

# School tourism in health resorts, exemplified by school trips organized for children and teenagers from Krakow

## Turystyka szkolna w uzdrowiskach na przykładzie wycieczek szkolnych dla dzieci i młodzieży ze szkół krakowskich

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**Abstract:** *The process of organizing school trips should include such didactic elements as teaching, education, integration and recreation, as well as take into account the principles of a healthy lifestyle associated with the renewal and regeneration of psychophysical strength. Teachers organizing such excursions should, already in the process of planning, be guided by the values, potential benefits and attractiveness of the travel destinations. Health resorts, where the local climate creates optimum conditions for relaxation, constitute important travel destinations of trips organized for children and teenagers. The purpose of this article is to present towns and villages that are classified as health resorts as a reception space, which due to the qualities of their natural and cultural environment can influence the tourist activity of primary and middle school students. School tourism in the selected health resorts has been characterized in this paper for the purpose of conducting research.*

**Key words:** *tourist activity, school tourism, health resorts*

**Treść:** *Podczas organizacji wycieczek szkolnych powinno uwzględniać się takie elementy dydaktyczno-wychowawcze jak nauczanie, wychowanie, integracja czy rekreacja, przy jednoczesnym uwzględnieniu zasad zdrowego stylu życia związanego z odnową i regeneracją sił psychofizycznych. Nauczyciele, pełniąc rolę organizatorów wycieczek, już w trakcie planowania wyjazdów powinni kierować się walorami środowiska miejsca pobytu i jego potencjalnymi korzyściami. Ważnymi kierunkami wśród wyjazdów dzieci i młodzieży szkolnej są miejscowości uzdrowiskowe, których lokalny klimat stwarza optymalne warunki do wypoczynku. Celem artykułu jest zaprezentowanie miejscowości mających status uzdrowiska jako przestrzeni recepcyjnej, której wysokie walory środowiska przyrodniczo-kulturowego mogą wpływać na aktywność turystyczną uczniów szkół podstawowych i gimnazjalnych. Na potrzeby badań scharakteryzowano szkolny ruch turystyczny w wybranych uzdrowiskach.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** *aktywność turystyczna, turystyka szkolna, uzdrowiska*

social and legal predispositions and rights to take specific actions, students are only the participants of tourism, which is planned and implemented by a teacher (tutor) at the school (Kamel, 2012). Although the place, date and itinerary of an excursion are often arbitrarily imposed, children and teenagers are willing to take part in various forms of this type of tourist activity. An important role in the organization of trips is played by the teacher, who plans them and then takes a series of actions related to their organization. He shall be fully responsible for the implementation and proper management of the excursion, as well as the safety measures of students (Wojtycza, 2000).

In the literature concerning theoretical problems of tourism for children and teenagers, it is pointed out that people involved in school tourism should be named educational tourists, due to the theme and objectives of the excursion (Armstrong, Impara, 1991). This profile of a tourist corresponds to the main tasks of the school, which include teaching and education, and also active participation and gaining knowledge experienced during a trip (Król, 2007). Therefore, their itineraries include the implementation of key educational assumptions and are based on the optimal use of the natural and cultural values of the visited destination for the cognitive purposes,

Thanks to the school, students take part in various forms of tourism such as: sightseeing, cultural, cognitive, educational, qualified, as well as nature and entertainment tourism. All these forms of tourism, organized by a teacher during the school year, fall within the conceptual framework of school tourism. Janowski (2003, p. 18) points out that “it is a part of general tourism, involving the use of different forms of activity in the natural and cultural environment, implemented under the guidance of a teacher (tutor), so as to achieve the planned objectives of teaching and education, including sightseeing and recreation elements”. Basic principles, tasks and forms of the organization of school tourism are defined in the 2001 Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport on the conditions and manners of organizing sightseeing and tourism by state kindergartens, schools and institutions (Journal of Laws, 2001, No. 135, item 1516). This legal act determines that school tourism is a form of extracurricular activities of children and teenagers, and its purpose is, inter alia, discovering the history and culture of the country, raising the awareness, supporting the process of education, improving the physical fitness and health, and popularizing

## Introduction

Participation of children and teenagers in tourist flow and its determinants constitutes a major segment in research of various sciences (Abdel-Ghaffar, 1992; Parzych, 2009). It is often pointed out that, in addition to a family home, an important role in the development of tourism of children and teenagers is played by various educational institutions, including schools (Kisiel, 2010). Due to the lack of personal,

outdoor activities. In order to meet these tasks, schools can organize thematic trips, sightseeing and tourism excursions, qualified tourism events, hiking camps, sightseeing, tourism and outdoor events.

