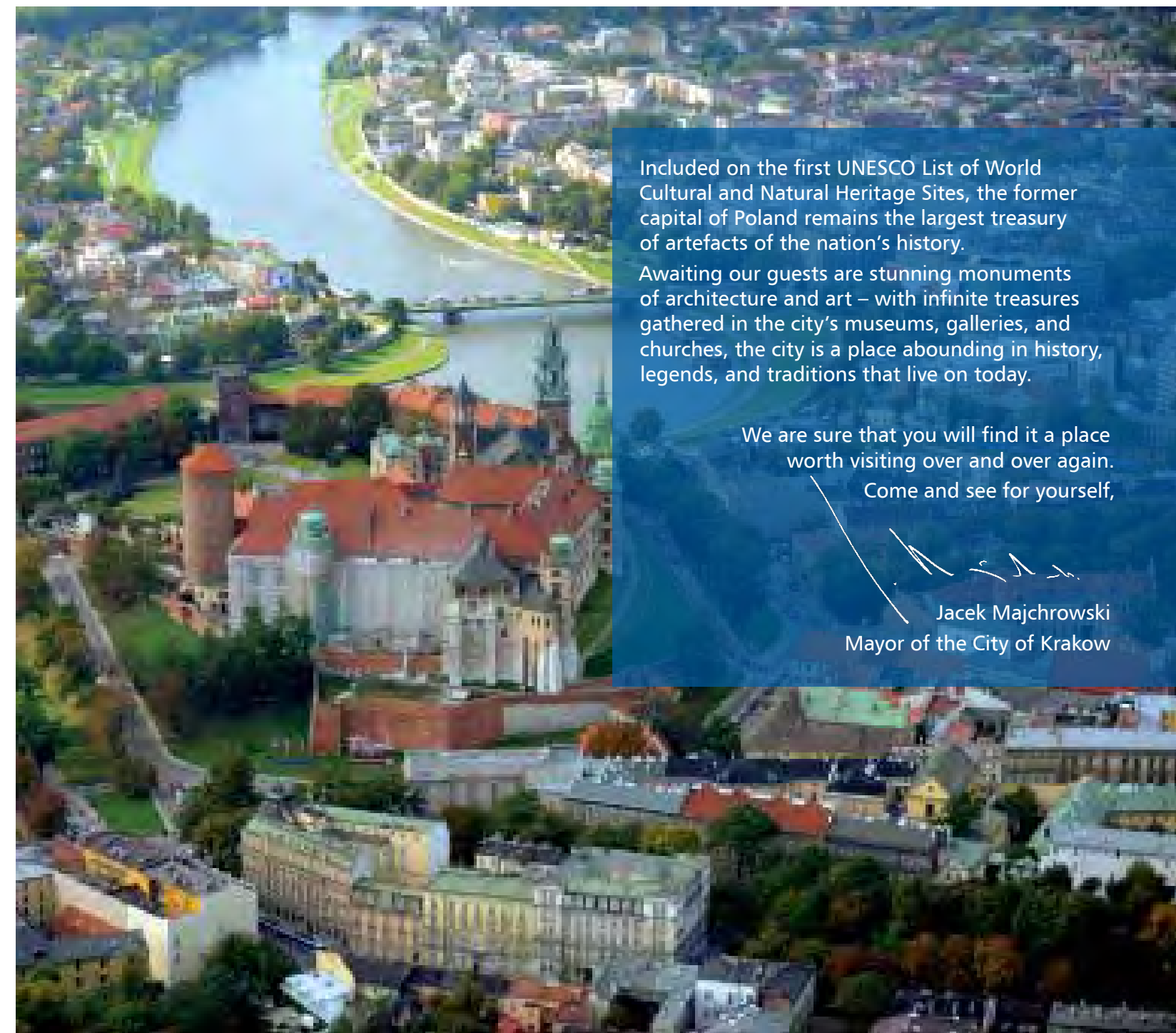


KRAKÓW



ONLY IN KRAKOW

21 reasons to visit the city



Included on the first UNESCO List of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites, the former capital of Poland remains the largest treasury of artefacts of the nation's history.

Awaiting our guests are stunning monuments of architecture and art – with infinite treasures gathered in the city's museums, galleries, and churches, the city is a place abounding in history, legends, and traditions that live on today.

We are sure that you will find it a place worth visiting over and over again.
Come and see for yourself,


Jacek Majchrowski
Mayor of the City of Krakow

Krakow's coat of arms depicts an open gate. This stands as visible symbol of the city welcoming each and every visitor and awaiting newcomers – whether they are close neighbours or come from far away. So it is now, and so it has been throughout the centuries.



Krakow is among those European metropolises whose unique image has been shaped through the creative efforts of people of many nationalities.

In the Middle Ages, German settlers brought the best of their guilds' traditions here, while during the Renaissance, Italians brought the wealth of their magnificent achievements of art and architecture of the time to the city. Throughout the centuries, Jews lived here cultivating commerce and crafts. Waves of immigrants were drawn to the foot of Wawel, attracted by unheard of tolerance and interesting culture, and soon Polonised themselves. The German Werzig became Wierzynek, and the Tuscan Montelupi family changed their name to Wilczogórski.

In the Jagiellonian era, in the 15th and the 16th centuries, Krakow was the capital of one of the most powerful and largest European countries. At the time, the Republic stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea coast. The city, open to all the nationalities that inhabited the vast country,

became the sanctuary of priceless national mementos, a treasury of Polish science and culture. Its features were carved by time, both through the abundance of architectural treasures and the currents of history. This was the city described by Europe in the inscription to an engraving made in Amsterdam in 1619, depicting the panorama from over the Vistula: *Cracovia totius Poloniae urbs celeberrima atque amplissima Regia atque Academia insignis* (Krakow, the most famous city of all of Poland, adorned with a magnificent royal castle and renowned Academy).

There are many, in fact innumerable reasons, why one should and must visit Krakow. So why limit ourselves to 21? Not only because this number is three times the magic number seven, or that it is a symbol of perfectly hitting the target. The number was chosen was based on the fact that there are twenty-one phenomena here which no other city throughout the world can boast.



The Chartering Plan

ONLY IN KRAKOW

The best example of a medieval town in all of Europe



This medieval urban layout continues to function successfully in the very centre of a city of almost a million people.

In 1241, the Tatar horde under Batu Khan's command swept through Poland. They left behind empty villages and burnt cities. the reconstruction of the country required bold decisions and rich imagination.

On 5th June, 1257, during a special ceremony held in the village of Kopernia near Szydłowiec, Bolesław the Chaste, the duke of Krakow and Sandomierz, signed the Chartering act of Krakow. It was based on Magdeburg law. The duke was accompanied by his mother Grzymisława and his wife Cunegunde (Kinga) (daughter of King of Hungary, Bela IV, and Maria, daughter of the Byzantine emperor). A large crowd of secular dignitaries and clergymen attended the meeting. According to the chartering act, squares and streets were laid out, including the Main Market Square (Rynek), which has been the heart of the city ever since. Three streets extend from each side of the Main Market Square (except for the eastern section, which was adjusted to match the construction already in place at the time) with every other street leading to a city gate. The entire urban layout was divided into square blocks, with the streets intersecting at right angles.

The chartering law strictly defined ownership issues and made all residents equal vis á vis the decisions of the local authorities. Residents were granted a release from charges to the duke for six years, and release from any customs duties for ten years.

The population grew, trade and crafts flourished. As early as the 13th century, streets acquired names and construction of town fortifications began. Originally they consisted of earth and wooden ramparts, but those were later replaced by brick walls, bastions and moats filled with water. Due to the rapid growth of the city initiated by the Chartering act, in 1320 Krakow became the capital of Poland.

The UNESCO Committee for World Heritage assembles lists of cultural heritage sites of worldwide importance and of natural areas of special significance. The first such list was published in 1978. The urban and architectural layout of Krakow was placed on the first list along with twelve other heritage sites of significance for all of humanity. The former capital of Poland is ranked among such phenomena as: the Ethiopian temples in Lalibela, dating to the times of King Solomon and queen Sheba, the two-thousand-year-old native American settlements in Mesa Verde, Colorado, USA, the famous cathedral built by Charles the Great in Aachen and the Yellowstone National Park (USA).

