

Krakow - meeting all requirements

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Rich history, varied cultural offer and food scene, first-rate infrastructure and, most of all, collaboration-friendly MICE industry. From the viewpoint of business tourists Krakow is one of Poland's best-known and most oft-visited cities.

According to research conducted by Polish Tourism Organisation (Polska Organizacja Turystyczna - POT), Krakow is the most recognisable Polish city brand in the world. Last year the city was visited by almost 13 million tourists, including numerous participants of business events. In 2017 Krakow hosted more than 6,000 events, among which 4,392 were congresses and conferences. The meetings industry generated close to 2.2 billion PLN GDP, which accounted for 3.38% of GDP of Krakow's overall economy. This is the outcome of the second edition of research commissioned by the Municipality of Krakow and carried out by Małopolska Tourist Organisation in cooperation with a team of experts specialising in Krakow's tourism. The first edition was staged in 2013 as part of the trailblazing Krakow Impact project. What is important is that the number of guests travelling to Krakow is systematically rising. Most of them - as many as 70% - stay in the capital of Małopolska for more than one day and take advantage of the continuously expanding local accommodation infrastructure. Among conference-ready facilities, mention is due to DoubleTree by Hilton Kraków Hotel & Convention Center, officially opened in 2015, and Metropolo by Golden Tulip launched this year. MICE guests currently have at their disposal 11 five-star hotels (2,152 beds) and as many as four-star venues (6,911 beds).

The big three

While Krakow's offer in the field of hotels has always represented a high level (a natural consequence of the city's tourism attractiveness), until recently business customers did not have much to choose from when staging conferences or congresses. This fact proved highly problematic especially in the case of truly large events. Fortunately, it was recognised on time and solved by infrastructure investments. Three major venues constructed five years ago are capable of meeting requirements related to the arrangement of even the largest and most challenging events. The list includes the ICE Kraków Congress Centre, the entertainment-and-sports TAURON Arena Kraków, and the International Exhibition and Convention Centre EXPO Kraków. As a result, Krakow today is among the cities boasting the very best conference-related infrastructure in the country. In addition, the network of flights with the capital of Małopolska is continuously expanded; at present you can fly from Krakow to 78 destinations worldwide.

Krakow supports MICE

Unfortunately nowadays even a fairly attractive tourist offer and satisfying infrastructure might not be enough to attract a reasonable number of business tourists. However, this is a task that Kraków Convention Bureau has been successfully coping with for 15 years. In addition to the promotional operations it conducts, the Bureau is also a partner for all planners wishing to stage their events in Krakow (searching for information about venues, companies to cooperate

with, etc.). In addition, the city offers its support to all MICE organisers by i.a. arranging fam trips, promoting events, supplying promotional materials and welcome packages, staging sightseeing tours or providing the option of so-called conference tickets, which entitle participants to public transport discounts. It is also worth mentioning here the Kraków Network initiative launched by the Krakow Festival Office, operator of ICE Kraków, and an influential business group representing various sectors of the tourism industry. Its operations influence the growing number of events held in Krakow. By the end of 2014 approx. 30 organisations were invited to join the enterprise, which today associates almost 200 companies.

EXPO Kraków

Fifth anniversary of EXPO Kraków

May will mark the fifth anniversary of the launch of EXPO Kraków. "We have been dreaming about a new venue for a long time, spent a lot of time planning and searching for the right setting. Relocating our headquarters and organisational office to EXPO proved to be an authentic milestone in the company's history. A more comfortable work environment, improved conditions for exhibitors and visitors - simply put, a quick promotion to a higher league. We saw brand-new potential and growth opportunities", recalls Grażyna Grabowska, President of Targi w Krakowie.

The decision about constructing EXPO Kraków received a lot of publicity from the business community closely monitoring new investments. Furthermore, the venue's emergence to a large degree contributed to the development of the Krakow district of Czyżyny. Only a few years ago it was simply known as the residential area of Nowa Huta. Today the district entirely changed its character and became a bustling and significant point on the city's map. It is visited not only by residents, but also by foreign investors. "Perhaps not many people remember that six years ago ruins of the former PREFABET construction factory, despite its central setting probably the most run-down part of Krakow, used to be located in exactly the same place where the EXPO building now stands. Today a new housing estate is being constructed next to our venue, an office block was recently built. Successive developers are getting ready for investments and the neighbourhood is changing increasingly faster", explains Paweł Nikliński, Vice President of Targi w Krakowie.

While developing EXPO Kraków an emphasis was placed on its mixed-use character and the effortlessness of staging all types of events. In five years it has already hosted close to 300 events of various subject matter plus several dozen congresses, conferences, concerts, and other meetings. The largest production held so far in the discussed venue, the 28th Conference of the European Wound Management Association EWMA (9-11 May 2018) encompassed a grand exhibition of producers and suppliers of medical equipment and wound care and healing products (almost 120 booths). The event was staged in nine conference rooms, two of which were built especially for this purpose. The Conference was attended by approx. 3,500 specialists from all over the world. The fact that talks about a venue that would meet the high expectations of the organisers have continued since 2014 shows that the selection of appropriate space was deemed exceptionally important. "The opening of EXPO Kraków



**Magiczny
Kraków**

provided us with a dose of new energy and motivation to work. We could start working on ideas, whose implementation was earlier simply impossible. Consequently, we have recorded a considerable growth of the number of foreign customers and international events”, sums up Ewa Woch, Vice President of Targi w Krakowie. In addition, the emergence of EXPO Kraków and the ensuing increasingly demanding projects also resulted in Targi w Krakowie maturing as a team that today has more than 70 members and established new business relations. A few years ago its employees were walking into new office rooms bringing not only large boxes in their hands, but also heads filled with ideas of new events. They were entering a whole new world of previously unattainable ideas, which they wanted to take full advantage of. Did they succeed? The answer is a resounding yes.

