

## Polish National Flag Day and the Day of Poles Abroad



**It is believed that the red and white colour combination was first used as a symbol of Poland in 1792, during the first anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May, when women wore white dresses with red ribbons and men wore white-and-red brassards (armbands).**

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Red and white later served as a national symbol in 1831 during the November Uprising although a decree of the Kingdom of Poland's Parliament only regulated the use of the military cockade, not the flag. In the 19th century, the red-and-white symbols were worn outside Poland as well – for example by Poles who took part in the revolutions of 1848 (the Springtime of Nations) as well as foreigners who supported Poland in its fight for independence.



Red and white became the official colours of Poland as late as in 1919.



Flag of Poland, 1919 version, photo: Wikimedia.org

The appearance of the Polish flag was inscribed in the law about the coats of arms and colours of the Polish Second Republic. The law stipulated the form (a rectangle with two stripes, the upper one white and the lower one red) and the size (the aspect ratio was to be 5:8). These proportions have remained unchanged to this day, although the key legislative acts specifying the Polish national symbols are the Constitution and the law of 31 January 1980 on the coat of arms, national colours, national anthem, and state seals of the Republic of Poland.

It will come as a surprise to many that the Polish flag has two variants. The basic one is the red-and-white rectangle, which can always be seen on the streets of Poland on public



The flag of Poland © ASkwarczynski/Shutterstock.com

holidays. But there is also another type of flag, the red-and-white one with an eagle wearing a crown. It was introduced in 1919 and was supposed to be displayed only at Polish diplomatic missions abroad. According to the applicable law, the flag with the coat of arms can also be flown at consulates, airports and on merchant ships.



The flag of Poland has defined colours and dimensions and must be mounted on a flagpole. An ordinary red-and-white piece of cloth on a plastic stick, a bicolour rectangle drawn on paper, or a red-and-white T-shirt from a souvenir shop all have one thing in common: they are all items made using the national colours, but they cannot be considered flags.

According to the law, the flag must be treated with respect, which means that it must be displayed in public places according to established rules. The flag must be clean and ironed; it must not on any account touch the ground or water. In rainy and windy weather, it is better to fold it carefully and wait for the storm to calm down. On no account may the national flag be publicly destroyed or desecrated; this is punishable with a fine or even a year's imprisonment. A damaged flag cannot be simply thrown away; it should be burned in private or destroyed by separating the stripes from each other – for example, by secretly cutting it i

**In 2004, a new holiday, Polish National Flag Day, was introduced in Poland. It is celebrated between International Workers' Day and Constitution Day on 3rd May. This date, 2nd May, was chosen for a reason: on this day in 1945, Polish soldiers who took part in the Battle of Berlin mounted the Polish flag on the Reichstag and on the column in the Grosser Tiergarten park. Moreover, 2nd May is the Day of Poles Abroad.**

#### **Resources:**

*Where does the Polish flag come from?* <https://kafkadesk.org> *Polish Flag History-*  
*Polish Coat of Arms- Flag of Poland..* <https://polishshirtstore.com> *May- Polish Flag Day – about the*  
*symbolism of the national colours.* <https://ug.edu.pl> *Flaga polski/dziejw.pl- Historia Polski.* <https://dzieje.pl>.



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