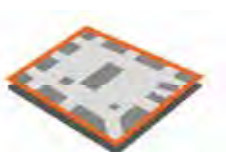


After the charter was granted to the city, a settlement extended between Krakow and the Wawel Hill called Okół, on the site of today's Kanonicza Street



This is what the Main Market Square looked like, with stalls surrounding the Cloth Hall, the Town Hall, the Scales, and a cemetery adjoining St. Mary's Church. Despite later modifications, the layout of the Square and the adjoining streets has preserved their original forms.

The old town – the Main Market Square and the streets and squares within the belt of the Planty



Main Market Square

ONLY IN KRAKOW

The largest medieval square
in Europe (210 x 212 m)

Cracovians call this site “the city’s parlour”. For many it is hard to imagine a day without at least as short visit to the Main Market Square.

At one time, the square was densely built-up. There was a town hall, a granary, the pillory and the municipal scales, the guardhouse and several wells. Numerous stalls surrounded the Cloth Hall; as many as 342 in 1556. It was a meeting place for merchants from all over Europe. The poultry market extended from Floriańska street to św. Jana street; the salt market was situated at the outlet of Sławkowska street; flour and oil trade was conducted between Szczepańska and Szewska streets; coal was sold at the outlet of Wiślna street, and lead was traded at the outlet of Bracka street. There were also bread, fish and crayfish markets. Also bakers, shoemakers, potters, carpenters and rope-makers had their separate marketplaces. Jews had the right to trade on the site of today’s Adam Mickiewicz Monument.

The Main Market square was a venue for important state ceremonies. In 1320, Krakow’s burghers paid homage to King Władysław the Elbow-High after his coronation, which was the first such event in the history of Krakow. At that time, the city was raised to the status of the capital of Poland. The king was seated on a specially built “majestic” platform at the outlet of Bracka Street. From that time onward, every monarch entered the Main Market Square on horseback on the day following his coronation, then changed into official

attire at the town hall and received an oath of allegiance from the City Councillors, assisted by countless crowds of his subjects. The ruler was given the keys to the city and a thousand ducats, marking the occasion of beginning his reign. Then, a feast, accompanied by music, was held until dawn. Darkness of the night was lit by fireworks.

In 1525 King Zygmunt I the Old, also on the “majestic” seat, received the oath of allegiance to the republic from the Prussian Duke Albrecht. Not far from that site, in 1794, Tadeusz Kościuszko swore to defend the homeland against the occupying powers. In 1981, after the attempt on the life of the Bishop of Rome, and former Archbishop of Krakow, Pope John Paul II, the Main Market Square filled with a hundred thousand people, all dressed in white, who came here in a silent march.

The Main Market Square, which was laid out in 1257 according to the Magdeburg Law, has preserved its dimensions to this day, covering an area of 4 hectares, 3 ares and 34 square metres. But its plan, now almost eight hundred years’ old, still reminds us of the compromise that the original bold planners had to face when confronted with the existing realities. The façade of St Mary’s Church, which had been built before the chartering, breaks the line of the townhouses; St Adalbert’s Church prevented the laying out of two streets at the southern corner of the square, and Bracka and Mikołajska Streets are clearly not straight, with curves and bends. All this proves beyond doubt that quite a substantial settlement had been situated here before the chartering. The innovative urban layout was later superimposed on the existing urban structure.



T. Kościuszko, the Nation’s Leader, takes an oath in the Main Market square in Krakow
Painting by M. Stachowicz

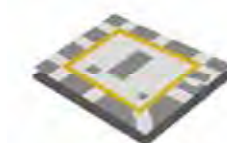


A view of the Main Market Square in 1840
Painting by M. Zaleski



Flowers have been sold on Krakow’s Main Market Square for almost five hundred years

Main Market Square (frontages: a-b (north), c-d (west), e-f (south), g-h (east))



The only musical signal in the world that has been regularly played every hour for six hundred years



The melody descending on the city from the high tower of St Mary's forms a truly magical part of the town's landscape. No other city can boast such a long tradition of a tune played at the same location for so many years.

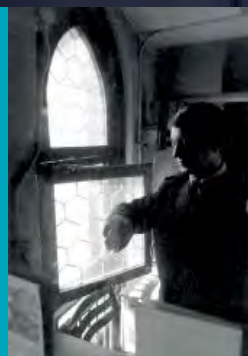
No one knows when exactly the tune was created, and nothing is known about its composer. It probably wandered to Poland from Hungary in the second half of the 14th century during the reign of King Louis of Hungary or his daughter Jadwiga. This assumption is also supported by the origins of its name – bugle-call (hejnał) means “dawn” in Hungarian. So, originally it was a waking-call, signalling the opening and closing of the town gates, an alarm during a fire or invasions by the enemy. It was played in the morning and at dusk. Buglers on other bastions and walls answered the signal that was heard from the Main Market Square.

The fact that the bugle was played from the higher of St Mary's towers has been confirmed by the city accounts dating from as early as 1392. As to when buglers began to blow their bugle every hour to the four points of the compass, no one knows. What is known, however, is that the practice was interrupted in the late 18th century because of the scarcity of municipal funds. The old tradition was restored in 1810 and has continued till the present day, with only short interruptions.

The first bugler known by name was Iwan Mikulski, a fact confirmed by the accounts from 1629. Among the most famous was Adolf Śmietana, who performed three hundred thousand bugle-calls over a period of 36 years (beginning in 1926).

The musical form of the bugle-call (the tune breaks off in the middle at the peak of its melody) has always raised emotions and stimulated listeners' imaginations. Not surprisingly, it became a topic of popular legend. The story goes that during the Tatar invasion in 1241, an arrow shot by an invader pierced the watchman's throat as he was trying to alarm the city. This version can be found in a book by the American writer Eric P. Kelly. His story about Krakow's students and alchemists, published in 1928 in New York, met with great success. The book had a telling title of “A Trumpeter from Krakow” – enough to turn a legend into reality. Nowadays, it is the widespread explanation of the history of the broken tune of the bugle-call.

St Mary's Tower, adorned with a golden crown and dominating the Main Market Square, is the place from which the world's oldest regular musical programme has been broadcast regularly since 16 April 1927. The Krakow bugle-call has been transmitted every day at 12.00, except during the times of the Nazi occupation. When the programme was first introduced, the BBC offered to broadcast the signal over British radio. However, the condition was that it would be transferred to Warsaw, but Krakow could not consent to that proposal it would have meant selling its soul.



Every hour, with a half-a-second's accuracy



Since the first radiobroadcast in 1927, the bugle-call is played to the same Marconi microphone





The polyptych carved by Veit Stoss and his apprentices in 1477–1489 is 13 metres high and 11 metres wide.

In 1442, the vaulting of St Mary's Church over the chancel collapsed. Falling bricks and stones destroyed the interior of the church and its high altar ceased to exist.

At that time, Krakow was the capital of a powerful country extending from the Baltic to Black Sea. Local merchants experienced a boom in the trade exchange with German, Italian and French cities. The merchants were affluent and spared no effort to display their high social status, build up their prestige and enhance the high positions of their families. It was then decided that Krakow would have an altar unlike any other in Europe.

Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz) a Swabian-born sculptor, gained fame in Nuremberg. Work on the Krakow altar took him twelve years, and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the patron of the church. Its main focus, both in theme and composition, is the central scene of the dormition of the Virgin Mary surrounded by the apostles. The figures are almost three metres high (285 cm). The artists carved them from single blocks of lime wood. Only five-hundred-year-old trees could have such thick trunks, so the wood may now be more than a thousand years old.

The figure of the Virgin Mary was carved according to the medieval standards of female beauty,

whilst the accompanying apostles had the features of contemporary Cracovians. With great passion the sculptor rendered all details, whether it be thick curly beards, balding skulls, bulging veins on the feet, hands deformed by arthritis or a wart in the curvature of a nose.

