held at Northern Trade Fair, where local authorities involved in tourism as well as tourism and sightseeing organizations presented a variety of information products. The number of such exhibitions and their visitors was growing rapidly every year.<sup>54</sup> The 9<sup>th</sup> Northern Trade Fair was the most successful in terms of tourist propaganda. There were more than 500 posters with images of historical and cultural objects of the region on the stands of exhibition sites alone.<sup>55</sup> Starting from 1934, for those wishing to visit Northern Trade Fair, special discounts were introduced for rail travel to Wilno and back.

## Discounts on Rail Travel

In the Interwar period, rail transport played a leading role in tourism. Tourism and travels were not helped by excessively high fares, which were often raised due to high inflation. In this regard, the fare discounts applied by the railway were essential. In 1923, a 33% discount was introduced for travel by rail for groups of tourists from 30 people and more.<sup>56</sup> In 1930, the Polish State Railways

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<sup>53</sup> A. Srebrakowski, *Targi Północne w Wilnie 1928–1939, Wokół historii i polityki. Studia z dziejów XIX i XX wieku dedykowane Profesorowi Wojciechowi Wrzesińskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2004.

<sup>54</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 6, file 553.

<sup>55</sup> LCSA, fond 51, inv. 6, file 588.

<sup>56</sup> *Dwudziestolecie Sekcji Turystycznej P.T.T.*, "Wierchy. Rocznik poświęcony górcom i góralszczyźnie" 1923, pp. 180–182.

provided a 25% discount on the ticket price for members of the Union of Polish Tourist Societies. It operated in 35 cities, including Wilno, within a 70-kilometer radius from them and from stations in tourist areas.<sup>57</sup>

As part of domestic tourism promotion campaigns, the authorities have introduced discounts on train tickets for people traveling for tourism purposes. For example, in 1937, persons traveling before July 1 for a vacation of at least 7 days in the eastern regions (including the Wilno region) could use a 75% discount from the ticket price<sup>58</sup> on their return journey. The condition for applying the benefit was that the passenger had a Tourism Support League card and a ticket to the stations located in the specified regions. At the same time, the distance of a one-way trip was to be at least 250 km. In addition, during their stay in these regions tourists had the right to use a 50% discount for four sight-seeing trips. Also in 1937, a promotion was held, under the terms of which one full ticket could additionally purchase up to five children's tickets for 12% of their regular price.<sup>59</sup>

In 1932, the Polish State Railway organized the first tourist train. In many ways, the concept of the tourist train was based on the model of the Italian popular train.<sup>60</sup> The ticket price for a tourist train was calculated taking into account a discount of 66%. If at least 350 people took part in the trip, then the discount was 70%. The initiative was aimed at organizing the delivery of citizens to places of rest on weekends and holidays, or to places where mass events were held. Tourist trains could be assigned at the request of travel companies, local historical, tourist and sports societies.

In 1934–1938, tourist trains ran from Baranowicze, Lida and Grodno to Wilno, from Wilno to Warsaw, etc. For example, back in the summer of 1939, newspapers called on local residents to make a tour along the route Wilno-Warsaw-Gdynia on a luxury tourist train. The organizers of the trip promised the tourists from Wilno three days at the seaside, one day in Warsaw, cabaret performances in the train, a dining car during the journey from the city to the city, accommodation in Gdynia in a hotel near the sea. The cost of the trip was 33 Polish zlotys.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> L. Ćwikła, *Prawne aspekty rozwoju turystyki w Polsce w latach 1918–1939*, KUL, Lublin 2011.

<sup>58</sup> *Kronika turystyczna*, "Wiadomości Z.T.K." 1934, no 7, pp. 8–11.

<sup>59</sup> *Z Ministerstwa Komunikacji*, "Dziennik Urzędowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej «Monitor Polski». Dział nieurzędowy" 1937, no 158.

<sup>60</sup> I. Kawalla-Lulewicz, "Pociągi popularne" jako forma turystyki kolejowej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym, "Zeszyty Naukowo-Techniczne SITK RP Oddział w Krakowie" 2017, no 3 (114), pp. 46.

<sup>61</sup> I. Мельнікаў, *Заходнебеларуская Атлантыда 1921–1941 гг.: паміж Варшавай і Масквой. Выдавецтва Галіяфы, Мінск 2016.*



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## Conclusion

Promotion of tourism and recreation occupied a central place in the tourism policy of that time. Government bodies, together with various societies and organizations, promoted tourism and recreation among the population of the entire country. In the Wilno region, its dominant forms were information and campaign activities. As part of the first one, at the expense of central and local authorities as well as various non-governmental institutions, tourist reference handbooks and guidebooks were published in Polish and the main European languages; advertising brochures and photo albums, and advertising articles were published in the press. During the campaign activities, exhibitions and fairs were held, there were events to promote tourism and recreation in the region, and various cultural events of a promotion nature were organized. These measures were supposed to provide potential tourists with information about recreation opportunities in the Wilno region, facilitate their arrival, and the most comfortable and productive stay in the territory of the Wilno Voivodeship. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, several dozen public organizations, associations and unions operated in the Wilno region, whose sphere of interests included tourism and recreation. Some of them viewed the development of tourism as an end in itself, while others perceived it as a tool for achieving other goals. They were represented by local or regional organizations as well as branches and departments of national societies, which, by the end of the 1930s, covered most of the cities and towns in the region by their activities. The Polish Sightseeing Society had the most extensive network, which, in parallel with sightseeing and tourism activities, carried out active work with the local population to promote Polish culture and develop a loyal attitude towards Polish statehood in these lands. Thanks to this, society enjoyed the support of the authorities of the Second Polish Republic and was able to publish a significant amount of tourist literature, reference handbooks and guidebooks. As part of the activities of national and local societies in the region, many tourist and excursion routes were developed, tourism events were held and a significant number of tourists and recreationists were received.

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