

The Pilica, over 325 km long (**170 km of which runs within the boundaries of the Lodzkie Region**), is the left, and longest, tributary of the **Vistula River**, flowing above the town of Pilica from an abundant karst spring. Its source section flows through a bare valley cut into the Jurassic and Cretaceous bedrock. The upper, Łódź section of the river has seen a great deal of hydroelectric development, in contrast to the lower, Mazovian section with poorly regulated banks. The Pilica Valley is surrounded by vast woodland, and the river flows through three **landscape parks** – **Przedborski**, **Sulejowski** and **Spalski** – combined into the **Nadpiliczne Landscape Parks** complex, which protects valuable natural areas, Pilica Forest, the river valley landscape and its plant life, monuments, folklore and history. From **Szczekocin** to **Sulejów**, the riverside areas are also protected as part of the **Middle Pilica Valley Natura 2000 Area**. The Pilica Valley is home to many kinds of animals, including protected species. The river itself is abundant in fish, which attract waterfowl and birds of prey. You can find beavers and otters here throughout the year. The valley is also rich in vegetation including protected plants. On the periodically flooded riverbanks grow lush, riparian forests, and they also feature some drier areas – mixed forests, islets, beach scrubland and reed beds. The Pilica route is wonderfully picturesque and suitable even for beginner kayakers. It is a lowland river with a favourable average gradient of 0.48‰ along the trail (0.78‰ from source to outlet). It flows peacefully through meadows and forests with gentle current in the lower section and more challenging speeds in the upper part. It meanders strongly in its upper and middle reaches. This is a fascinating river, with a lot of twists and turns, often switching direction, with varying riverbed depths and valley widths. It is generally a calm run, although the drop in water levels caused by deforestation in the river basin means that it may be occasionally capricious and exhausting in places due to strong currents in shallow water, shallow submerged obstacles, shallows along the current as well as depths and eddies. The sandy bottom and extensive beaches make it ideal for resting and bathing, while the forests and meadows offer spots for camping. As the river flows quite fast, beginner kayakers might cover 20 km in one day, while more skilled oarsmen can manage up to 30 km. The Pilica valley features infrastructure for water tourism, hiking and cycling. There are plenty of places to rent kayaks and many

companies offer trips all year round, including transport for people and gear, as well as catering and accommodation. At the piers on the banks were built with kayaking in mind. The Pilica kayaking season starts in spring from the village of **Dobra**, and all year round from **Żarnowiec**. The upper part of the trail to **Konieczpol** is challenging, with a narrow riverbed and numerous obstacles (trees, sills, weirs, riffles) that make portage necessary. This is a section rarely traveled, varied and wild, surrounded by forests, suitable for experienced kayakers. In the wooded areas along the midstream, overturned and submerged trees are visible, often just below the surface of the water. Near Konieczpol, in a valley stretching 2 km across, there are several groups of fishponds. There are more further along the trail, and the challenging weirs and sills end near **Maluszyn**. Beginner groups set off from here in the summer. Near **Przedbórz**, the river flows through a valley up to 50 m deep, around the edge of a range of hills. Near **Smardzewice**, its dammed waters form Sulejowski Reservoir, which takes at least two days to cross, including kayak transport across the dam in Smardzewice. But this poses no problem at all as the reservoir is attractive and welcoming, its banks offering plenty of opportunities for summer and weekend relaxation as well as accommodation. You can also sail and surf here. Downstream of the Smardzewice dam the river repeatedly flows towards a high left embankment, while the low banks are surrounded by meadows and pastures good for wild camping. Campsites and camping areas outside the reservoir area are few and far between. From **Tomaszów Mazowiecki** to **Białobrzegi** the river flows through a valley up to 4 km wide. The left bank between **Domaniewice** and **Tomczyce** is particularly high and steep, and the forest-covered clay embankment rises as high as 30 m above the water. The neighbouring moraine hills interspersed with ravines and gorges are overgrown with orchards. The right bank is much lower and flat, and features meadows and pastures. The lower section downstream of Białobrzegi meanders through an asymmetrical valley between dunes, the bottom of the valley is marshy with oxbow lakes, the riverbed reaching 100 m in width. After **Warka**, the Pilica flows through a dyked section into the Vistula River near the village of **Ostrówek**. You could set off from **Konieczpol**, still in the Silesia Region, at the Chrzastowska Street bridge. A chapel marks the descent to the meadow next to the water's