The religious themes of the relieves on the altar wings did not prevent the master from depicting the material culture of Poland towards the end of the 15th century. Headdresses, shoes, mantles, weapons, vessels and household utensils are exactly such as one could find in Krakow streets and homes at the time.

Even local vegetation was rendered with an amazing faithfulness; one can even find some violet leaves and dried dandelions in one part of the altar.

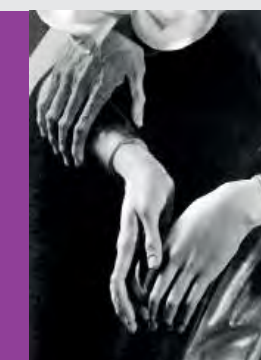
The work exhibits such a perfect realism that in 1933 Franciszek Walter, a Jagiellonian University professor, published the work entitled "Veit stoss, the sculptor of dermatological diseases."

The artist's fee for the work of his life totalled 2,808 Florins. This amount was equivalent to the city's annual budget, and sufficient to afford a number of fine townhouses.

Like a Holy Monstrance or an icon saint, the altar stays closed on a working day. But on holy days wide-open it stays, from His birth to passion Lord's life it tells and the Holy Virgin you will see as well. It's a living book so you read and pray.
W. Pol



Blind Veit Stoss
Painting by J. Matejko



...and so he would turn the wood into people, birds and flowers...
K.I. Gałczyński





Who can tell your beauty, oh Krakow,
old town, maybe the masks on the Cloth
Hall high...

A. Polewka



The Cloth Hall
in the Middle Ages

Many European cities used to have their own cloth halls, but only Krakow has such an old trade centre that has survived and still continues to operate.

The first historic account of Krakow (dubbed Karako) can be found in the writings of Ibrahim ibn Jacob, an Arab merchant and traveller from Cordoba. In a note sent to the Caliph from his journey to Germany and Bohemia, he wrote that the Slav city on the Vistula river was a large and important trade centre. That was in the 10th century. The centuries that followed strengthened the position of the capital of Poland on the map of Europe. The city lay at the crossroads of important trade routes leading West to Wrocław and Nuremberg, East to Kiev, North to Gdańsk and South to Hungary.

A double range of stone stalls, forming a sort of a narrow street in the middle of the Main Market Square, was commissioned by duke Bolesław the Chaste. This fact was mentioned in the Chartering Act of 1257. At night, horse-drawn carts loaded with all kinds of commodities entered the narrow passage, as the side entrances were closed off by metal gratings for security reasons. Flemish and English cloth was the prevailing merchandise at the time. Later, goods from all over Europe were stored in the Cloth Hall premises.

The oldest commercial Cloth Hall
in Europe, still in operation

During the reign of Kazimierz the Great, the market was covered with a roof and a great brick building, 108-metres long and 18-metres wide, was constructed. Double pointed-arch arcades that have survived to the present day, lead to the high main hall from the south and the north.

In this way “a palace of commerce” was created in the very heart of the city, a monument to Krakow’s centuries-long commercial tradition.

After the great fire of 1555, the Gothic building was remodelled by masters Pankracy and Giovanni Maria Padovano in the renaissance style. Santi Gucci of Florence, the court architect to King Zygmunt August, adorned the parapets with mascarons carved in sandstone. They are believed to have portrayed prominent merchants and burghers of the time, thus forming the first gallery of caricatures in Poland. The upper part of the high main hall was then adopted as the upper gallery.

With time, various auxiliary structures have been added to the main building – all kinds of booths and annexes, certainly anything but beautiful. They were demolished during the next reconstruction of the Cloth Hall, which was carried out in 1875-1879, when the building was given its present shape by the architect Tomasz Pryliński.

The upper floor has become galleries for Poland’s first National Museum. A range of wooden stalls designed by Jan Matejko was built on the ground level.

Shops and tearooms were established in the arcades.



A reception given in the Cloth Hall
on 4 October 1879 in honour
of the writer J.I. Kraszewski
Painting by J. Kossak



The largest necropolis of royalty and national
Heroes in this part of Europe



The Krakow church is worthy of a trip to the city; it is filled with chapels and sarcophagi whose wealth has no match elsewhere except in Rome or some Belgian churches. One can see here carved silver coffins whose sides are adorned with images of battles, numbering eight hundred figures, both humans and horses.

Honore de Balzac

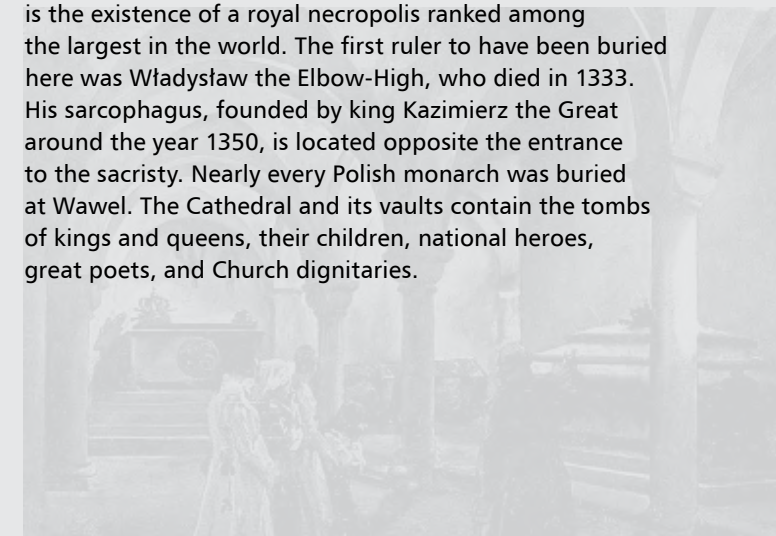
The first Cathedral was built on the Wawel Hill during the reign of King Bolesław I the Brave, shortly after the bishopric was established in Krakow in the year 1000. The Cathedral was destroyed in 1038 during the Czech invasion led by Duke Bretyslav I. It was partially reconstructed as a small church of St Gereon, which has survived to this day under the western wing of Wawel Castle. The second, much larger Cathedral was built between 1090 and 1142. Its construction began during the reign of Duke Władysław Herman and was completed under the reign of Bolesław III the Wry-Mouth. The church was destroyed by fire in 1306. Large parts of that Cathedral have been preserved, including St Leonard's Crypt, the lower parts of the silver Bells Tower, and the foundations of the Clock Tower. In 1320, King Władysław the Elbow-High was coronated in the damaged Cathedral. From that time on, all Polish Kings, except for Stanisław Leszczyński and Stanisław August Poniatowski, had their coronations in the Wawel Cathedral.

Also in 1320, construction began on the present, large Gothic cathedral, on the site of the ruins of the previous romanesque buildings. Construction was completed in 1364 under the reign of King Kazimierz the Great. The space of the Wawel Hill for the church was limited. Nevertheless, this strikingly magnificent structure remains the most precious jewel of Poland's heritage. New interior details were added throughout the centuries that followed – altars,

sarcophagi, epitaphs, reliefs, monuments and portals – blending into a unique architectural fusion, full of splendour and dignity. Interior furnishings were created by the most outstanding artists of their times – Veit Stoss, Bartolomeo Berrecci, Giovanni Maria Padovano, Santi Gucci, Jan Michałowicz of Urzędów, Giovanni Trevano, Francesco Placidi and Bertel Thorvaldsen. The Cathedral is surrounded by nineteen chapels. Each of them is a separate church in itself, boasting its own, original decor.

The Świętokrzyska Chapel, dating from 1470, is adorned with a ruthenian polychromy by artists from the Novgorod area; the Sigismund (Zygmuntowska) Chapel is considered to be the finest example of renaissance architecture north of the Alps.

But what makes this place unique and special is the existence of a royal necropolis ranked among the largest in the world. The first ruler to have been buried here was Władysław the Elbow-High, who died in 1333. His sarcophagus, founded by king Kazimierz the Great around the year 1350, is located opposite the entrance to the sacristy. Nearly every Polish monarch was buried at Wawel. The Cathedral and its vaults contain the tombs of kings and queens, their children, national heroes, great poets, and Church dignitaries.