The teacher who is responsible for the trip should take into account the values of the visited destinations and the opportunities for active and healthy recreation, in accordance with the principles of a healthy lifestyle. In this context, an important role may be played by health resorts, which, in addition to the valuable qualities of the environment and cultural heritage, are also suitably adapted for the youngest tourists. The aim of this paper is to identify health resorts visited by both the primary and middle schools pupils from Kraków, as well as to present selected characteristics of school tourism in these travel destinations.

## Material and methods

The study considers the trips carried out in primary and middle schools. For that purpose, 10 primary and 10 middle schools were selected out of all state educational institutions located in the city of Kraków. The time range of the research included five school years (from September, 2009 to June, 2014), excluding holiday periods. During the field research carried out in 2014, selected schools were visited, and then – in order to determine the status of school tourism – the data were extracted from the excursion index card, completed by teachers before departure. Then, a detailed analysis was carried out of collected data involving the date of departure, the number of people participating in the trip, the visited destination (excluding the city of Kraków) and the means of transport.

## Analysis of the results

The collected research material shows that primary schools take a more active part in school tourism. There were 520 trips organized in such schools, whereas in middle schools only 434 trips were executed (Tab. 1).

Further analysis provided information about the diversified structure of trips with respect to different stages of education (Fig. 1). It showed that in primary schools, most organized trips (415) took place within the Małopolska region, which represents 79.8% of all trips. In the overall structure of the trips for primary school students, it is noticeable that there was very limited tourist flow to foreign tourist destinations, which amounted to only 0.4% of all trips. Such a small number of foreign trips organized for primary school pupils was due mainly to the fact that they were students in the lowest age group among people of compulsory school age.

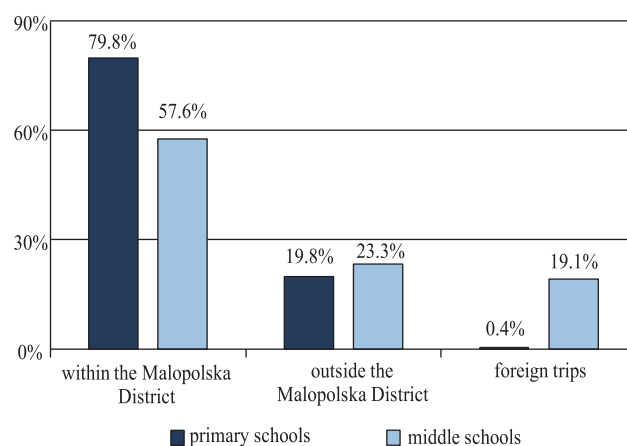


Fig. 1. Percentage of three groups of trips at various stages of education – in the school years 2009/2010–2013/2014 (source: own study) • Procentowy udział trzech rodzajów wycieczek organizowanych na różnych etapach edukacji – dane z lat szkolnych 2009/2010–2013/2014 (źródło: dane własne)

Similarly to primary schools, in middle schools, most excursions (250 trips) were also organized to destinations within the Małopolska District. However, this number constitutes only 57.6% of overall middle school trips. Selected destinations outside the Małopolska District provide 23.3% of all middle school trips. Moreover, middle schools more often organize foreign trips, which account for 19.1% of all trips organized at this stage of education.

Tab. 1. Number of organized trips in surveyed schools according to travel destination (source: own study) • Liczba wycieczek szkolnych w zależności od celu podróży (źródło: dane własne)

School year	Trips organized within the boundaries of the Małopolska district*		Trips organized to places outside the Małopolska district		Foreign trips		Total number of organized trips	
	primary schools	middle schools	primary schools	middle schools	primary schools	middle schools	primary schools	middle schools
2009/2010	93	49	16	23	1	17	110	89
2010/2011	89	53	19	21	1	18	109	92
2011/2012	79	45	22	16	0	18	101	79
2012/2013	75	48	19	25	0	15	94	88
2013/2014	79	55	27	16	0	15	106	86
grand total	415	250	103	101	2	83	520	434

\* with the exception of the City of Kraków

Considering the total number of analyzed trips, 84 events were directed to destinations having the status of a health resort. Moreover, health resorts were more often visited by the primary schools pupils (52 trips) than by the middle schools ones (32 trips). Most popular destinations were the spas of the Małopolska District (72 trips in both types of schools). This choice resulted most certainly from the convenient location and easy access to these sites. Such explanation is supported by modes of transport used in the vast majority of trips, i.e., the coaches (81 trips), whereas the railway transport was reported only for 3 trips.

