

KRAKOW CORNERS



Kraków



The yard between Meiselsa and Józefa streets, a set from Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List

Krakow Corners

Historical and innovative, romantic and metropolitan, cherishing the best Polish traditions and sufficiently dynamic to develop new ones – ever ready for brave challenges, contemporary Krakow precludes simple definition.

Krakow is the mainstay of tradition and the home turf of the avant-garde, a city of writers, painters, musicians, and poets of all generations. To feel the spirit of Krakow, you simply need to take a walk in its streets, peek into its gates, Gothic cellars, and assorted courtyards and gardens. Or you may choose to cycle to Tyniec, to the greenery in Zakrzówek, or to the Premonstratensian Convent.

Actually, in Krakow everything is close at hand. You can walk on foot from the Main Market Square to Kazimierz, and from there Podgórze is just a stone's throw away: it is enough to take the Father Bernatek Footbridge to the other side of the Vistula.

Try to discover the city for yourselves. There is always something special even in the most obvious places, whether the neck jugs by St Mary's Church or the mammoth bones in the doorway of Wawel Cathedral. You can walk in the footsteps of Nicolas Copernicus, Stanisław Wyspiański, John Paul II, Tadeusz Kantor, Krzysztof Penderecki, and Andrzej Wajda.

Nowa Huta and Bronowice, although somewhat further afield, are also worth a visit. Yet, it's best to design your own routes. Our suggestions are but an encouragement to discover your own Krakow: Krakow the mystical brimming with history, and Krakow the contemporary teeming with everyday life.

Jacek Majchrowski
Mayor of the City of Krakow

IN AND AROUND THE MAIN MARKET SQUARE

Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus... Why don't we start a walk in this part by the Market Square in the **Quadrangle of the Collegium Maius** (the oldest part of the Jagiellonian University) listening to the joyful student song sung in Europe since the 13th century. Every two hours from 9am to 5pm, the clock triggers a procession of figures connected to the history of the Academy of Krakow (the university's original name), to make them gracefully glide to the sounds of court music composed by Jan of Lublin in the 16th century and the ancient *Gaudeamus*, bearing the suggestion "let's rejoice while you're young". The original clockwork was most probably made before 1465, and the current one is the fourth construction in the history of the college.

Mikołaj Kopernik (Nicolas Copernicus) attended lectures here, in the oldest building of the university. Let's peek into the **Jagiellonian University Museum**.

Medicine lectures took place on the ground floor, in the so-called Galen lectorium, while the

Alchemy Room, with its alchemical bottles and flasks preserved to this day, served the experiments of the 16th-century alchemists: Twardowski the wizard, Michał Sędziwój, astrologist and secretary to King Sigismund III, and one of the most famous mediaeval necromancers - Johann Faust. (It was after Goethe's stay in Krakow in September 1790 that he wrote the first parts of Faust.) The Common Room on the first floor (*Stuba Communis*) is where academics gathered to dine and take counsel together.

The Long Vestibule (*Długa Sień*), or alternatively *Jagiellońska Street* when it is closed, serve as routes to sneak into the Professors' Garden. This used to be much bigger, and included an orchard and a vegetable garden whose crop made it to the professors' tables in the refectory of the college. Today it offers a large green space to relax in among the scientists watching us from their monuments. A charming, quiet corner in the centre of a lively city.

Krakow florists



Every one of them has her favourite flowers, faithful clientele, and unique style of arranging bouquets. The stalls in the Main Market Square are more than a place to buy flowers: they are small institutions and "information agencies". You can learn the latest gossip here, complain about the heat or frost, councillors, MPs and ministers, and talk about life and distant travels. You will also learn which of the local celebrities holds a jubilee or celebrates their namesday. The author believes that the best bouquets are the work of Ms Berta, to whom she is quite addicted. It's enough to suggest that what you need is a "sun-packed bunch" for such and such an occasion, and Ms Berta will magic out a pleasant surprise.



The Market Square! The city's salon, a city in the city, stately and homely, with a sea of café tables, world-class heritage, thousands of pigeons, a centuries-old mansion, stalls, florists, and horse-drawn cabs. Covering in excess of 4ha (10 acres: over 200x200m), it is one of the largest mediaeval market squares in Europe. It is here that the paths of tourists and locals cross, it is here they set forth to find the mysterious corners, backyards, and cellars. Each of the 47 townhouses standing beside it is a witness to historical events and a symbol. No. 6,

on the corner of Sienna Street is the Szara (Grey) House, where King Henryk Walezy (Henry III of

France) dined after his coronation in 1574; in 1794 it provided the insurgent headquarters for

Krakow traditions and holidays



"Nothing in the city was like anywhere else. The seasons of the year were marked with rituals. Graves, May Devotions, Corpus Christi, the parade of Lajkonik Hobby Horse played an disproportionate role in the life of Krakow. The sense of decoration was on the rise. After the Resurrection Mass talk in all the salons concentrated on how superbly beautiful Bishop Dunajewski looked with a tiara worn over his silver hair. He was discussed like others would discuss an actress. It's either 3 May, or the funeral of Mickiewicz, or the arrival of the Archduke. Tarnowski's term as rector was extended by three years, as there was some celebration in store, and nobody looked as handsome in a toga as him." (*Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński Znasz li ten kraj?*). This sense of solemnisation, feasting, and merrymaking has survived in Krakow to this day. Nowhere else in Poland do all the events honouring something or someone work as well as here.