The Sigismund (Zygmunt). Bell measures the pace of the most significant moments in the city's history



The history of Homeland reading on these graves bow low to your leaders who are buried here.
E. Wasilewski
Painting by J. Kossak



The Romanesque Wawel Cathedral of Władysław Herman
Drawing by A. Szyszko-Bohusz



The largest collection of Flemish tapestries in this part of Europe

Only 136 Flemish tapestries out of the original 356 pieces in Zygmunt August's collection that once adorned Wawel Castle have survived, but nevertheless the Krakow collection of gold-and-silver-woven tapestries is ranked among the largest in the world.

These wool- and-silk-woven images take their name from Arras, a small town situated in the north of France. That was where the first establishments employing weavers and painters began producing tapestries like these in the 14th and 15th century.

The first arras tapestries were brought to Wawel Castle by Queen Bona. Shortly after that her husband King Zygmunt the Old purchased eighteen tapestries in Antwerp. But the true initiator of this magnificent collection was their son, Zygmunt August. At the very beginning of his reign in 1549, he commissioned in Brussels new extraordinarily beautiful "Flemish curtains" or "tapisseries", as they were called at the time.

His royal vision was executed by the greatest artists of Flanders. Figural tapestries were designed by the famous master Michael Coxie, known as "the Flemish Raphael". He painted such series as "The History of Paradise", "The History of Noah" and "The History of the Tower of Babel", generally believed to be the most beautiful of all. Other tapestries, known as "Verdures", are usually of smaller size and contain landscape

and animal motifs. There are also heraldic compositions with monarchs' coat-of-arms and monograms.

The artists' compositions were first made on cardboard, then transformed into ornamental tapestries in the workshops of the Flemish masters Jan van Tieghem, Willem Pannemaker, Jan de Kempeneer, and Pieter van Aelst. The basic fabric of the tapestries was wool. Silk was used to achieve light shades. Occasionally, gold and silver threads were also incorporated.

At the time of the King's death, the collection numbered 356 tapestries. In his will, he made a bequest of them to his three sisters, however with the stipulation that after their death the tapestries would be transferred to the Republic. Not all successive monarchs respected this decision, so it became a matter of dispute between the sejm (the national assembly) and the Court.

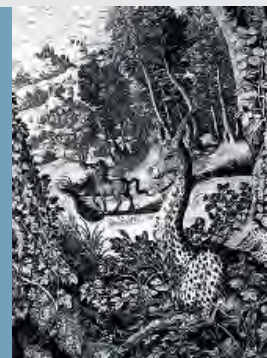
The priceless collection was dispersed all over Europe. By various routes, Wawel tapestries reached Bari, Vienna, Stockholm, the court of Pope Urban VIII in Rome, and France. A large portion of them ended up in Warsaw and after the partitions of Poland in the 18th century, this collection was sent to Moscow by order of Catherine II. Arras tapestries adorned the tsars' palaces in St Petersburg, Moscow, Gatchin and the Kremlin. They were returned to Wawel following the treaty of Riga.

During WWII the tapestries had a long Odyssey. Hidden from the occupying Nazis, they travelled through Romania, France, England and finally reached Canada where they were safely stored and subsequently returned to Poland in 1961. The Krakow collection of 136 tapestries, while not as large as that of King Zygmunt August, is still one of the finest in the world.

Wawel Royal Castle
The National Art Collection



Arras tapestry
"Paradise Bliss"



People, beasts and
trees, even tiny plants,
all have the same
beginning and end.
K. Koźmian



A collection of Arras tapestries
displayed in the Renaissance
wing of the Castle produced
on King Zygmunt the Old's
commission



The Planty Park

ONLY IN KRAKOW

The largest central urban park in Europe, encircling the oldest part of the city



A municipal park, which replaced the demolished city walls, is 4 kilometres long and extends over an area of 21 hectares, as a unique planning project for Europe.

The Tatar invasions of 1241 and 1259–1260 demonstrated that the city lacked fortifications and was an easy prey for enemies. As early as 1285, Duke Leszek the Black commissioned the construction of city fortifications. The system of ramparts was later developed by Vaclav II of Bohemia, Władysław the Elbow-High and Kazimierz the Great. As early as mid-14th century the capital of Poland became a fortress difficult to conquer.

The city was surrounded by a wall built of brick and stone, 2.40 metres thick and 6–7 metres high. Some 9 metres outside the wall was a rampart, 2.20–2.50 metres high. The entire structure was protected by a moat, 3 metres deep and 6–8 metres wide (around the Barbican this barrier extended to 24 metres in width). The oldest municipal records mention the following gates: Butchers' (1289), Grodzka (1298), Floriańska (1307), Wiślna (1310), Sławkowska (1311), Mikołajska (1312), Shoemakers' (1313), and Nowa (New) (1338). Gradually more passages were added. Bastions, exceeding 10 metres in height, towered over the walls. In 1473, there were only seventeen such bastions, including the gates. Shortly before the demolition of the fortifications in the early 19th century, there were as many as forty-seven.

The name of Poland's best-known park, the Planty, is derived from the word "plantowanie", which means the levelling of the ground. It included the demolition of ramparts and the filling of the moats. The plan to transform the old fortifications into a green belt surrounding the city was developed by Professor Feliks Radwański, an architect and land surveyor. From 1818 to 1822, he carried out the necessary engineering measurements and planned the entire park. Actual works began in 1822 and continued for eight years.

Among those whose commitment to the development of the Planty was significant, was Florian Straszewski, who was responsible for the planning of all of the park's greenery over a period of twenty years. Straszewski was a landowner, social activist and co-initiator of the construction of the Kościuszko Mound. For many years he held the lease of the Krakow number lottery. In 1821, he placed a huge wooden emblem of Krakow on the Hetmańska House at 17 Main Market Square. Every Wednesday at noon the winning numbers were displayed in the five openings at the basis of the emblem. The lottery enjoyed enormous popularity. Using the funds derived from the game Straszewski purchased trees and bushes. Every month new chestnuts, poplars, maples, lime trees, ash trees, elms and acacias were planted. In 1844 the Planty had 8,750 trees.

Recently the Planty have been divided into eight gardens, each with its own character. Stylish fencing, lamps and arbours were installed. Inlaid stones mark the sites of the historic defensive walls, bastions and gates.

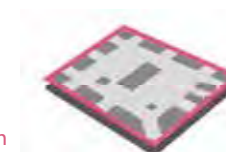


Collegium Novum UJ



The monument of Florian Straszewski, the founder of the Planty Park

Around the old town





The largest military structure
of its type in Europe



In the second half of the 19th c. August Essenwein, a German researcher, was the first to use the term “die Barbakane” (Barbican).

The fortress, built in 1498–1499 as the most northern outpost of the city fortifications, is an example of the highest standard of the art of defence. It has a diameter of 24.4 m, and its walls are more than 3 metres thick. The bastion has 130 firing positions situated on four levels. The openings in the lower part were used by the artillery. Fire was directed from the seven turrets protruding over the roof. The Gothic structure was surrounded by a moat, 3.4 metres wide.

A long neck linked the Barbican with the Floriańska Gate, serving as a defensive outpost.

King Jan Olbracht allocated one hundred “grzywna” (monetary units) to the building of the Barbican. He personally laid a corner stone, initiating its construction. The architect who designed this largest and best-preserved Barbican in Europe remains unknown. At one time, some researchers attributed the work to Veit Stoss, the creator of St Mary’s Altar.

The Arab expression B-al-bagara means “the gate to the stable.” In the Celtic language, bar-bacha means “bulwark”. As early as the 12th century, these expressions were used

in Catalonia and France for military structures of the type that can be seen near the Floriańska Gate.

Throughout the centuries, the Krakow Barbican was also a Porta Glorise (the Gate of Glory). Royal processions passed through its gate on the occasion of coronations and royal visitors, papal legates, foreign envoys and military leaders were all welcomed. It was the route of victorious armies, but also of funeral processions of Kings and national heroes.