ICE Kraków

Design and functionality

Setting is what makes ICE Kraków stand out from many other conference centres. The venue was erected not on the outskirts, but virtually in the very centre of the city. Besides the obvious advantages stemming from this location, an additional asset involves the near-by hotel infrastructure. In addition, setting in the heart of Krakow influenced another crucial element - the building's appearance or, to be precise, its intriguing and compelling architecture. ICE Kraków demonstrates that a major congress centre can be both highly useful and visually attractive. The reason for this state of things is quite prosaic - the newly established complex simply had to be designed and built in such a way as to avoid “downgrading” the neighbourhood. Instead, it was assumed that it should be a good match for its surroundings - after all, you can admire the Royal Castle on Wawel Hill from its foyer. Architects from the Ingarden & Ewý atelier, renowned for innovative projects of public utility venues, are responsible for the building's look, while the designing process involved Arata Isozaki himself, this year's winner of the “Nobel Prize of architecture”. The outcome of their work is a modern and visually attractive building that takes full advantage of its setting (view of Wawel Hill and Kazimierz district) and is remarkably functional to boot. As a result, ICE Kraków is available for a wide gamut of events - from congresses, conferences, symposia and forums through concerts and theatre shows to multimedia shows and events tackling social issues.

Since ICE Kraków inaugurated its activity in October 2014 it was visited by more than a million guests participating in close to 800 events. Only last year about 200 events attracted more than 255,000 attendees. Among the events in question, mention is due to conferences and congresses, such as i.a. DIOXIN 2018 (International Symposium on Halogenated Persistent Organic Pollutants & 10th International PCB Workshop), a prestigious international event dealing with environmental pollution, 23rd WONCA Europe Conference 2018, an European conference of family physicians that brought close to 3,000 specialists to Krakow, the World Foundry Congress, the European Corrosion Congress Eurocorr, as well as the World Congress on Osteoporosis, Osteoarthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases. This obviously is but a small fraction of numerous events of this kind. Some events have actually moved into ICE Kraków for good, i.a. Impact dedicated to digital economy, the Open Eyes Economy Summit, the European Cybersecurity Forum Cybersec or the highly prestigious Frontiers in Interventional Cardiology.

The list also includes Digital Dragons, the largest video game event in this part of Europe, the annual conference of the ASPIRE Association, as well as European Congress of Local Governments.

Besides conferences ICE Kraków also regularly hosts grand jubilees (i.a. 200th anniversary of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, the 70th anniversary of the Polish Radio Choir) and seminal concerts of world-famous acts. Last year during the Film Music Festival the Auditorium Hall of the congress centre gained an eminent patron - renowned composer and conductor Krzysztof Penderecki. In late February representatives of ICE Kraków announced close to 50 successive business events that the venue will host in the months to come. Naturally, there will certainly be new additions to this list.

TAURON Arena Kraków

Poland's largest entertainment-and-sports arena

TAURON Arena Kraków is a venue entirely different from traditional event settings, such as congress centres or rooms in premium hotels. Poland's largest entertainment-and-sports arena (and one of the largest venues of this kind in Europe) is distinguished by a mixed-use character, diversified space and functionality. The arena is available for sports competitions in 18 disciplines of world championships rank, concerts, festivals, theatre plays and shows, conferences, congresses, trade shows and exhibitions, corporate meetings, business meetings, as well as a shooting location for TV productions, feature films and advertisements.

The Main Arena, which houses events for even a dozen or so thousand participants, the Small Arena (capacity: 1,300), conference halls (capacity: 200), a VIP zone with 28 lounges, restaurants with a view of the arena's main pitch and an extensive area surrounding the venue can all be adapted for the purposes of the MICE industry. In the case of renting conference halls, the package also includes 200 parking places. In addition, organisers can take advantage of the offer of displaying promotional materials on electronic devices - both outside and inside the arena, including Europe's largest LED installed on its elevation (more than 0.5 km-long!). "Capacity is a distinguishing feature of our venue, which can accommodate 22,000 guests. There are 15,000 seats in the stands, while the Main Arena has additional standing capacity of 9,300. Event organisers can freely configure the stands, with comfortable facilities for athletes and performers at their disposal along with advanced multimedia and stage systems. The venue boasts great acoustics, which impact the number of concerts it hosts. Finally, the multi-purpose character of the arena makes it possible to hold events of diverse character and scope", explains Małgorzata Marcińska, President of the Management Board of the Municipal Development Agency in Krakow (operator of TAURON Arena Kraków).

Indeed, TAURON Arena Kraków is located only 4 km from the Main Market Square and has



**Magiczny
Kraków**

already hosted more than 700 events of all types, which in total were attended by more than 3 million guests. Only last year the venue accommodated approx. 630,000 visitors - participants of 165 events. Among the latter there was no shortage of concerts (i.a. of Metallica, Paul McCartney, Iron Maiden, Depeche Mode, Deep Purple, Lenny Kravitz), sporting events (i.a. SuperEnduro World Championship, Diverse Night of the Jumps, FIVB Volleyball Nations League), conferences and congresses (m.in. Lyconet Elite Seminar, Career and Entrepreneurship Expo, events of Shell, Motorola, Coca Cola, Diagnostyka) or events for local residents. High attendance figures were also recorded at Cirque du Soleil, Disney on Ice and Film Music Festival. This year TAURON Arena Kraków hosted already more than 30 events, 50 successive ones have been announced and its calendar is becoming increasingly packed with brand-new events (also for the years to come). The World Youth Day Krakow 2016, which was attended by more than 75,000 visitors, is an example of a project that fully showcased the advantages of the venue in question, its mixed-use character and the option of simultaneously applying all available spaces.

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