The clock in Collegium Maius, Jagiellonian University Museum



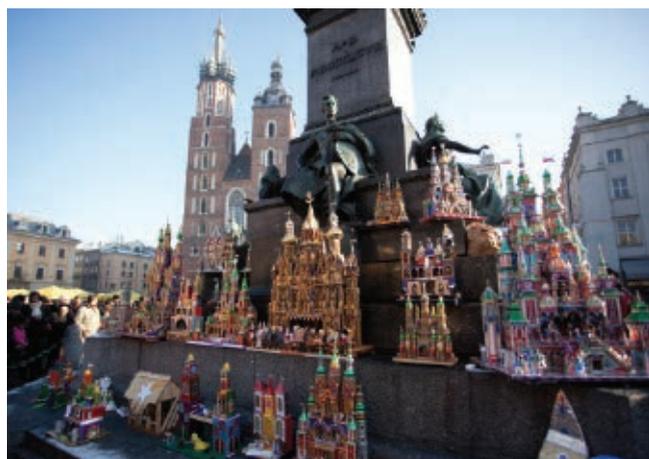
Tadeusz Kościuszko. If legend is to be believed, it was constructed at the command of King Casimir the Great for his lover, Sarah, in

Nativity Scenes

Close to Christmas, a group of young people move across the Main Market Square in the falling snow carrying a huge silvery nativity scene. It contains the Cloth Hall and the bugler atop the tower of St Mary's. The Krakow nativity scenes always make references to the architecture of the city and have very rich façades with a plenitude of carefully made detail and filigree decorations. They are a mass of turrets, balustrades, cornices, columns, protrusions, and imitation stained-glass. They are built on wooden skeletons of hardboard, cardboard and papier-mâché, and covered in glossy tinfoil. Masons Michał and Leon Ezenkier are considered the precursors of the nativity scenes inspired by Krakow architecture, as they built the first in 1860. They were followed by other masons, jobless in wintertime. Krakow nativity scenes can be admired in the Historical Museum of Krakow (MHK, Rynek Główny 25).



the 14th century. Today you can enjoy a meal here, under the Gothic vaulting decorated with murals by Józef Mehoffer. Somewhat further on, in the Under the Lizards (Pod Jaszczurami) House at No. 8, Poland's oldest student club operates. Just on the other side of the entrance to Grodzka Street you enter Wierzynek (Rynek Główny 15), where the 20-day feast organised by King Casimir the Great in 1364 attracted Emperor Charles IV, Louis the Great King of Hungary, Valdemar IV Atterdag King of Denmark, and Peter I de Lusignan King of Cyprus and titu-



The traditional nativity scene competition at the foot of the Adam Mickiewicz monument

lar King of Jerusalem.

It's hard to shake off history while in the Market Square. In the 13th century High Duke of Poland Boleslaus the Modest (Bolesław Wstydlivy) promised merchants an appropriate place to do their business: the **Cloth Hall**. Initially, the structure standing in the centre of the Main Market Square was no more than a street flanked by stalls on both sides. To increase the safety of the merchants arriving here with their goods, the gates were locked for the night. The street was roofed over around 1300, and in the 14th



century King Casimir the Great had a long (108×18 m) building replace the single stalls. In 1555, the original Cloth Hall was consumed by fire. The reconstruction attracted an Italian sculptor cum architect Giovanni Mario Padovano. The parapet wall crowning the building and the gargoyles, probably the work of Jan Frankstein, and the gargoyles by Santi Gucci, court artist of King Sigismund Augustus, date back to that time, and the arcaded gallery running along the building – to the 19th century.

Let's take a look at the Cloth Hall from a somewhat different angle. Let's try to find **torch snuffers** (they are right by the entrances). In the 19th century, Krakow was still drowned in darkness at night-time, and your path had to be lit with a torch. Once you have, however, reached your destination, you had to quench the flame. That's how the snuffers came into being. In the morning, the night guard would extinguish the still glowing brands. They have survived in the walls of the building to this day, and can be found in Krakow in św. Jana, Kanoniczna, and Sławkowska streets. The **Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Art** on the first floor of the **Cloth Hall** boasts a collection of paintings and sculptures by eminent artists from the 18th and 19th centuries, including

Marcello Bacciarelli, Jan Matejko (notably Prussian Homage), Piotr Michałowski, Józef Chełmoński, and Henryk Siemiradzki, who started the museum by donating his Nero's Torches to the city in 1879.

It's enough to descend below the paving of the Main Market Square to the **Rynek Underground** to discover the history of Krakow. Exceptional on a European scale, this archaeological reservation covers nearly 4000 m². The superbly prepared interactive exhibition in

the Footsteps of Krakow's European Identity lets you not only see objects but also hear the sounds of the mediaeval city: the crying of merchants, the hubbub of the street, the calls of the drivers. You walk between the stone and brick walls of the cellars, along fragments of cobbled streets. You look at mediaeval tools used 600 years ago, hygiene utensils, playing dice, and the points of Tatar arrows. The exhibition is complemented with holograms and screenings of documentary films. The mechanical



Piwnica pod Baranami Cabaret (Rynek Główny 27)

