Magiczny Kraków

From San Francisco to Kraków via Rzeszów

2026-08-11

From 15 to 21 July 2026, Rzeszów is once again hosting the 20th World Festival of Polish Folk Dance Ensembles from Abroad. Organized since 1969 and traditionally held every three years, the festival is one of the largest and most prestigious events of its kind worldwide. For decades, it has brought together Polish diaspora communities while promoting Polish culture, heritage, and traditions far beyond our borders.

Among the participants in this year's edition is the "Łowiczanie" Folk Ensemble from San Francisco, one of Kraków's partner cities. The long-standing partnership between Kraków and San Francisco, together with the city's many cultural attractions, was one of the reasons why the ensemble chose to visit Kraków before heading to the festival in Rzeszów.

The dancers were joined by representatives of the Kraków–San Francisco Sister Cities Committee: Vice President Maty Kay Stuvland and Treasurer Elżbieta Zienczuk-Baird. During their stay, the delegation met at Kraków City Hall with Katarzyna Gądek, Deputy Director of the Tourism Department; Beata Sabatowicz, Deputy Director of the Kraków Mayor’s Office responsible for international cooperation; and Magdalena Osuch, representing the Małopolska Tourist Organization.

The meeting offered not only an opportunity to admire the ensemble's vibrant traditional costumes but, above all, to discuss how Polish identity is preserved across the Atlantic. The members of Łowiczanie are deeply committed to promoting Polish culture, language, and traditions in the United States. Although many emigrated with their parents in the 1970s, Poland remains an important part of their lives.

Their attachment to their heritage extends well beyond the stage. Ensemble members proudly recreate the flavours of their childhood by making homemade cytrynówka (traditional Polish lemon liqueur), baking classic Polish cakes, and sharing them with family members and American friends. As they explained during the meeting, each of them carries cherished culinary memories from home and strives to pass them on to future generations, even though authentic Polish ingredients are not always easy to find in the United States.

The official partnership between Kraków and San Francisco has been in place since 2009. Despite the geographical distance and the financial and organizational challenges involved, the relationship continues to flourish thanks to the dedication of many individuals—especially the members of the Sister Cities Committee on the American side. Balancing their volunteer work with professional and family responsibilities, they consistently develop initiatives that strengthen the ties between the two cities.

The Committee also plays an active role in celebrating Poland's national holidays. In May and November, the white-and-red Polish flag is prominently displayed in public spaces across San Francisco, while commemorative gatherings, concerts, and cultural events help showcase Poland's rich heritage. These initiatives give younger generations of Polish Americans an opportunity to discover their cultural roots and strengthen their connection with the homeland of their ancestors.

The visit also included discussions about the future of economic cooperation and innovation. For many years, Silicon Valley has offered exceptional opportunities for young entrepreneurs and technology innovators, including those from Kraków. At the same time, Kraków's rapidly growing startup ecosystem and its strengths in advanced technologies and artificial intelligence are making the city an increasingly attractive partner for young innovators from the United States.

The visit by the Łowiczanie Folk Ensemble was, in fact, much more than a celebration of Polish folklore. It served as a reminder that sister-city partnerships are ultimately built by people. Through their passion, commitment, and enduring connection to their roots, they ensure that Polish culture and traditions remain vibrant—no matter which side of the Atlantic they are nurtured on.