

## **2019 in business tourism**

2020-02-27

**2019 in Krakow was marked by jubilees. Tauron Arena Krakow, the largest sports and entertainment hall in Poland, the EXPO Krakow exhibition and fair complex and ICE Krakow - one of the most modern congress centers in Europe are all celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their operation. The Krakow Convention Bureau also celebrated its jubilee: 15 years of activities.**

Five years after the appearance of three meeting facilities with congress and conference facilities on the map of the Krakow industry, we are observing an increase in the number of large events in Krakow, including international congresses. Awarding the city the title of the European Capital of Gastronomic Culture and ongoing debates on short-term tourist rentals were undoubtedly the themes of the year.

### **The 5th anniversary of three large facilities**

In 2014, Tauron Arena Krakow, the ICE Congress Center and EXPO Krakow were commissioned in Krakow. The facilities have become dominant players on the regional and nationwide market for conference and fair organization. Thanks to them, the city offers the possibility of organizing international meetings or large incentive events, which previously could not be hosted due to the lack of adequate infrastructure.

Tauron Arena Krakow is the largest in Poland and one of the largest sports and entertainment halls in Europe - it is characterized by its multi-functionality, diversity of space and functionality. More than 700 different events have been held since the opening, with a total of more than 3 million people in attendance. For the needs of the MICE industry, the following can be adapted: the Main Arena, in which events are organized for up to several thousand people, the Small Hall (for 1.3 thousand people), conference rooms (up to 200 people), the VIP zone with 28 boxes, restaurants with a view of the arena pitch and the vast area around the facility.

The distinguishing feature of ICE Krakow is its location and nearby hotel base. The shape itself also attracts attention - the building is modern, visually attractive, uses the advantages of the place where it is located (the view of Wawel and Kazimierz). It can organize events of various nature - from congresses, conferences through concerts, theater performances, to multimedia shows and concerts. Since the inauguration of its activity - in October 2014 - ICE Krakow has already been visited by over a million guests participating in nearly 800 events.

In 2019, EXPO Krakow also celebrated its 5th birthday, a multi-functional facility that can be easily adapted to various events. For five years nearly 300 fairs have been held on a wide range of topics, as well as several dozen congresses, conferences, concerts and other events.

### **15 years of the KCB**

The Krakow Convention Bureau has been operating within the structures of the Krakow City Municipality since 2004. The KCB's main task is to build the city's brand on the Polish and international arena as a business destination. The team of its employees has been participating in key industry events for years - fairs, association meetings, industry forums and conferences. the Program Ambassadors of Polish Congresses is particularly important, due to the specificity



of Krakow and its position as a scientific center. The program is coordinated locally by the office in cooperation with associations. Last year, 18 new eminent personalities representing the scientific and business community, including 4 from Krakow, joined the group of Honorary Ambassadors of Polish Congresses. Since 2004, nearly 250 people have received the title of Congress Ambassador, including more than 50 from Krakow and the Malopolska Region.

For fifteen years, therefore, the Krakow Convention Bureau has been a partner connecting the business and scientific community with the city's self-government, and very often the first point of contact for event organizers, especially those international organizers who direct their interest towards the capital of the Malopolska Region. Most of the large congresses of associations implemented in the city take place with the cooperation and support of the Congress Office.

### **Increase in the number of visitors**

In 2019, the number of people visiting Krakow exceeded 14 million, of which 3.3 million were from abroad. The respondents traditionally indicated monuments (30.5%), leisure (18.6%), entertainment (8.8%), visiting friends and relatives (6.8%), transit (6.7%) and business goal (6.1%) as the main purpose of coming to Krakow). During their stay in Krakow in 2019, guests spent PLN 7.5 billion (excluding travel costs). That's over a billion more than in 2018. For comparison, in 2004, i.e. the year when the Krakow Convention Bureau was launched, the number of people visiting the capital of the Malopolska Region amounted to more than 6.4 million.

The growing number of visitors is related to, among others, the challenge of tourist short-term rental of flats and apartments located mainly in the center. In European cities, popular tourist destinations, short-term rental is a very important factor influencing their development. On the other hand, residents complain about the rise in property prices and rent. Due to adverse changes under the influence of this phenomenon, the number of cities engaging in the debate is constantly growing; Three more cities have joined Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Brussels, Bordeaux, Krakow, Paris, Valencia and Vienna: Bologna, Florence and London to tackle the problem together. Since the election of the new European Commissioner responsible for the common European market is currently underway after the elections to the European Parliament, the cities - through the Eurocities organization - have proposed the contest committee to make reference to the tourist issue of short-term rental one of the questions during the interview of candidates for this position.

The above issue confirms the importance of implementing a policy of sustainable tourism, building the city for residents and visitors. The topics will be discussed during the second edition of the Historical Cities conference in search of a premium tourist organized by the Krakow City Office Tourism Department.

### **Increase in the number of meetings**

The annual report of the Polish Tourism Organization "Meetings Industry in Poland" discusses the steady increase in the number of meetings. In 2018, 8,156 business meetings were registered in Krakow - congresses, conferences, corporate events and trade fairs, of which 5215



were meetings for more than 50 participants. The participation of congresses and conferences accounted for 58% of all meetings in the city. The people who attended business events in Krakow in 2018 was impressive: 1,114,243. It should be emphasized that the greatest number of people attending congresses and conferences were gathered at medical events (more than 129,000 people). The average length of an events is 1.68 days, but international meetings lasted longer, on average over 2 days. For comparison, in 2017 there were 6,014 meetings in the city, and in 2014 - 3,976.

