

A City Open to the World / العالم على منفتحة كراكوف

2023-08-30

The unique nature of the capital of the Małopolska Voivodeship is becoming increasingly popular with tourists from the Arabian Peninsula, who are more and more visible the streets of Kraków.

Kraków Airport: A Gateway to the Persian Gulf

Kraków Airport is gradually rebuilding the level of tourist traffic from before the pandemic, consistently developing its offer and setting new records for the number of passengers in recent months. The expanding network of destinations is vital to the development of tourism in Kraków and the entire Małopolska region. The first plane from Dubai flew to Kraków in April 2018, but it was only after the pandemic that air connections between Lesser Poland and this area of the Persian Gulf really bloomed. As of August 2023, Fly Dubai offers three flights a day to Dubai, on Mondays, Thursday and Saturdays, and two flights on the remaining days. Additionally, Wizzair flies to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates, on Mondays and Fridays. Without a doubt, the ease with which one can travel to Kraków is one of the deciding factors for tourists from the Persian Gulf. In July 2023 alone, the capital of the Małopolska Voivodeship welcomed nearly 14,000 visitors from Arab countries.

Unique Heritage of Kraków

The Old Town, the historic heart of Kraków, which together with Kazimierz (which used to be a separate town, and now is a picturesque district) was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List back in 1978, is undeniably a highlight of Kraków. Adding Kraków to the UNESCO List was a breakthrough moment, with the municipal unit in Kraków being one of the first 12 sites comprising the UNESCO List.

The Old Town and the Wawel Royal Castle gained recognition as a unique treasure trove of monuments, works of art and architectural styles. Kazimierz naturally complements the historic Kraków, full of intertwining Jewish-Christian influences. Add to this two other cities, which became part of Kraków – Podgórze on the other bank of the Vistula River, and the perfect socialist city Nowa Huta – and you get a fascinating municipal mosaic, a must-see for tourists. The intricate history of the city and interweaving of cultures have had a significant impact on the traditions and customs in Kraków, and can be seen on every corner – even at the Main Square, where every hour the Hejnał resounds from the tower of the St. Mary's Basilica. The foot of St. Mary's Basilica is always busy with tourists waiting to listen to the melody. After playing the bugle call, the trumpeter waves to the listeners, who respond enthusiastically. The story goes that the melody of the bugle call ends abruptly to commemorate the brave trumpeter who died alarming the residents of the oncoming attack of the Tatar invasion, and although it is just a 20th-century legend, it is worth remembering that Kraków is the only city in the world where the medieval tradition of playing a bugle call from the tower every hour has survived to this day.

Visiting Kraków in spring is an opportunity to discover yet another local tradition, when residents celebrate the Easter indulgence of Emaus, during which you can taste a wealth of



**Magiczny
Kraków**

local products. In June you can spot the vibrantly colorful Lajkonik roaming the streets – the horse and its rider dressed in oriental garments, holding a mace, being struck by which is said to bring good luck. This is exactly why people gathered to observe the Lajkonik do not try to dodge the stroke of his ornamental mace. To the contrary!

June in Kraków is a time of wreaths. Traditionally this celebration was connected with the summer solstice, with bonfires burning and garlands woven from flowers and grasses floated on the water. Today, women in Kraków continue to crown their heads with wreaths on the day of the solstice, accompanied by a celebration of music, with concerts on the streets and squares of Kraków. A little later, during the summer holidays, the Vistula River becomes a unique stage hosting the Great Dragon Parade. Hovering over water, dragons roam the bends of the Vistula River, and the procession of mythical colourful creatures is accompanied by spectacular music and a fireworks and laser show. A vestige of the legends and myths of Kraków is the fire-breathing dragon that still guards the entrance to the cave under the Castle on Wawel Hill.

The vast number of events held on the Main Square is testament to the close attachment to tradition. Examples are the Folk Art Fair celebrating folklore and handicrafts, or the magical Christmas Fair with its annual Kraków Christmas Crib Competition, and it should be mentioned here that the art of crib creation in Kraków is on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. It is this local engagement and the nurturing of tradition that make Kraków memorable.

In recent years, the culinary heritage of Kraków has finally received due recognition. Today, Kraków is highly appreciated by foodies enthralled by its European culinary heritage, with the cherry on the cake being the honorable title of the European Capital of Gastronomic Culture, which Kraków was awarded in 2019. In 2023, the city can be proud of its vast presence in the Michelin Guide, with as many as 18 restaurants in Kraków featured in the latest edition of the famous guide, and Bottiglieria 1881 being the first in the country to receive two Michelin stars. This clearly proves that the culinary scene in Kraków is flourishing, and visitors can be sure to experience a feast for the palate.

Green Wealth of the City

Thanks to its greenery, Kraków delights all year round. Tourists increasingly appreciate the importance of parks and squares, which add charm to the city and allow for relaxation amidst the rustle of trees. Kraków's greenery is much more than just the Planty Park, a majestic strip of greenery surrounding the Old Town, where nature meets history. Kraków also offers woods growing on steep hills, numerous parks, and mounds shrouded in legends, offering a magnificent view of the panorama of the city of Polish kings. One of Kraków's oldest parks is the recently revitalised Bednarski Park, where the legendary sorcerer Twardowski was said to have had his workshop among the limestone rocks. Tourists yearning to relax away from the city centre can enjoy the green surroundings of the Nowohucki Reservoir, and experience the benefits of the healthy microclimate of the brine graduation tower. The Tauron Arena, one of the biggest sports and entertainment venues in Poland, and a business showpiece, is neighbour to the "Kraków Maldives", a pond surrounded by greenery, which got its name from its light blue colour.



**Magiczny
Kraków**

It is exactly these views and the oasis of nature that attract tourists eager to catch a breath away from the harsh southern sun. A cradle of culture and one of Europe's greenest capitals, Kraków offers all this at your fingertips.

Delivering a High-quality Tourist Offer

The hospitality of residents, friendly atmosphere, attractive offer and modern infrastructure attract visitors from all over the world, including the Arabian Peninsula. Visitors to Kraków appreciate the high quality of accommodation at sensible prices. The city has over 180 hotels, including 20 five-star hotels and numerous increasingly-popular boutique hotels, with charming interiors. All this and much more make Kraków a tourist destination that can exceed the expectations of even the most demanding guests. Anyone who visits Kraków will certainly want to come back.

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