Magiczny Kraków

Areas for leisure and active recreation in Krakow and Malopolska

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How to spend your free time in Krakow

In Małopolska there is no shortage of green areas for leisure and active recreation. The rich and constantly expanded recreational infrastructure encourages sports and leisure activities in the fresh air.

Among Krakow's most interesting attractions, we should mention the **Botanical Gardens** belonging to the Jagiellonian University and the **Zoological Garden**, located in the Wolski Forest, a forested area which is a traditional leisure destination for residents. In one of the most beautiful parks in Krakow – the **Jordan Park** – you can spend time on one of the many sports courts, or simply take a stroll along the avenues. Adjacent to the park is the **Błonia** – a huge meadow (48 ha), located only 15 minutes walk from the Main Market Square.

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The Krakow Błonia is globally unique! From this great meadow almost in the centre of Krakow there is a beautiful view of the Old Town, the Wolski Forest and the Kościuszko Mound. **The Mounds (because there are a total of four) are a special kind of tourist attraction.** The oldest are the Krakus and Wanda, the younger and most popular – the Tadeusz Kościuszko Mound, and the youngest and largest – the Józef Piłsudski Mound. Inscribed in the landscape of the city, there are also places for Sunday walks and outdoor events. The **Planty operate as an urban garden in the very centre of the city**. They were built on the site of the fortifications surrounding the city: The defensive walls and moats and embankments. Today the Planty, divided into 8 gardens, are approximately 4 km long and extend over an area of 21 hectares. Among the favourite leisure destinations for Cracovians is the **Zakrzówek Lagoon** area. The reservoir, thought by many to be one of the wonders of Krakow, was created in 1990 after the flooding of an old limestone quarry. Located southwest of the Old Town, it consists of two reservoirs connected by an isthmus. In the vicinity of the lagoon are a group of rocks and cliffs, called the **Twardowski Cliffs**. Those who enjoy relaxing by the water project can go in summer to **Krakow Beach** – a modern complex which attracts more than just sun lovers to the Vistula. 10 000 square metres of sand, deck chairs, volleyball, and a swimming pool, located on a barge moored to the quay. While those for whom recreation on the water is not the thing can visit Krakow from the air. Located on the Vistula Boulevards (opposite the Castle) there is a **balloon with a viewing platform**, a unique project in our country. The tethered balloon can carry up to 30 people up to a height of 185 metres.

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Public spaces are increasingly showing investment in sports infrastructure. These are not only the modern **stadiums** of Cracovia and Wisła, together with the facelift procedure on the building at Suche Stawy or the rising sports hall in Czyżyny, the largest in Poland. The city can be proud of initiatives such as: **OSiR Kolna**(including an indoor swimming pool and sports hall,

and the recent most modern kayak route in Europe), and the modern sports and educationalfacilities at **Com-Com Zone Centre for Development** managed by the "Siemacha" Association: in Nowa Huta and Prokocim. And we should not forget the Aqua Park – the largest indoor facility of its type in Poland.

Lovers of elite entertainment will surely visit Krakow's golf courses in Ochmanów and Paczółtowice.

If the excess of urban activity is making your head spin, you can improve your well-being in Swoszowice. This **spa town**, located within Krakow, can boast two unique sources of mineral waters (the sulphur content in the waters classifies them in 5th place in the world and 4th in Europe!). Swoszowice also hosts: tennis courts, horse riding and a spa park with an area of 7 hectares.

And with the first snow the skiers' faces light up. Małopolska, like no other region in Poland, attracts winter sports enthusiasts. On the local Carpathian slopes, you can find a route to suit both advanced skiers and complete beginners.

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Krakow is a city friendly to cyclists: in the very centre, most of the streets round the Main Square are for pedestrians and cyclists. On one-way streets where there are no clear contraindications, cycle paths intended exclusively for two-wheelers are being created in the opposite direction. In the city there are ever more bicycle racks. Krakow was the first major city in Poland to launch, in autumn 2008, service-free urban bike rental, based on solutions used in other European cities.

Also, outside Krakow's city gates there are tens of kilometres of bicycle routes. Some of them are included in the system of urban trails, and so you can travel in the open air on your own or a rented bicycle. With its incredibly diverse terrain, **Małopolska** ensures that every cycle tourist will find something to suit them. Extending to the north-west of Krakow is the famous Trail of the Eagles' Nests, where you can explore not only the charming nooks of Ojców, and defensive strongholds, but also reach the vicinity of the Błędowska Desert – the largest area in Central Europe of airborne sands (20 km²). Cycling east of Krakow you can relax in the shade of the Niepołomicka Forest. To the south – there is of course a trip to the Wieliczka salt mine, or in search of the prehistoric settlement in the area of Skawina. And heading west towards the Vistula Valley along the Greenways trail the strongest two-wheeled knights can reach ... Vienna!

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It is also worth mentioning that Malopolska has the longest bike trail in the country. The Carpathian Cycle Route marks a main route and complementary routes with a total length of about 800 km (the main trail starts on the Polish border in Leluchów and refers to the course of the historical trade route from southern Europe to Wieliczka and Krakow).