Permeated with the restless spirit of perhaps the last true Krakow Bohemian, the legendary Piotr Skrzynecki (1930–97), this is an enclave of unusual songs and monologues, and refined and poetic humour. Despite the raging censorship, it was an island of unfettered freedom and bracing optimism among omnipresent communism. The oldest operating Polish cabaret (continuously since 1956) is enshrouded in many a legend. Under the command of Skrzynecki, it has attracted performances by Wiesław Dymny, Ewa Demarczyk, Krzysztof Litwin, Mieczysław Świącicki, Marek Grechuta, Krystyna Zachwatowicz, Jacek Wójcicki, and many others as well as recognised composers – Zygmunt Konieczny, Jan Kanty Pawluśkiewicz, and Zbigniew Preisner. Some of them still turn up on stage. The little Gothic cellar in the Potocki Mansion can sit an audience of no more than 80, as it always has. Traditional "Piwnica" Christmas Eve, Herring, and Easter Egg parties are still organised. With no advertisements or tickets, they attract those in the know, and free contributions are welcome. The enchanted world of cabaret under Gothic vaults certainly needs visiting, even when there is no show, as the bar opens every day at 7pm and remains open until the last guest has left.



theatre offers a show, A Legend of Ancient Krakow, especially for children, who can also enjoy themselves to their hearts content in a specially designed room.

On the way to St Mary's Church, we pass by the **monument to Adam Mickiewicz** (built in 1898, demolished by the Germans in 1940, to be rebuilt again in 1955 on the centenary of the poet's death). This is a favourite haunt for tourists and locals, and a gathering place for political and other demonstrations, assorted protests, and wedding cavalcades. Every year poets read their works at its foot, and on 24 December, florists lay down red and white bouquets.

Before entering St Mary's, let's enter the adjacent **Mariacki Square**



Mariacki Square silent by night

(that's where the visitor entrance is located). Apart from visiting the main church of the city, it is essential to take a peek into the 14th-century St Barbara's, and to stop by the lavishly decorated external chapel. The square is a cosy,

charming place, perfect for listening to the bugle call (perfect acoustics, you can easily see the bugler who usually waves back at tourists), and dropping a coin into the **Fountain with a Student** (a copy of a figure from St Mary's high altar which was a gift of Krakow craftsmen to the city in 1958) is rumoured to ensure your return to Krakow.

Before we drown in the atmosphere of the basilica church, let's try to spot the **jougs** by the entrance to the church. They are metal rings placed on the wrists or neck of the person sentenced to be exposed before the public (this form of punishment was only discontinued in Krakow in 1779). Often an object connected to the crime was placed by the hapless criminal, for instance women punished for adultery had a wreath placed on their head.



Bugle Call from St Mary's

There is yet another legend, the legend of the Krakow bugle call, connected to Tatars. Every hour, a melody played on the trumpet flows to the four sides of the world from the taller tower of St Mary's. The watchman first turns to Wawel, warning the king, then to the town hall, for the Mayor and aldermen, later to St Florian's Gate – to alert those entering Krakow, and finally to the Small Market Square for the merchants and traders. A melody known by every Pole (as it has been aired each midday since 1927 by Polish Radio I) breaks off mid-tune.

According to legend, the watchman on the tower noticed the approaching Tatars. Eager to warn the people, he began to sound the alarm, yet one of the Tatar arrows pierced his throat never letting him finish its melody. Although he died, his sacrifice met its purpose, as the city was saved. Here the legend ends, and historians can only confirm that the bugle call has indeed been played since the Middle Ages. In the morning and evening, the buglers announced the opening and closing of the gates, they would also warn of fires and other dangers. However, the origin of the custom of playing it to the four sides of the world is unknown.



There is the **lantern**, funded by the city councillors in gratitude for saving the people of Krakow from a deadly plague, which burns by the painting of Our Lady of Graces on the wall of the church on the Floriańska Street side. Pestilences quite frequently haunted the city. The image of the Graceful Lady of Faenza was intended to bring relief. People prayed here, asking to be saved.

When the danger was gone, grateful city councillors installed two images of Our Lady of Graces (the other is in a side altar inside the church, on the left-hand side of the chancel). The light of the lantern commemorates the scourge and superstition suggests that once the light dies out the noxious airs will return.

Finally, there comes **St Mary's Church (Basilica)**, resplendent with all its treasures including a Gothic font, the Renaissance ciborium by Giovanni Maria Padovano, and 17th century stalls. Yet its greatest glory is the Gothic altar carved in lime wood by the master Wit Stwosz (Veit Stoss) from Nuremberg in 1477–89: some figures in this huge (11×13m) structure stand approx. 2.8 m tall and its five wings make it a pentaptych. Be sure to be in the chancel around 11:50am to see the altar open.

A legend claims that a yellow slipper, the little shoe of the youngest helper which was a gift from the Nuremberg master, has been lodged behind the altar for five centuries. Just when the opening ceremony was about to start, it turned out that one of the huge figures needed a minor adjustment. The task was completed by the youngest and most nimble of the boys. Unfortunately, while climbing the altar, he had a shoe slip from his foot. As he came from a poor



Interior of St Mary's Church

family, the loss was a tragedy. Luckily, King Casimir the Jagiellonian noticed that and had the little one presented with a new pair of shoes immediately after holy mass.