In the ICCA Statistics Report Country & City Rankings 2018, a key report for the industry, Krakow took 45th position in the world, and 25th in Europe, hosting 53 association meetings. This is an increase compared to 2017, when Krakow was 54th in the world and 27th among European cities.

"It is worth recalling that congresses and conferences bring more and more benefits to the city. This is confirmed by research on the economic impact of the meetings industry on the economy of Krakow, which in December 2018 was presented by: the Malopolska Tourist Organization, a team of Krakow tourism experts from the Cracow University of Economics and the City of Krakow. Participants of business events spent a total of PLN 1.4 billion, while the meetings industry generated nearly PLN 2.2 billion of GDP, which accounted for 3.38% of the GDP of the entire Krakow economy for 2018", adds Małgorzata Przygórska-Skowron, head of the Krakow Convention Bureau.

## **Infrastructure**

The increase in the number of events is accompanied by investments in infrastructure. In 2019 alone in Krakow, 11 hotels received a decision classifying the appropriate type and category, including two five-star ones: Balthazar Design Hotel and Bachleda Luxury Hotel Krakow MGallery by Sofitel and 5 four-star hotels (Metropolo Krakow by Golden Tulip, Plaza Boutique Hotel, Metropolis Design Hotel, Central Palace by Habitan, The Loft Hotel).

From the perspective of the fifteen years we are talking about, one can notice an infrastructural leap from the perspective of event organizers. In 2004, when the Krakow Convention began to operate, 173 accommodation facilities operated in the city, including 83 hotels. In contrast, the 2018 City Status Report, issued in 2019, already mentions an accommodation base of 894 facilities, of which 168 are hotels. A large part of this number are facilities used by event organizers and business guests.

The number of air connections is systematically increasing for the needs of visitors to the capital of the Malopolska Region. In 2019, Krakow Airport served over 8.4 million travelers, over 1 million 641 thousand more than in 2018. In the current winter schedule, 24 carriers offer over 130 regular connections. It is worth recalling that in May 2019 a new carrier appeared at Krakow Airport - Wizz Air.

## **Events in 2019**

Among the congresses that took place in 2019 in Krakow, a conference of the RNA association - a scientific society whose members support research and education in the field of RNA

(ribonucleic acid) science - is noteworthy.

In June this year, the 15th Congress of the World Heritage Cities of the OWHC took place, during which the Mayor of Krakow, Jacek Majchrowski, was elected the new president of the association. The OWHC Board of Directors included, among others, the General Secretary of the GTC and authorities of several dozen cities from around the world.

The 48th World Surgical Congress (WCS) or FEBS - a forum for the exchange of knowledge and ideas in molecular life sciences - are other business events that took place in 2019, which are worth mentioning.

The city focuses on acquiring international congresses and conferences and creating its own, prestigious cyclical events. The Open Eyes Economy Summit (OEES) is an excellent example, an international economic summit based on social values, whose 4th edition ended in November 2019.

In October, the 4th Krakow Medical Tourism Congress was held, addressed to specialists providing medical services, and in March 2020 the 2nd Conference will be held as part of the Historic Cities 3.0 project - In search of a premium tourist. Krakow is gaining a new role - not only as a host city, but also the organizer and initiator of debates in the public space.

## **Culinary**

Throughout 2019, Krakow celebrated the title of European Capital of Gastronomic Culture. The year was full of events of a culinary background, which served to build the image of the city as a center of gastronomic culture and culinary destinations and the capital of the region rich in local and certified food products.

At the initiative of chefs and restaurateurs, numerous tasting dinners, devoted to regional dishes and products, were held. The Slow Food Masterclass dinner series, which was a platform for cooperation between Krakow and foreign chefs associated in Slow Food Chefs' Alliance, enjoyed great interest.

As part of the celebrations of the European Capital of Gastronomic Culture, both open events for residents, such as Krakow Zapusty and the Obwarzanek Festival, as well as industry events were held: the MADE for Restaurant conference, the European Congress on Gastronomy "Food & Art & Technology", and the final of the nationwide competition Bocuse D'or, where third place was taken by chef Michał Stężalski from the Szara Gęś restaurant.

Culinary Krakow was close to the residents and tourists who visited our city throughout the year. The "Tower of Tastes" exhibition devoted to the history of food culture took place at the Krakow Museum. Krakow also joined the "Freedom Menu" campaign and distributed 1989 obwarzanki to passers-by on June 4.

The gastronomic face of Krakow was also presented at more than one hundred partner events in the country and abroad. Krakow cuisine has aroused considerable interest in Warsaw during the prestigious Wine & Food Noble Night culinary competition. Krakow was also present abroad:



**Magiczny  
Kraków**

Krakow presented itself from the culinary side at the tourism fairs in Berlin, Lyon and Vienna. Krakow restaurants promoted culinary heritage during special events at the Polish Embassies in Madrid, Rome, Lyon, Edinburgh, Nuremberg and Lisbon.