When the demolition of the city walls was initiated in the early 19th century, the Floriańska Gate and the Barbican were also slated for destruction. These structures, along with the Carpenters’, Joiners’ and Haberdashers’ towers and a section of city walls, were saved by Professor Feliks Radwański. In the critical years of 1817 and 1822, his passionate speeches persuaded the senate of the Free City of Krakow that traditions should be respected. It was not easy, as many people expressed satisfaction that finally the obstacles blocking out fresh air from the densely built city would be demolished. Radwański cleverly-crafted his arguments, saying that the demolition of fortifications would expose the Main Market Square to northerly winds, “which will knock people off their feet, while exposing women and children to influenza, rheumatism, and perhaps even to paralysis”. However, the strongest argument of all was that the wind would blow up women’s skirts near St Mary’s Church – which would be an indecent sight, inappropriate for Krakow.



The Barbican (in Krakow called the “Rondel”); view from the interior



The Barbican – fortress during the wars, Gate of Glory in times of peace



The Marksmen's Confraternity

ONLY IN KRAKOW

The oldest paramilitary association in this part of Europe and one of the oldest in the world



Throughout the centuries Kings and emperors visited the Marksmen's Confraternity. Their gifts can be seen at the Celestat Branch of the Historical Museum, situated in Lubicz Street.

In the older times, the duty to defend the city rested on its residents. Responsibility for defending each section of the city walls was assigned to a specific craftsmen's guild, as was the defence of gates and bastions. To fulfil this duty as effectively as possible, a Marksmen's Confraternity was established. It was an inter-guild association for training the members in military arts. Now the association has a history of well over seven hundred years and boasts one of the most magnificent traditions in Europe. It is the oldest organisation of its kind in Poland.

Once a year, on Monday following the octave of the Corpus Christi Holiday, in addition to regular training, members of the Confraternity used to hold ceremonial shooting contests, for which the target was a wooden rooster. It was an ancient tradition, an excellent way to improve shooting skills, and an exercise in hand-eye coordination. Contestants aimed at a target from a distance of approximately 150 metres, originally with crossbows, and later arquebuses. The one who hit the last splinter was announced King Marksman. He was decorated with a chain with an image of the rooster, which was the symbol of the night vigil and a warning against danger. The winner held a feast to which his fellow marksmen were invited. Throughout the entire year he enjoyed special privileges, and was exempted from taxes and tariff duties.

Annual contests were held at shooting facilities owned by the Confraternity. The first such shooting ground was

behind the Mikołajska Gate, the next in a park adjoining a palace in the Łobzów suburb, the third one in the Shooting Garden. Today, traditional shooting contests are held at an army exercise field in Pasternik.

Marksmen brothers, dressed up in rich, historic costumes, often participate in state and church ceremonies. Their presence at public meetings testifies to the centuries-long traditions of the Krakow burghers.

Among the most precious mementos associated with the society traditions is the trophy itself – a silver rooster with the head of a crowned eagle, a gift from the City Councillors dating from 1565. This insignia of the Marksman King, the winner of the annual shooting contest, is preserved in the collection of the City of Krakow Historical Museum. In its Celestat branch one can see a rich collection of historic weapons, numerous medallions, standards, diplomas and shooting targets from centuries past, as well as a tea set presented to the Confraternity during a visit by emperor Franz Joseph I to Krakow in 1880. The silver and ivory dishes were created by the famous company of Karl Klinkosch in Vienna.



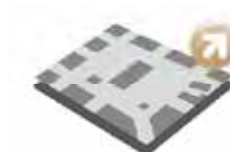
The silver rooster – emblem of the Krakow-based society



Members of the Marksmen's Confraternity in 1926



Shooting exercise from Behem's Code (1505)





The first globe in the history of cartography to show America



Courtyard of the Collegium Maius. Time has stood still here since the 15th century.



"The founding of the Jagiellonian Academy", an engraving from a Lvov collection
Photo B. Hennerfot. B. Henner

The Collegium Maius is ranked among the oldest Medieval university buildings in Europe. Today one can see unique scientific instruments and other interesting artefacts here.

On 12 May 1364, King Kazimierz the Great issued a privilege establishing the Studium Generale, the first Polish university. This Krakow school, referred to in the document as "the pearl of the prevailing sciences", is the second-oldest university East of the Rhine, after Prague's university, and is older than all extant German universities.

Originally, the Academy was located in the district of Kazimierz. After the King's death, the university went into decline and soon ceased to operate. The effort to restore it was undertaken by Queen Jadwiga in the 1390s, and soon brought the expected result. In July 1400, King Władysław Jagiełło personally participated in the opening ceremony of the restored university, which was later named after his dynastic line.

The University then moved to the existing Collegium Maius at the intersection of today's Św. Anny and Jagiellońska Streets. Few original facilities of medieval universities have survived to the present day. Outside England, only Salamanca in Spain, Bologna in Italy, and Prague in the Czech Republic can boast such universities. The oldest university buildings in Erfurt and Leipzig did not survive

WWII. Krakow's University has lasted for over six hundred years at the same location.

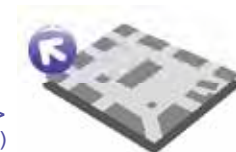
Shortly after its restoration, the University earned a name for itself in the research world. The first Rector of the university, Stanisław of Skalmierz, is considered to have been one of the founders of international public law.

One of his successors, Paweł Włodkowic, during the ecumenical council in Constance, gave a highly appreciated speech against using force to convert pagans. Maciej Miechowita offered Europe the first description of Sarmatia, the lands extending from the Vistula River to the Don River and the Caspian Sea, which was later translated into many languages. In early 16th century, the teaching of the Greek language, and later Hebrew, was initiated here, which was a great novelty at the time. Nicolaus Copernicus, the creator of the heliocentric system, was among the University's graduates.

Among the numerous scientific instruments documenting the development of human thought and science in the Collegium Maius collection, a special place is held by a globe, known as "the Jagiellonian Globe". This instrument served for the determination of astronomical co-ordinates, and has a clockwork mechanism inside. It was probably manufactured in northern Italy or southern France in 1508, and was the first such globe in the history of cartography to show America. It has an inscription, which reads *America terra noviter reperta* (America, the newly discovered land).



The Jagiellonian Globe
drawing by A. Kowalczyk



ONLY IN KRAKOW



Leonardo da Vinci painted two female portraits that have captured the world's attention for centuries. His Mona Lisa painted in Florence (ca. 1503–1506) can be admired in the Louvre in Paris. A date with his Lady with an Ermine, created a few years earlier (ca. 1483–1490) requires a trip to Krakow.

She was well educated, liked to read poetry, and was interested in the arts. She also liked music, played the lute and sang beautifully. When her portrait was painted, Cecilia Gallerani was staying at the court of Duke Lodovico Sforza in Milan. This divinely beautiful seventeen-year-old girl had given her thirty-eight-year-old ducal lover a good-looking son. This relationship is conveyed not only by the girl's mysterious smile. It is symbolised by a little animal she holds in her arms. Duke Lodovico was called Ermellino, which means ermine in Italian.

After the love affair was over, her lover gave the girl a generous dowry. He found her a husband (Count Bergamino) and donated the dal Verne Palace and a substantial sum of money. Cecilia lived long for her times. She passed away in 1536, aged 68. She significantly outlived Duke Lodovico, her husband and sons. This is why she left her entire estate to her niece, whose daughter married a gentleman from the Bonansano family of Milan. Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece was part of the family collections for many years. The painting on chestnut wood (53.4 x 39.3 cm) was purchased by Adam Czartoryski in 1800 as a gift for his mother, Izabela née Flemming, who had established a collection of works of art in Puławy. Once, to meet Cecilia Gallerani, one needed to go to the Czartoryski Museum. Today, due to modernisation of this museum, the "Lady with an Ermine" painting is exhibited at the Wawel Castle. The Puławy collection put together by Duchess Izabela is the oldest in Poland and one of the oldest in Europe.