Generally, everything inside St Mary's is enshrouded in legend, and imbued with mysticism. The Chapel of Our Lady of Loreto is where King John III Sobieski prayed before departing to relieve the Siege of Vienna. The Christ from

the black stone crucifix, made by Wit Stwosz, spoke to a priest who neglected the singing of the psalms. You can climb the **Bugle Call Tower** – the taller tower of St Mary's – by scaling 239 stone and wooden steps, to look down at the Main Market Square and adjacent streets from a height of 54 m above the roofs of the old city. If the weather is good, you can even see the Tatra Mountains.

Vis a Vis Bar (Rynek Główny 29)



This is the place where Krakow artists and people living a life in counter-current meet. This is where Piotr Skrzynecki, creator and animator of Piwnica pod Baranami used to spend his time. An exceptionally picturesque figure, he was a mad visionary and organiser of a plethora of extraordinary balls, fiestas, and happenings. The bar is situated on the ground floor of the 15-century Pod Blachą Mansion (rebuilt in the second half of the 19th century). You are welcomed from afar by a sculpture of Piotr sitting at his table over a cup of coffee. Locals come here to drink a shot of espresso or spirits, and tourists – to take a selfie.

NORTH OF THE SQUARE

This section of the city centre is alive with history, heritage, people, and shops. Let's start visiting this part of the city from the highly atmospheric Corner of Doubting Thomas (Zaulek Niewiernego Tomasza), as the nook just round

the bend from where św. Jana St. meets św. Tomasza St. is called. Unless we tarry a while longer in one of the cafés or pubs eagerly visited by Krakow bohemians, it won't take a minute to reach **Floriańska Street**. It's hard to imagine

Gothic cellars



No other city in Europe features such a plethora of Gothic cellars adapted to the needs of art, the gourmet world, and night-time amusement. There are over 100 of them around the Main Market Square, and they jointly cover 75,000 m². The Gothic vaults of the Pałac pod Baranami still host the Cellars under the Rams (Piwnica pod Baranami) Cabaret started by Piotr Skrzynecki, and there are discos organised under the mediaeval vaulting of Pod Jaszczurami Student Club.

a visit to Krakow without walking what may be considered the most elegant street in the city. Walking towards the Barbican, you pass by the **Pod Różą Hotel (No. 14)**, which hosted Franz Liszt and



Decorations on the façade of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre



Floriańska Street



The Barbican



Juliusz Słowacki Theatre

Emperor Alexander I of Russia. The Latin motto on the frieze of its Renaissance portal reads "May this house remain standing even when an ant has drunk the sea and a tortoise has run around the world". Moreover, how could you fail to visit the legendary **Micha-**

lik's Den (Jama Michalika) with all its paintings, satirical drawings, and amazing furniture. In 1895 Jan Apolinary Michalik started a confectionery here. As it was close to the Academy of Fine Arts, young painters soon visited it by the dozen. Fortune played a trick

on the delicate confectioner, who loathed the life of the "artiste" and "was revolted with drunkenness, noise, and brawls". Cakes, the love of his life, didn't work, and he owed his fame and glory to a back room of his shop, occupied by Krakow freethinkers. He turned into a coffee house owner, a down-to-earth industrialist turned patron of the local Bohemian movement. The place became especially famous thanks to the Zielony Balonik (Little Green Balloon) literary and artistic cabaret operating here in 1905-12 (occasionally even until 1915). Much might have changed, yet this wild and crazy Krakow still exists. It has shifted from Michalik's Den to Kazimierz, and is now moving on over the Father Bernatek Footbridge to Podgórze on the other bank of the Vistula.

The street is enclosed by a section of the defence wall with



the only preserved ancient entrance to the city – **St Florian's Gate** (begun in the 14th century). The area is a favourite haunt of non-professional painters and fine arts students who sell their works here; Krakow related paintings, landscapes, and flowers predominate. Even though a handful of famous contemporary artists used to sell their works here, you're not likely to find sublime art here, but a souvenir painting from Krakow can certainly be found. Guarded by the Guild of Furriers, St Florian's Gate used to be an element in the city's fortifications, and was connected to the nearby **Barbican**. The latter is the largest building of its type in Europe, and the only one to be perfectly preserved. Built in the 15th century, it defended the approaches to the city. Its walls are 3m thick, its diameter is 24.4 m, and the 130 loopholes

on four levels serve as means to defend the area. In summer the Barbican becomes the stage for concerts and artistic productions.

Should you turn right before St Florian's Gate, it will take you to Ducha Świętego Square, opposite the **Juliusz Słowacki Theatre**, whose building is modelled on the operas in Paris and Vienna. Its opening on 21 October 1893 was a reason for grand celebration. Its first director, Tadeusz Pawlikowski, applied his charisma, extravagance, and daring mind to develop it into the leading Polish stage. All premieres were followed by heated discussions in Krakow salons and artistic cafés. People were made scared and anxious, yet most of all the productions forced people to think. Today it is not only used for theatre productions, but also the highly successful **Poetry Salon** organised thanks to Anna Dymna

in the lobby on every Sunday (no admission fee, just ask for a free ticket).

In **Ducha Świętego Square**, animal lovers may be especially interested in taking a peek into the Church of the Holy Cross, once a harbour for beggars, orphans and abandoned children, the sick, and the homeless, which today hosts artists and friends of the animals. A mass for people and their pets and animals is held here on a September Sunday. Built in 1300, the church stands in a peaceful corner at the entrance to św. Krzyża Street. The murals, Baroque altar, and a bronze font from 1423 demand admiration, as does the palm vaulting artfully supported on the church's only pillar which symbolises the tree of life.