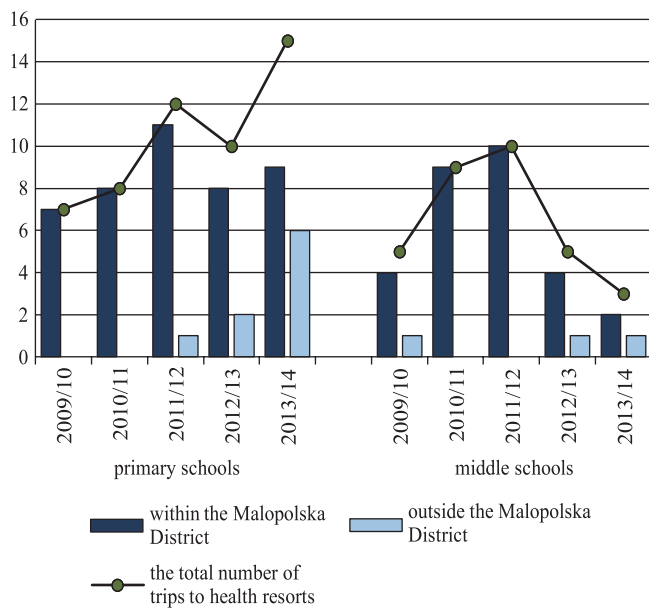


Fig. 2. Number of school trips to health resorts in Poland (source: own study) • Liczba wycieczek szkolnych do uzdrowisk w Polsce (źródło: dane własne)

Analyzing the trips of primary schools pupils to health resorts, a remarkable increase (twice as much) can be noticed the school year 2013/2014, in relation to that of 2009/2010. In middle schools, initial increasing trend is observed until the school year 2011/12 (similarly to primary schools), but then the 70% decrease is seen for the next two years of analyzed time span (Fig. 2). It is also worth noting that in total in both types of schools, trips to health resorts were most frequently organized in the school year 2011/2012.

In the analyzed period, health resorts were visited by the total number of 2,743 pupils from both types of schools (Fig. 3). From that number, 1,828 were primary schools students, which constitutes 66.6% of all the participants. Obviously, the observed trend in number of participants from primary and middle schools strongly correlated with the number of trips organized by both types of schools.

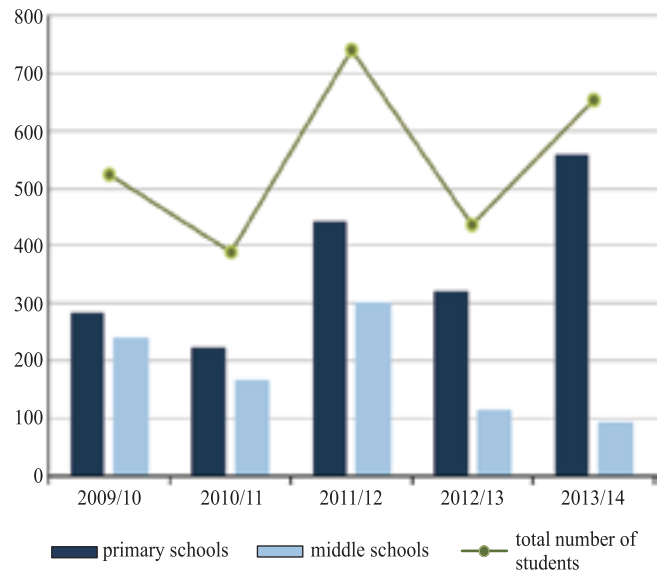


Fig. 3. Number of participants of school trips to health resorts in Poland (source: own study) • Liczba uczestników wycieczek szkolnych do uzdrowisk w Polsce (źródło: dane własne)

Considering the dates of school trips, it is worth noting that in both types of schools, tourist flow increased significantly in May and June (Tab. 2). It is most certainly due to favorable weather conditions prevailing in these months, although it is also worth noting that in these months students complete examinations, thus, the teaching intensity is usually much reduced, which facilitates the organization of various forms of tourism for children and teenagers, including the so-called “school camps”.