In late 19th century it was transferred to Krakow. It includes a collection of ancient art (Egyptian, Greek,

Etrurian and Roman), Polish and European painting, artistic crafts and rare military exhibits. It is especially interesting, however because of its mementoes associated with significant historical personages. This part of the collection is probably the most interesting example of a Romantic style museum in the world. The idea behind it was that exhibits were associated with people. The Duchess's passion for collecting was stimulated by the collapse of Poland, and was born from the desire to pass the memory of the national heroes to following generations. In addition to family mementoes, there are many artefacts connected with personages of international significance. One can see a chair which once belonged to Shakespeare, a hat which Napoleon wore while crossing the Berezina River, a cornet of Oliver Cromwell's mother, a powder-box which belonged to King Henry VIII and a piece of George Washington's costume. James Cook's cloak was an attraction at an exhibition that was held in Australia to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the discovery of that continent. However, these are only a few examples of the exhibits in the world's most interesting collection of mementos of famous historical personages.

The painting belongs to the Princes Czartoryski Foundation collection



The exhibition of ancient art



The Princes Czartoryski Museum

Main Market Square > Św. Jana
(the Princes Czartoryski Museum)



ONLY IN KRAKOW



Colourful palaces from lustrous tin foil, sparkling pieces of glass and iridescent tissue paper faithfully render the most typical elements of Krakow architecture, offering a fairy-tale setting for the mystery of the Nativity.

The idea to organise traditional gatherings around the Nativity Scene was born in the Apennines, Italy. In December 1223, St Francis of Assisi arranged a nativity scene in a grotto near Greccio, thus referring to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem.

Nativity plays soon spread wide throughout Italy and then all of Europe. Originally they were held by the friars of the order of St Francis (Reformati, Bernardines, Capuchins), who were soon followed by other orders. The ritual became popular in France, Spain, Germany, Austria, Bohemia and Poland. The Holy infant was placed in a crib, against the setting of the most typical landscapes for the country – a rock grotto, wooden stables, palaces or an oasis with palms in the desert.

But the most interesting nativity scenes originate from Krakow. It was the masons from the Krowodrza district and tram workers from Półwie Zwierzynieckie and Zwierzyniec who started the tradition. They began to build fine palaces for little Jesus, inspired by St Mary's towers, the Barbican walls, the Town Hall, the parapet of the Cloth Hall, and cloisters of Wawel Castle, which combined to offer a setting for the nativity scene. Then they introduced processions of characteristic figures, crowding at the palace to pay homage to and greet the newborn. In this way a folk theatre of its own was created, which found its inspiration in the wealth of the local folklore. Below the Nativity scene, a stage for colourful puppets was set up. Typical characters

were a Cracovian, a highlander, a cabman, a gendarme, a Gypsy, King Herod, a devil, an angel, death, a Jew, Mr Twardowski, a witch and a beggar. Their songs and couplets inspired professional authors of cabaret performances, initiating numerous variations of this new literary form. Stanisław Wyspiański's *The Wedding*, the most significant Polish drama, was structured in the form of a Krakow nativity play.

The 150-year-old tradition of nativity scenes is still alive in Krakow. Michał Ezenkier, master mason from Krowodrza, is considered to have been one of the classics. Since 1937, on the first Thursday of every December, dozens of these colourful structures can be admired at the foot of Adam Mickiewicz's Monument. This tradition was interrupted only during the years of the Nazi occupation. The annual competition brings together old and young architects of these fairy-tale palaces. The finest nativity scenes are later exhibited at the City of Krakow Historical Museum, under whose auspices the event is held.



The diversity of historic monuments was a source of inspiration for artists



Birth of Jesus – fragment of the Altarpiece in St. Mary's Basilica



The largest grouping of churches
in a city centre in all of Europe



Krakow used to be called “a Second Rome” for the abundance of its churches and convents, the wealth of historical artefacts and works of art, its museum collections, and for the role it has served for Christianity in this part of Europe.

Krakow is sometimes called the city of a hundred churches. There is not the slightest exaggeration to this statement. Today one can count as many as 120 churches in the city.

The churches best represent the history of Krakow’s architecture. Throughout the centuries Gothic walls and vaults rose on romanesque foundations, the Baroque style flourished, replacing the Gothic. Romanesque and Gothic structures contain rich Baroque, rococo and neo-classical interiors. All these styles blend together to form a unique architectural combination.

Not only are Krakow’s churches and cloisters places of religious worship; they are home to numerous historic mementos and priceless works of art and culture.

In St Mary’s Basilica one can admire the largest Gothic high altar by Veit Stoss. The walls of the church are covered by polychromes designed by Jan Matejko; the pointed-arch windows contain stained glass by Józef Mehoffer and Stanisław Wyspiański. The Church of the Holy Trinity (the Dominican Church), the oldest parish church in Krakow,

houses the relics of St Hyacinth, the most famous Pole ever canonised. The windows of the Franciscan Church, the burial place of duke Bolesław the Chaste, who granted Krakow’s charter, are adorned by stained-glass designed by Stanisław Wyspiański. The university’s collegiate Church of St Anne attracts the viewer with its rich stuccowork by Baltazare Fontana. The Church of SS Peter and Paul built by the Jesuits is a faithful copy of Rome’s il Gesù church. It is the burial place of the Rev. Piotr Skarga, famous for his fervent sermons. St Michael’s Church on the Skalka hill houses the Crypt of the Meritorious with the graves of outstanding scientists and artists. The sanctuary of Divine Mercy attracts growing numbers of pilgrims.

The city is a seat of more than twenty male and more than a dozen female religious orders. These include congregations with centuries-long traditions, etched in the history of culture and civilisation of this part of Europe.

The Benedictines of Tyniec have taught artistic crafts, gardening and vegetable cultivation since 1044. From the 13th century, the Franciscans acted as missionaries in Red Ruthenia, Lithuania, and later in South America. The Cistercians used to teach milling and were the first to have used brick for construction. The sisters of the order of St Clare educated girls. The Dominicans were missionaries in Ruthenia and Prussia. In the 1970s and 1980s, they supported the Polish democratic opposition including the solidarity movement.

You can’t be indifferent to the beauty of Krakow churches at night



Two churches have been built in the tiny Mariacki Square – St Mary’s Basilica and St Barbara’s Church



The Pauline Fathers’ Church on Skalka, with the Pantheon of great Poles beneath



The most significant centre of Judaic law 16th-century Europe

For many centuries Kazimierz was widely known as the home of the largest Jewish commune in Europe. WWII closed this chapter of the town's history. The Nazis murdered almost 70 thousand of Krakow's Jews.

The history of Kazimierz began on 27 February 1335. On that day, in Sandomierz, King Kazimierz the Great signed the Chartering act of the town named after him. Currently a part of Krakow, Kazimierz was then an altogether separate entity.

The town, chartered according to Magdeburg law, was situated on the right bank of the old Vistula river, whose bed, which used to run along today's Dietla and Starowiślna Streets, was filled in 1873. Kazimierz was situated on the trade route from Wrocław to Ruthenia and Hungary. Its main artery was Krakowska street, which has survived to this day.

Kazimierz was an impressive town. Its Main square, with dimensions of 195 x 195 m was only a little smaller than Krakow's Main square (210 x 212 m) and three streets started from each side of this massive space. The town Hall was built in the middle of the square. Its sides were flanked by the Corpus Christi Church to the east and St Catherine's Church to the west. Both churches have survived in their full beauty and splendour. Many researchers believe that

the Bawół square (today the southern part of Szeroka street) was the original location of the Krakow university that was established by King Kazimierz the Great in 1364.

The history of Jewish Kazimierz begins in 1495, when King Jan Olbracht, urged by local burghers who wanted to get rid of competitors, banned all Jews from Krakow and resettled them to the other side of the old Vistula river. Soon, large groups of Jewish people from all parts of Europe began to settle in Kazimierz. Jews, chased out from Germany, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Italy and Spain found their new homeland here.

They represented different traditions and customs, which caused conflicts and religious disputes. This, in turn, forced a unification of the principles of faith, which were binding upon the entire community. In the 16th century, Kazimierz became a significant centre of Judaic law for all Europe, thanks to Moses Isserles, a rabbi of the local community, outstanding researcher and philosopher, founder of the Talmudic academy in 1550 and its rector. In 1530, the first Jewish printing house and bookshop in Europe were established in Kazimierz.