IN AND AROUND THE PLANTY GARDEN RING



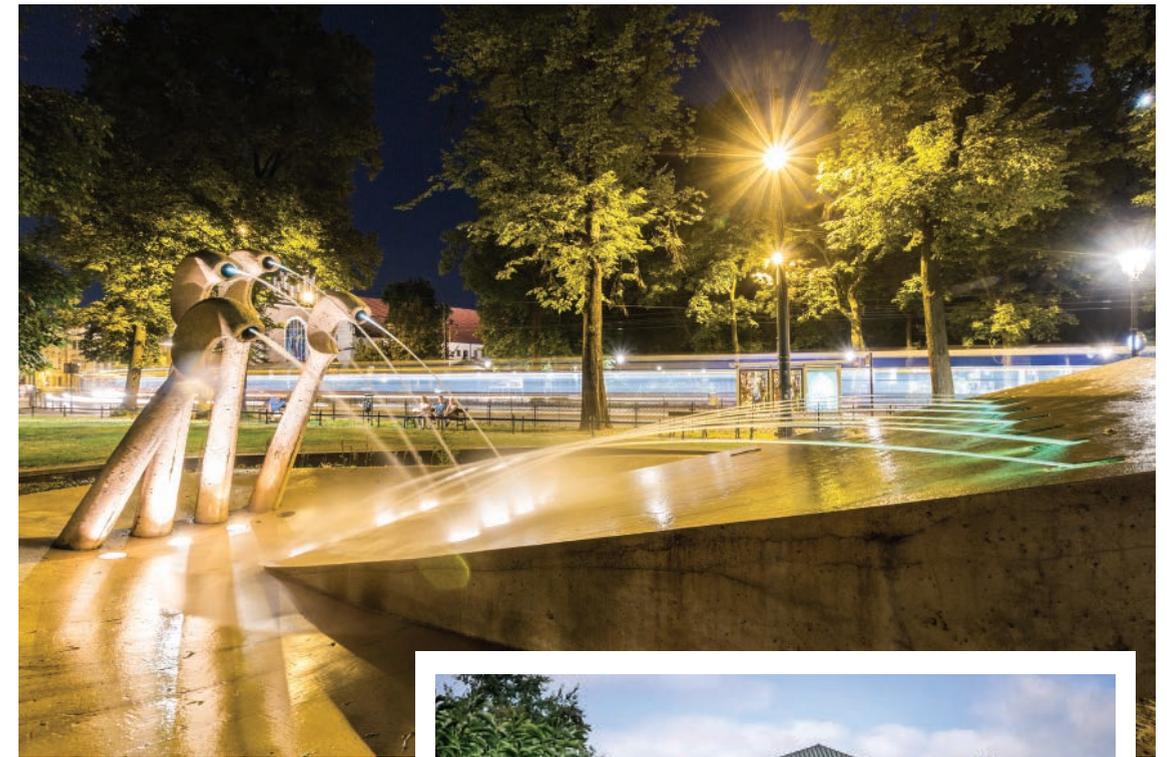
Planty is more than a favourite route for walks: in summer you simply follow the garden ring for the cool, and in winter – to see the sparkling snow. Today it's hard to imagine that even in the first half of the 19th century the area was intersected by mires of sludge, overgrown with thistles, nettles, and hemlock. The green ring surrounding the historic city centre was only developed when the moat had been filled in and the

surrounding area planted (hence the name).

Approaching **Sławkowska Street**, turn into **Reformacka**. The **catcombs** of the Church of St Casimir, by the Reformed Franciscan Monastery, contain mummified bodies in monastic habits, Eastern-type costumes of the Polish nobility (*kontusze*), and crinolines, all perfectly preserved despite the passage of centuries. This is the only such place in Krakow. This is

also where you come in difficult and hopeless situations, especially if the dire needs are connected to money and employment, as these fall in the range of problems that are the domain of St Expeditus whose figure stands in a side chapel. Students before examinations, actors before the premiere, and people about to face the court trying to appeal against unfavourable decisions all address their requests to him.

The Collegium Novum of the Jagiellonian University



The Palace of Art in Szczepański Square

Reformacka Street takes you to **Szczepański Square** and the **Helena Modrzejewska National Stary Theatre**, which opened in 1789 and is today one of the best Polish stages. The interior was lavishly decorated early in the 20th century, and Józef Gardecki designed the frieze on the outside. It is worth visiting the museum with digitalised material on the history of the theatre, or else you can click a link to its remote version (www.cyfrowemuzeum.stary.pl). Let us, however, return to Planty. Round the corner from Szczepańska Street you'll find the **Palace of Art** and the **Bunkier Sztuki** with exhibitions, café, and bookshop. Go further and only a block away down the Planty you'll reach **St Anne's Church**, an academic church from its earliest days.

In the 14th century, rich Jews used to live in the area of św. Anny Street. The most famous and wealthy of them, Lewko (who has a corner named after himself in Kazimierz) was the royal banker and overseer of the Royal Mint. The construction of the Collegiate Church of St Anne's was ordered by the University authorities in 1689 to replace an older one that was too small. The new church was designed by a Dutchman, Tylman van Gameren, while the

portal and the interior with its fantastically lavish stucco decoration are works of Baldassare Fontana. The church is famous for its Baroque interior and a Baroque organ boasting exceptionally good sound.