edge. Here, too, is the first **portage** spot across a sill (50 m). Further on, the trail is divided into seven one-day sections. The time required to cross Sulejowski Reservoir should be taken into account. From **Konieczpol** the trail meanders through meadows, the banks inaccessible and overgrown with reeds. Pass the mouth of the **Kopanka Canal** and the Radoszewnica River. In Okołowice you will need to **carry your kayaks** (50 m) over a footbridge across the weir and launch them from the sandbank. Then you will pass more bridges and a group of fishponds. You could also set off a little over 10 km further, at the border with the Lodzkie Region, in the Silesian village of **Kuźnica Grodziska** near some weirs. When the river splits, kayak down the right branch and if the sluice gate is not raised, **carry the canoes** across a farm (60 m), after which you can resume the trip. In **Wólka**, **portage** the kayaks (20 m) through a derelict mill, and then **over a weir** (50 m) in **Modła**. After completing the section flowing below some woodland with numerous fallen trees in the riverbed, take a rest in **Pukarzów**. Carry on through the dry ponds towards a straight, regulated section, and at the end of the ponds in **Mosty** carry the kayaks over another weir (50 m). Beyond Mosty, the Pilica meanders. In **Maluszyn** you can moor up and see some nice old wooden houses with porches and columns, a church and a 19th century school in a former manor house with a tower and classicist quarters. From the mouth of the **Zwleczka River** to the mouth of the **Czarna Włoszczowska River**, the Pilica runs deep and narrow with a swift current. Here some trees have fallen into the water and the banks are overgrown with scrub. A marina operates in **Sudzinek** offering kayak rental. Downstream of the mouth of the Czarna Włoszczowska, the river widens, shallows and meanders. As far as **Smardzewice** the route features shallows and islands. You can stop off at **Bobrowniki**, **Krzętów** or **Biały Brzeg**, where there is a bathing area and a scouting centre. Continue on to **Przedbórz**, cross the stone sill and moor up on the beach. You can find accommodation for the night at **Przedborski Landscape Park**. Then cross a stone sill and riffle and head towards **Trupień**. After **Taras** some longer straight sections begin. After **Faliszew** with a boat crossing, you will pass the villages of **Skotniki**, **Łęg Ręczyński** and **Trzy Morgi** with some jetties. In **Biała Góra** a bend turning 180 degrees offers a view of a long, high sandy embankment overgrown with woodland, inaccessible from the water, but

there is a jetty where you can stop off. Further on, the river widens out, and here you can see shallows, islands, and a beach at the mouth of the **Czarna Maleniecka River**. In **Kurnędz**, a wide meadow is the starting point for a shorter kayaking trip. Here you will find a shop, some food options, accommodation and a kayaking centre. In **Sulejów** the river has a fortified quay and islands are visible along the riverbed. The jetty can accommodate vans pulling kayak trailers, and here you may also start or finish a shorter trip. Downstream of the **Radońska River** outlet is a beach where you can land to visit the monastery in **Podklasztorze**. Then you reach the 16.5 kilometre-long **Sulejowski Reservoir**. Before the Lusitania outlet, there is a camping and kayak pickup area for those who do not wish to enter the reservoir. Ahead, the river forks into three branches. Take the left one. Once on the reservoir, pass **Barkowice**, the **Barkowice Mokre** yacht marina and a 100 m wide isthmus leads into the largest section of the reservoir (exercise caution with the waves in high wind). **Zarzęcin** offers a harbour and a sailing village. There are two marinas in **Broństawów**. **Karolinów** features a beach and bathing area. You are welcome to moor up at the port in **Tresta Rządowa**. From the harbour in **Swolszewice Małe** you will need to transport the canoes across the dam to avoid a strenuous 400 m **portage**. In **Tomaszów Mazowiecki** you can land your kayaks at the holiday centre. Nearby, it is worth visiting the *Niebieskie Źródła Nature Reserve* and the **Pilica River Open Air Museum**. Beyond the town, beware of the riffles. After passing **Spała** and its marina, beyond the mouth of the **Gać River** you can see the trees of the *Spała Nature Reserve* and the marina at **Teofilów** further on. Pass **Inowódz**, and moor up the kayaks after the bridge. From here you can approach the ruins of Casimir the Great's castle with exhibition rooms, a lookout tower, and the Church of St. Idzi standing further on an embankment. **Zakościele** pier is a camping area for groups. You can also stop in **Mysiakowiec**, **Grotowice** and **Gapinin**. From here, follow the wide bed of the Pilica River to **Domaniewice**, passing the ferry and you will end the Łódź section of the trip at the jetty. It is also worth kayaking about 10 km further and finishing your trip in the Mazovia Region in **Nowe Miasto nad Pilicą**.