The continuity of that tradition, with its legacy etched in the history of civilisation and culture, was cut short by German fascists. More recently, Kazimierz served as the setting for Steven Spielberg's famous film, "Schindler's List".



Kazimierz the Great grants privileges to Jews
Painting by J. Matejko



The tomb of Moses Isserles at the Remuh Cemetery in Krakow



Kazimierz Town Hall in Wolnica Square



The greatest gothic-renaissance building
of Jewish sacred architecture



It exceeds its counterparts in Worms, Regensburg and Prague in size.

In his works, the outstanding researcher of the history of Krakow Jewry, Majer Bałaban, expresses the opinion that the synagogue was built by immigrants from Bohemia, who came here after the notorious pogrom in Prague of 1389. This opinion is not shared by all. But it is generally held this is one of the most precious examples of Jewish sacral architecture in all of Europe.

Jewish tradition says that the synagogue was built on the former site of the first Polish university established by King Kazimierz the Great. For this reason, the Jewish Community was obliged to pay the professors' salaries and make substantial donations to the Krakow academy even long after that, as was confirmed in an agreement of 1774.

The Old Synagogue is modelled on Western European synagogues. It is the farthest east example of Judaic sacred architecture of the type. It is taller and larger than the original synagogues in Worms, Regensburg and Prague, but has retained the design of its predecessors. The original synagogue was a high hall covered by a Gothic vaulting, which was supported on two pillars. After the great fire of 1557, the Italian architect Matteo Gucci remodelled the synagogue in the renaissance style. He built a double-aisled hall, raised the vaulting and supported it on two slender Tuscan columns. The roof was sheltered by a parapet.

Along the northern side, a special buttressed annex was built to serve as a prayer room for women. It was covered by triple-gabled shingle roof. A richly decorated, late-renaissance stone ark in the middle of the eastern wall, closed behind a wrought-iron door in the synagogue's main room, has survived to the present day.

In early 20th century, the synagogue was substantially remodelled in the course of conservation efforts carried out by Zygmunt Hendel, who was also responsible for the renovation of the Royal Wawel Castle. Significantly damaged during the Nazi occupation (the original vaulting was demolished, the columns were dismantled and precious chandeliers removed to residences of Governor Hans Frank), the synagogue was renovated in 1955–1957. The oldest architectural details of the synagogue were preserved during the renovation and the gothic-renaissance character of the entire structure restored.

The Old Synagogue now serves as a museum devoted to the history and culture of the Krakow Jewry. Krakow is often called a second Rome, while Krakow's Kazimierz is referred to as little Jerusalem.



Most closely akin to Greek philosophers are Polish Jews.
S. Brzozowski



Krakow's Orthodox Jew studying Torah



A view of the Old Synagogue in the 19th century



The largest European meadow (48 ha)
situated in the heart of a major city



...Should the Kościuszko Mound emit some smoke and the Błonia have a little more water than just the Rudawa River, Naples would not match Krakow, as a city with simply excellent living conditions.

H. Sienkiewicz, from a letter to Kazimierz Morawski

This site can be found on the pages of the history of Poland as early as 1162. At that time, Jaksa of Miechów, a fabulously rich Krakow magnate, donated his estate in the Zwierzyniec suburb to the Convent of the Premonstratensian sisters. He did so to receive God's blessing for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land. His gift must have been accepted, as the pious knight returned from Jerusalem to his hometown of Miechów, where he established a Monastery of the Brothers of the Holy Sepulchre in 1163. According to historical chronicles, the meadow was the venue for a gathering to welcome 1254 envoys from Assisi who brought the Pope's bull declaring Stanisław of Szczepanów the first Polish saint.

The meadow was crossed by the Rudawa river, due to which it was a vast swamp for centuries. During the plagues, the sick were transported to islands in the swamps as they waited for death. The Błonia became a venue for great meetings and parades no earlier than in the 19th century. In 1809, when Krakow was incorporated into the Duchy

of Warsaw, a grand army parade was held here. It was organised by duke Józef Poniatowski and General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski to celebrate the nameday of Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1849, Tsar Nikolai I held a review of his troops on their way to Hungary to put down an uprising there. During his tour of Galicia in 1880, emperor Franz Joseph I admired an honour guard of galloping cavalry in Krakow's regional costumes. In 1910, residents of all parts of occupied Poland gathered here at a ceremony commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Grunwald victory by the Polish armed forces. Late 20th century witnessed several gatherings of millions of the faithful who came here to meet Pope John Paul II. In 2016, during the World Youth Days, Błonia also became a meeting place for young people from all over the world with Pope Francis.

The grassy field with an area of several dozens hectares was also a venue for other important events. In 1894, the first football match in Krakow was held here. A few years later, in 1906, Poland's two oldest football clubs – Cracovia and Wisła, faced one another on this field. In 1910, an aeroplane took off from the Błonia for the first flight over the city, with the Austrian engineer Hieronimus as its pilot. Finally, on 6 August 1914, 142 legionnaires of the legendary Cadre Company began their march to the nearby Russian border, setting off from the historical Oleandry, and thus opening way to Poland's independence after 123 years of bondage.



In 1933, Marshal Józef Piłsudski at cavalry parade on the 250th anniversary of the Vienna victory by King Jan III Sobieski
Painting by M. Nowicki



The first Holy Mass celebrated by the Pope on the Błonia, 1979



The only grouping of earthen monuments
in a European city

The mounds are characteristic elements
of the local landscape, something like
“Krakow pyramids”.

No one knows what the oldest mounds were. Places of worship? Burial sites for military leaders? The two oldest man-made hills are well over a thousand years old. They remain mysterious historic landmarks. Probably for this reason they have always been associated with legendary, mythical heroes.

The Krak Mound is believed to have been the burial place of the legendary duke who was the founder of the city. The Mound rises on the right bank of the Vistula river, atop the Krzemionki heights (255 m above sea level). It is sixteen metres high and has a diameter of more than fifty metres at the base. It was probably constructed in the 7th century. This is indicated by an Avar bronze belt-buckle found in its interior. Once the mound used to be a place of pagan cults. For centuries, fires were lit here on All Souls' nights to commemorate the dead, and funeral feasts were held.

The Mound of Wanda, daughter of Krak, is also believed to be a tomb. Legend has it that the body of the duke's daughter was placed here after it was taken from the water of the Vistula river, where she had jumped, preferring death to marrying a foreigner. It has a diameter of 45 m at the base and rises to 14 m. It is situated on a high escarpment (238 m above sea level) where the Dłubnia tributary meets the Vistula river.

The mounds of Krak and Wanda, more than a thousand years old, inspired the construction of an earth monument commemorating the hero of Poland's struggle for independence, Tadeusz Kościuszko. The ceremony inaugurating the construction of the mound on 16th October 1820, gathered people from all three parts of partitioned Poland. The outstanding Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen also took part in that event.

The honour of breaking ground at the ceremony was conferred on Angelica Catalani, a famous Italian diva, whose voice and beauty had captivated all of Europe at the time. The Mound rises up from Sikornik hill (355 m above sea level). It is a conical structure, 34 metres high, with a diameter of 80 m at its foot. Earth from the battlefields where Tadeusz Kościuszko had fought, including Racławice, Szczekociny, Dubienka and Maciejowice, was placed in the mound. A hundred years later, in 1926, symbolic samples of soil from the places where he fought for the independence of the United States of America were also brought here.

The highest of Krakow's mounds, the Mound of Independence, is considered a tomb of tombs. 36 metres high, it rises from the Sowiniec Hill (358 m above sea level) in the western part of the city. The news of the commencement of its construction was sent by a carrier pigeon to Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the father of Poland's independence. After the Marshal's death in 1935, it was decided that the mound would bear his name.



The Kościuszko Mound



“The Krakow
pyramids”



Duke Krak,
the legendary
founder of Krakow
(ca. 700), the father
of Wanda



The construction
of the mound on Sikornik
Painting by M. Stachowicz

Mounds: Kościuszko (Sikornik), Piłsudski (Sowiniec),
Krak (Lasota Hill), Wanda (Nowa Huta)



The largest 19th century monument of defensive architecture in this part of Europe



The St Benedict Fort 31



The Royal artillery of the fortress

After the third partition of Poland took place (1795), Krakow fell under the rule of the Habsburg monarchy. In the second half of the 19th century, the city located at the intersection of the Russian and the Prussian borders was turned into a mighty fortress.