Following Planty, you will find the main building of the Jagiellonian University, the **Collegium Novum**, in the style of the Gothic revival, within its perimeter. A **monument to Nicolas Copernicus** stands in a cluster of trees.

Protected by the tree canopies we reach Franciszkańska Street intersecting the garden ring, where popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis enjoyed conversations with the people of Krakow from the **famous window in the Palace of Krakow Bishops**.

Cross to the other side of the street and enter the **Franciscan Church**. The unadorned Gothic silhouette conceals colourful Art Nouveau murals and breath-taking stained-glass decoration by Stanisław Wyspiański. The windows of the chancel sport the four elements and the figures of Blessed Salomea and St Francis. The entire church is dominated by the monumental stained-glass God the Father – Let there Be! over the main door. The walls are decorated with motifs of Polish flowers. The mysterious **Archbrotherhood of the Passion of Christ** has met in the Chapel of the **Passion of Christ** (north of the main aisle) for their services since 1620. At 4pm on every Friday of Lent a procession of hooded men dressed in black habits begins its slow march along the church. The brethren wield staffs terminating in a skull, while the church resounds with a mournful chant: *Memento homo mori* ("Man, remember about death"). The archbrotherhood was set up in the 16th century, and its mission included ransoming convicts and rehabilitating them into society.



FROM THE MARKET SQUARE TO WAWEL AND ALONG THE VISTULA RIVER EMBANKMENTS TO KAZIMIERZ



St Mary Magdalene Square

Next to Pod Jaszczurami, the oldest active student club, take a **discreetly located passage** from the Main Market Square to Stolarska Street. You can take a peek into the **Dominican Church**. Now cross **Wszystkich Świętych Square** and enter **Grodzka Street**. When Wit Stwoszc still lived at No. 39, this was a trade route from Hungary to the North and to the West. The street was also used by Polish kings proceeding from St Mary's Church to Wawel. Grodzka, flanked by 65 townhouses, has remained the longest street in the city centre. Busy and full of tourists and students hastening to classes, it is much more peaceful by night. An exceptional attraction of the 17th-century **Church of St Paul and St Peter** is provided by demonstrations of the Foucault pendulum providing testimony to the rotation of the Earth (at 10am, 11am, and midday on Thursdays).

One of Krakow's oldest churches is literally next door: **St Andrew's** was built in the 11th century and received its current form in the 12th/13th. It is quiet and peaceful here. This is sometimes

Wianki – Fête de la Musique

Psychedelic, rock, jazz, avant-garde, classic, folk: on the Saturday closest to Midsummer Night (24 June), the whole city resounds with music. Several dozen concerts are held all around Krakow: in the Main Market Square (and nearby squares), in Podgórze, Nowa Huta, and Kazimierz. They are accompanied by competitions, workshops, and dances. Every year is somewhat different, yet each is equally attractive, with a grand finale around midnight on the Bulwar Czerwieński Embankment at the foot of Wawel. Attracted by the magnificent annual fireworks show, crowds are already arriving in the evening. And in the small hours, everyone who still has not had enough can dance till sunrise in the numerous Krakow clubs. Tradition makes this June night a night full of magic, miracles, and love. A spell certainly worth participating in.



broken by the songs of the nuns from the Monastery of Poor Clares adjacent to the church. In summer the interior is fragrant with the flowers standing on the altar, and on 24 December this becomes the backdrop to one of the most enchanting Shepherds' Masses in Krakow. One of oldest Polish inscriptions in stone was discovered on the first floor staircase: the signature of a 12th-century mason. The treasury contains nativity play figures from the early 14th century, which are among the oldest in Europe.

From here, you can cross the diminutive square devoted to St Mary Magdalene with its fountain, and enter **Kanonicza Street**. A walk here is real time travel. The Renaissance and Baroque mansions and the secretive quadrangles with their galleries and loggias also boast magnificent polychrome murals. One of the oldest is the 14th-century **Dom Rycerski** (Knights' House, ul. Kanonicza 6), while the 15th-century House of Jan Długosz, also known as the Chapter House (ul. Kanonicza 5), boasts a 16th-century arcaded gallery in the yard. In 1951-63 the house at No. 19 used to be the **home of the future**



The Arcaded Courtyard in Wawel

pope, Karol Wojtyła; today it is the **Archdiocesan Museum** which has had his room recreated inside.

The **Mansion of Bishop Samuel Maciejewski** at No. 1 certainly deserves special attention, as does the crenellated parapet wall at No. 2, and Renaissance façade and Gothic detail inside the **Pod Trzema Koronami** **townhouse (Under Three Crowns, No. 7)**.

Even if you don't feel like examining all the details and murals, and you have not come here to dig into the mediaeval history

of Krakow, you simply have to go along Kanonicza. It's best done in the evening, when the moon floats over Wawel Hill. The silvery glow seems to transport people into the days when the canons of Wawel Cathedral strode in the street.

Finally, there's Wawel Hill: the Royal Castle, Cathedral, and the tombs of the Polish kings. The national and cultural symbol of Poland. You can climb the hill from the end of Kanonicza and Grodzka streets.