The analysis of all the trips to health resorts organized for primary schools children shows that most of them were one- and five-day trips (18 trips each). Among the five-day trips there were 17 school camps (Duszniki-Zdrój – 1, Krynica – 2, Muszyna – 2, Piwniczna-Zdrój – 5, Rabka-Zdrój – 7) and one so-called “white school” camp (Piwniczna-Zdrój).

Tab. 2. Number of school trips to health resorts in each month – data from the years 2009/2010–2013/2014 (source: own study) • Liczba wycieczek szkolnych do uzdrowisk w poszczególnych miesiącach – dane za lata szkolne 2009/2010–2013/2014 (źródło: dane własne)

School level	Month									
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	IX	XI	XI	XII
primary schools	0	0	5	4	24	12	1	5	1	0
middle schools	2	2	1	3	8	9	1	5	1	0

Only the single trip to Ustka village at the Baltic Sea shore lasted 10 days. In contrast, the middle schools students most often travelled to health resorts on one-day trips: in the studied school years, 9 of such trips were reported (Rabka-Zdrój – 5, Szczawnica – 4). The longest stay lasted 12 days and, similarly to the primary schools, it was organized in Ustka village.

Considering the tourist flows of various groups of students (defined as grades, school clubs or school sport teams), it can be noticed that in primary schools, the third grades participated in the largest number of trips (17 trips), followed by fifth grades (15 trips), fourth grades (13 trips), sixth grades (11 trips), second grades (9 trips), first grades (6 trips) and the sport teams (1). On the contrary, in the middle schools, the most active groups were the first grades (15 trips), followed by second grades (12 trips), third grades (11 trips), school clubs (2) and sport teams (1). For two school trips in the primary school and one in the middle school, the participating grades (or groups) were not specified.

Due to the fact that commonly two different groups might have participated in the same trip, the total number of groups (116) does not correspond to the total number of trips (84).

In both types of schools, the most frequently organized forms of tourism were school camps (Fig. 4). The analysis showed 40 such trips, which represents 47.6% of all trips. The school camps were organized more often in the primary schools (29) than in middle schools (11). Moreover, 28 trips (14 in each type of schools) were the sightseeing and tourism purposes because their main objectives were to present to the students both the natural and cultural values of the visited regions.

Students most commonly travelled to health resorts located in the Małopolska District (Fig. 5). The most popular destination was Rabka-Zdrój, to which 29 trips were organized within analyzed time span. The objectives of the trips for primary schools pupils to this site were: school camps (12), sightseeing trips (8), a hiking (1) and ski trips (1).

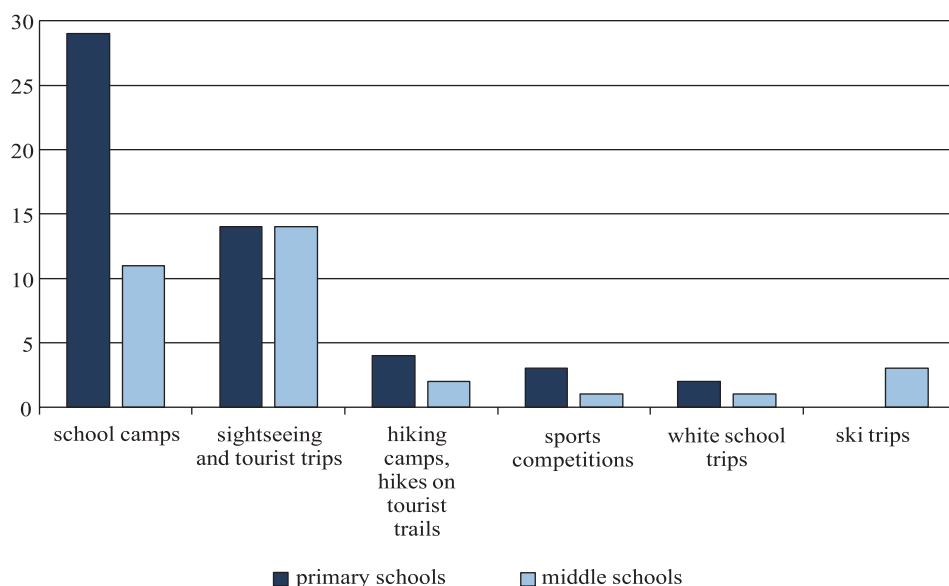


Fig. 4. Types of trips for students from primary and middle schools (source: own study) • Rodzaje wycieczek organizowanych dla uczniów szkół podstawowych i średnich (źródło: dane własne)