The decision to build fortifications surrounding the city was taken in Vienna in 1850, but before that, high walls with shooting positions had begun to be constructed around Wawel (1848) and fortifications were built in Krzemionki across the Vistula river (1849). By 1854, the fortress complex surrounding the Kościuszko Mound was built – on its western side, north on the road to Warsaw, and at the Krak Mound in the south. The Crimean War (1853–1856) provided the military authorities with an additional justification for a dramatic acceleration of the works, which had only just been begun. In 1856 the outstanding Austrian fortification engineer August Cagoga made a detailed plan for the further development of the fortification system.

Shortly afterwards an earthen rampart surrounding the city was built, three metres high and eight metres wide. Polygonal forts were built along the ramparts to reinforce the system and the external moats were filled with water. These defences were built at a distance of only

600–800 m from the Main Market Square and soon became a deadly corset suffocating the city and preventing its development throughout the half-century that followed. One such installation is the Fort in Nowy Kleparz. This explains why urban development within the city centre is so dense, with numerous added storeys and rear buildings in the neighbourhoods near the Main Market Square.

Construction on the fortress continued uninterrupted until the outbreak of WWI in 1914. Krakow was surrounded by a triple ring of fortifications. The most distant line of defences from the Main Market square, constructed at the turn of the 19th century, surrounded the city in the far suburbs. During WWI, the Krakow Fortress was ranked among the largest in Europe. Over an area of more than 500 square kilometres, 176 strategic military facilities were situated. Anti-tank forts, artillery posts, shelters, barracks, infantry entrenchments, walls with shooting posts, fortified gates, and underground structures were connected, forming a system of carefully planned passages.

During WWI, Krakow played a decisive role in this part of Europe, but, paradoxically, hardly participated in military campaigns. In December 1914, the Russian attack was halted here. The holding-back of the enemy's forces at the outposts of the fortress permitted the Austrian military leadership to concentrate their own troops in the south and later, with Prussian support, to defeat the Russians in the battle of Gorlice early in May 1915.

Today, the system of the Krakow Fortress, still forms a unique historical monument of 19th-century defensive art.



One of the best-preserved parts of the fortress – the Kościuszko Fort



The oldest salt mine in the world
still in operation



This world-unique mining site was placed by the UNESCO on its first World Cultural and Natural Heritage List (1978).

In the Middle ages this site was referred to as Magnum Sal, the Great Salt. At the time, this mineralised sedimentary rock salt represented an enormous value, a priceless treasure. Not only did salt enhance the taste of various dishes, but it was also used to preserve foods. The trade in salt was a source of wealth for numerous burgher families (Wierzynek, Boner) as well as magnate families (Morsztyn, Lubomirski).

It is not without reason to believe that the salt from Wieliczka formed a catalyst from which Krakow grew rich, and was developed and beautified throughout the centuries.

The Wieliczka salt deposits, exploited on an industrial scale for the last 750 years, form a historic landmark of physical culture unique in the world. The salt-works are situated on nine levels, the first of which is 64 metres below ground level, with the deepest 327 metres deep. 26 shafts have been drilled in the 10-kilometre-long deposit, while 180 others connect different levels underground. The salt-works include more than 200 km of passageways with a total volume of 7,500 milion cubic metres. There are underground churches and chapels (there used to be more than forty). From the 15th century to 1787, religious services

were held on a daily basis. Wieliczka's underground space has fairy-tale charm and unspeakable beauty which it owes to various crystallised formations, rarely seen elsewhere.

The Crystal Grotto, discovered in 1898, a unique landmark of inanimate natural formations, is an excellent example. The associated collection of mining equipment is priceless, with machinery, carts, windlasses, security and ventilation systems, lighting and firefighting equipment from past times.

Before the first partition of Poland took place in 1772, Wieliczka and the neighbouring Bochnia salt-mine formed the largest industrial facility in the former Republic, called the Krakow salt-works. This underground wealth funded the royal treasury. In the 14th century the salt-works provided 30% of the total income of the Crown. It was the source of funds for the state-financed army, and supported convents and monasteries, the construction of Krakow churches (such as SS Peter and Paul's), townhouses (the Peacock House) and the renovation of Wawel Castle in the 16th century.

The Wieliczka salt-mine was once a destination for royal, imperial and artistic tours (it was also visited by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe). The current underground tourist route is more than 3 kilometres long. It includes 20 chambers connected by drifts, situated on three levels, 64–135 metres deep. The salt-mine is visited by one million tourists annually.

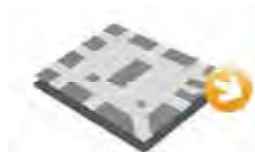
Erazm Barącz Chamber



The salt-miners' method of descending to the mine (called "the Wieliczka grape")
Engraving by J. Gauchard



St Anthony's Chapel



The largest system of gothic cellars in Europe

No other European city can boast such a great number of art galleries, theatrical stages, cabarets, restaurants and pubs located in stylish, historic cellars.

The town, built on swampy areas of the ancient Vistula river, surrounded by marshes and old riverbeds, was defended from enemies by its geographic location, but as the city gradually developed it needed more land for construction. The churches rising high up into the sky and boldly planned multi-storey townhouses required solid ground underneath. So the ponds were filled, the river-beds redirected, and the marshes drained. These endeavours, initiated in the early Middle ages continued till early 20th century without interruption.

The Main Market Square, the largest trade centre of the city, remained wet and muddy for centuries. Its eastern, higher part, where St Mary's Church began to be built in mid-13th century, has been raised by 2 metres, and the area at the opposite corner of the square, at the intersection of Wiślna and Św. Anny streets – by 5 metres. Also, the level of all of the streets within the former city walls, the latter replaced by the Planty ring, has been raised. In this way the original ground-floor rooms of the townhouses have become their present cellars.

This is the secret to the existence of so many such spaces concentrated in such a relatively small area.

The walls of Krakow cellars, built from Gothic brick and white Jurassic limestone radiate a unique atmosphere and are original architectural records of the centuries passed.

No matter whether it's summer or winter, underground Krakow resounds with music and song till late at night, offering a wide array of culinary attractions, theatre and cabaret performances and art gallery exhibitions. This world has a special atmosphere due to its youthful clientele, bohemian artistic flavour, and crowds of visitors.

The cellars are a genuine attraction at the very heart of Krakow, within the ring of the Planty. Several cabarets have made their permanent locations in underground premises. They include Piwnica pod Baranami (the Rams' Cellar), with its half-century old tradition, and the more recent, Loch Camelot. Steep steps lead down to the Pod Ratuszem (Town Hall) and Moliere theatre stages as well as art galleries (Krzysztofory). Stylish cellars form a setting for renowned restaurants. Other places offer jazz and blues music concerts or even dance music.

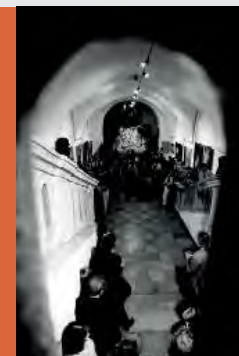
There are more than a hundred such underground spots in the immediate vicinity of the Main Market Square, all bustling with life. In total, they cover an area of 75 thousand square metres. Nearly as much space is still waiting to be used by new owners. There is no doubt that underground Krakow will continue to expand.



The "Piwnica Pod Baranami" Cabaret

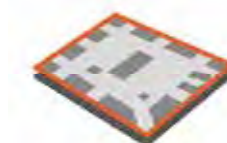


For decades Piotr Skrzynecki welcomed the audiences to a cabaret in the Pod Baranami Palace, whose most famous Krakow cellar can still be visited



Crypt under the Piast Church often serves as a painting gallery, a concert hall or a venue for poetry readings

The old town – the Main Market Square, streets and squares within the Planty





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