The castle, which provided residence to the kings of Poland

The Wawel Dragon at the entrance to the Dragon's Den



of the Piast, Jagiellon, and Vasa dynasties for centuries, is entered through a spacious Renaissance courtyard. The halls on the ground floor just left of the entrance conceal the remnants of the 11-century Church of St Gereon, which holds a special artefact: the Wawel chakra. Esotericists believe it to be one of seven founts of energy in the world (others are situated in Delhi, Mecca, Delphi, Rome, Jerusalem, and in Vysehrad in Prague). The chakras protect cities and their populations, and are known to favour spiritual growth.

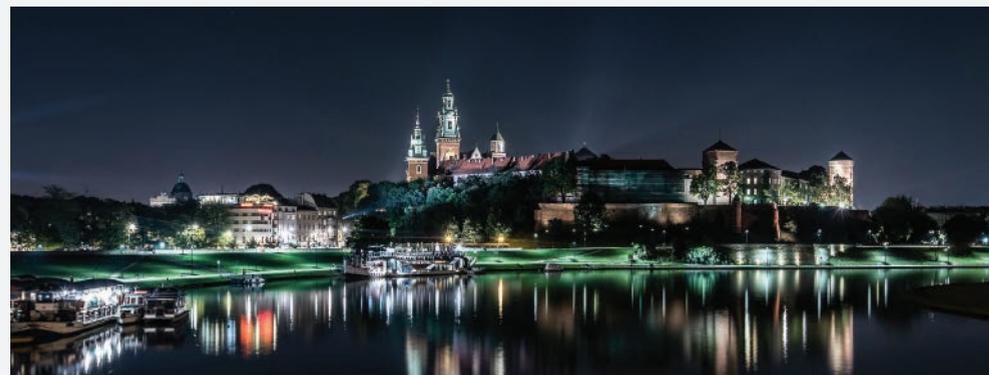
Adjacent to the castle is the **Archcathedral Basilica of St Stanislaus and St Wenceslaus**, with the characteristic golden dome. This is where the kings of Poland received crowns on their heads, and where, in the vaults, their mortal remains were deposited after death. You enter the cathedral through a gate from the days of King Casimir the Great. If you look up, you can easily spot three large bones by the door, hanging there since the Middle Ages. A study from 1937 asserts they belonged to a whale, a mammoth, and a rhinoceros. A legend instructs us that if one of the chains should break, the cathedral will collapse, or, according to another version, the world will end.

The Sigismund Tower with the Sigismund Bell funded by King Sigismund the Old (Zygmunt Stary), stands by the north wall of the Cathedral. A product of the Krakow foundry of Hans Beham from Nuremberg, it pealed for the first time on 13 July 1521. The bell does not ring often as it only announces the greatest of festivities, whether church or state. It weighs 10,980 kg, and its clapper - 300 kg. There are only 28 bell ringers gathered in the elite Brotherhood of Sigismund Bell Ringers, who have the privilege of ringing

the most famous of Polish bells. It takes from 8 to 12 people to swing the bell into motion.

Let's come down from the hill to the Vistula embankments. There is a den in the limestone rock at the foot of Wawel. A legend speaks of a horrible dragon roosting there in the days of King Krak. The monster terrorised the area, capturing cattle and even people, and no one knew how to vanquish him. One day a shoemaker by the name Skuba arrived in the court and promised to kill the dragon. He sewed a sheepskin into a bag, filled it with pitch and sulphur, and threw it to the beast. The monster devoured the bait. Soon he felt a horrible burning in his belly, and began to drink water from the Vistula. He guzzled it until he burst. In reward, the shoemaker wed one of the king's daughters, and used the dragon's hide to make himself a pair of boots. Today children love visiting the monument of the Krakow Dragon, whose maw spits fire every few minutes.

Going downstream along the embankments, you reach the walled **Church on the Rock ("na Skalce")** connected to the devotion to St Stanislaus, patron saint of Krakow and Poland. Every year his relics are carried in a special procession from Wawel to the



Barges/Vessels on the Vistula



The Church "on the Rock"

Church "na Skatce" on the first Sunday following 8 May (the Feast of St Stanislaus).

The Archbishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyła regularly led the procession, and in earlier days the Polish kings would make such a pilgrimage on the eve of their coronation.

Entering the church gardens from Paulińska Street, you walk into a world of peace and harmony. The pond of St Stanislaus, believed to be an ancient pagan ritual site, is decorated with a late Baroque figure of the martyr as the hacked body of Bishop Stanislaus of Szczepanów, executed on

the orders of King Boleslaus the Bold (Bolesław Śmiały) in 1079, was thrown into it. Standing nearby is the **Pauline Church of St Michael the Archangel and St Stanislaus**. The **crypt** below it boasts the **graves of eminent** Poles, notably Jan Długosz, Stanisław Wyspiański, and Czesław Miłosz.

Take the other gate to walk out into **Skateczna Street**, submerged in silence. You simply need to walk it just to feel the pleasant sense of peace, even if you are not overfond of visiting places. It's hard to say what builds this air, whether the prayers of the Augustinian fathers and sisters or perhaps the atmosphere of the Church "on the Rock" and the gardens stretching beyond the monastery wall; certainly good energy radiates from everywhere around.