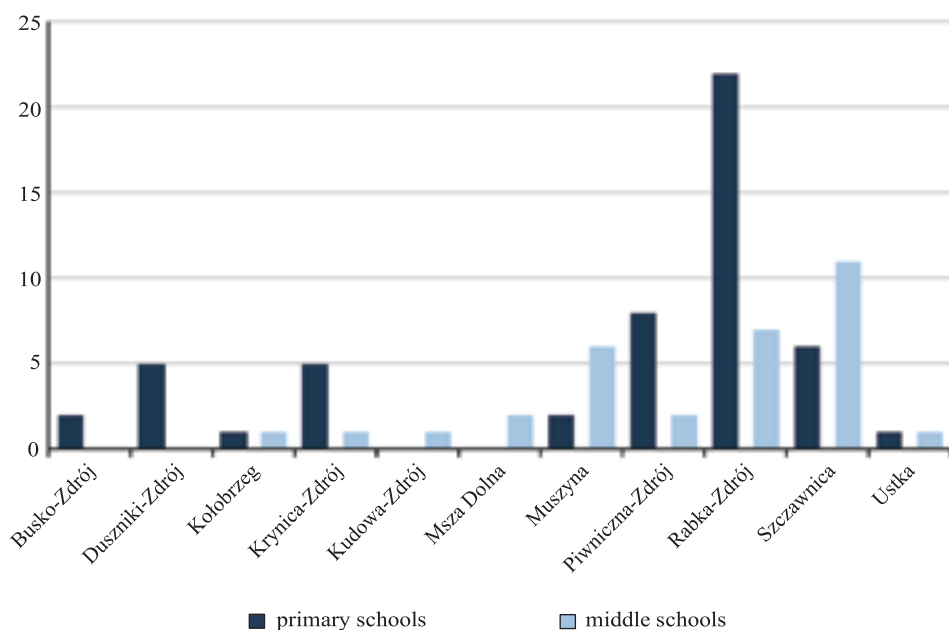


Fig. 5. Number of organized trips by travel destination (source: own study) • Liczba wycieczek szkolnych do poszczególnych uzdrowisk (źródło: dane własne)

The middle schools students went to Rabka-Zdrój for sight-seeing trips (3), school camps (2), hiking trips (1) and sports competitions (1). The least popular health resort was Kudowa-Zdrój, where there was only one hiking trip organized for middle school students. Among visited spas there were also seaside health resorts (Kołobrzeg and Ustka), in which children spent their time on school camps. However, due to the fact that these destinations are located far distant from Krakow, there were only four such trips over analyzed five years period.

## Conclusions

Health resorts play an important role as destinations of trips organized for children and teenagers involved in various forms of school tourism. The fact that such sites have favorable climatic conditions, as well as rich natural and cultural environments enables the participants to meet the main objectives of school tourism, which are the acquisition and expansion of knowledge of natural and cultural environments, the support of education processes, the improvement of physical fitness and the popularization of outdoor activities.

The research showed a significant increase in the number of trips to Polish spas organized by primary schools in the studied period. Unfortunately, the reversed trend is observed for middle schools.

The highest number of trips was organized in summer months and at the end of the school year, whereas in winter, the school tourist flow clearly decreased. It seems that many health resorts, particularly the mountain ones, should prepare more attractive offers for children and teenagers for winter months, and then mail them directly to the schools. These offers should include various programmes for students participating in so-called "white school" camps. Such offers should rise the attraction of health resorts for school tourism in winter, which should reduce the observed seasonality of school tourism. Additionally, it would provide a number of benefits for the tourism industry in health resorts.

Among the visited travel destinations, the most popular were health resorts located in the Małopolska District, especially Rabka-Zdrój spa, in which the school camps were run. This form of school tourism was willingly organized at many other spas. The selection of longer stays provided students with the opportunity to spend time under favorable climatic conditions.

It seems that Polish health resorts are popular not only for recuperation, for improvement of health and wellness, but also because of the opportunities to present to the school students their natural and cultural assets. Furthermore, the spas clearly play an important role in active education and sight-seeing implemented by school tourism.

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