Pass under the covered walk



St Catherine's Church

connecting the Convent of Augustinian Nuns to the **Hungarian (aka Ścibor) Chapel** in the **Church of St Catherine (and St Margaret)**, and enter the Gothic church founded in 1363 for the Augustinian Order by King Casimir the Great in 1363. It was allegedly a royal expiation for the murder of Father Marcin Baryczka, who, on behalf of the bishop, admonished the monarch for his immoral life (the king was famous for his affairs

and had plenty of mistresses). The southern aisle ends in a sculpture of St Rita of Cascia (1381–1457), the patron saint of mothers and wives and matters that in human terms are hopeless. It made its way to the church in 1944, most probably thanks to Father Alfons Hilary Kurowski. It is one of the last designs by an eminent and unconventional architect Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz. A devotion to St Rita and the blessing of the roses

is held at 6pm on the 22nd day of each month. Roses and other symbols connected to the saint can be bought in the diminutive 15-century belfry standing next to the church, on the corner of Augustiańska and Skateczna streets. From here, it's only a moment to reach the heart of Kazimierz – the Nowy or Żydowski (i.e. new or Jewish) Square. Why don't you follow **Rabbi Meisels Street**, fragrant with bread.

KAZIMIERZ

Historic synagogues, Gothic churches, galleries with paintings by recognised and avant-garde artists, complement the unassuming pubs and bars, where apart from beer, snacks, and dishes from all corners of the world, you can listen to live music, and see films and avant-garde productions. This is the place to do your pub crawling, and spend time on chairs set in front of the cafés.

Life in Kazimierz is focussed on the former centres of the Jewish district, including **Szeroka Street**, **Plac Nowy** so popular among the young, and the hip **Judah Square**, and shifts towards the Vistula across Wolnica Square, closer to the Father Bernatek Footbridge.

The refined atmosphere of Szeroka is a product of history, architecture, and assorted places to eat with the tastes of Jewish, Indian, Polish, Arab, and European cuisine. This is a good place to listen to music in the evening. Should you see an unearthly light in the window of the small townhouse at No. 22 (former Na Górcze Synagogue) by night, know that the spirit of Nathan Spira, an 18th-century magician and cabalist is continuing to examine the secrets of the universe.

If you enter Szeroka from Miodowa Street, pass along the stone and brick wall of the **Remuh Cemetery**. When it was renovated in the 1950s, unidentified fragments of the tombs were installed into the inner side of the wall. This



Arcades in Krakowska Street

created the one and only mosaic of irregular stone shards covered in Hebrew inscriptions, ornaments, and motifs of Jewish burial symbolism. With time the wall became known as the Wall of Tears.

Matzevahs – tomb stalls with symbols straight from the Torah, the world of Talmud and the great rabbis, are drowned in green. The necropolis operated from 1555 until the last burials around 1800; it covers 4.5 ha and stretches between Szeroka, Miodowa, Jakuba, and Ciemna streets. The **grave of Rabbi Moses Isserles** has enjoyed great fame since the 16th century. It attracts both Jewish pilgrims and those who ask for support at difficult moments. Rabbi Remuh (1525–72) was a wise and learned man, who brought together a love of knowledge with piety and goodness. He showed it not only to the followers of Judaism. They say that

requests addressed to the rabbi are often fulfilled. Perhaps, therefore, it may be worth your while leaving your wish on the rabbi's grave?

While in the cemetery, look for the symbols telling the story of the lives of the bygone citizens of this district, chiselled in the grave markers. A candlestick is an attribute of a woman lighting up Saturday lights, a goose quill or open book refers to a copyist.

Behind the cemetery, adjacent to the 16th-century **Remuh Synagogue**, where worship still continues, you can turn into the diminutive **Lewkowa Street** that seems to be forgotten by time. Lewko was an eminent figure in the Jewish community: financier, administrator of the Wieliczka and Bochnia salt mines, and supervisor of the Royal Mint for King Casimir the Great. No city noise reaches



Shops in Szeroka Street

this place shielded by the tall cemetery wall on the one side and the rears of the townhouses standing in Szeroka Street on the other. This is where the true atmosphere of the old Kazimierz lingers on.

Ciemna Street is several metres away. If you turn left, you have reentered Szeroka Street just next to the **Old Synagogue (Alta**

Shul, a museum since 1958). The highly expressive exhibition portrays the culture and religion of Jews living in Krakow. In the hall, attention is turned to a cistern of “living water” and a 13th-century tin basin; in the main prayer room – the metal bimah used for liturgical purposes, a stone money box, and the ark (aron kodesh) for storing the Torah scrolls.

The pleasure of visiting Krakow's Kazimierz lies in doing it as if incidental to other activities: between a small snack, a glass of wine, a cup of coffee, and a serving of ice cream. Should you return from the Old Synagogue to Ciemna Street, you will probably stop in a smallish square on the corner of Jakuba. Stretched confidently on a deck chair, you can catch a breath before going further, and have a drink and a snack. Not far away from here, where Wąska meets Wawrzyńca Street, another small square – Judah – is adorned not only by remarkable murals, but also vans and trailers turned into food trucks. The place attracts us with its fragrance of burgers, tortillas, and potato chips. You can have delicious fish and grilled vegetables, and wash them down with kvass. Everything is fresh and cooked with passion. Rolls are baked on the spot, and the vegetables come from farms near Krakow. Getting to Nowy Square from here won't take you four minutes.



Remuh Cemetery wall

Nowy (Żydowski) Square

This area was included in the Jewish part of Kazimierz in 1608, and was mostly occupied by the Jews banished from Bohemia in 1500. The life of Kazimierz concentrates in this, the New or Jewish Square. In the morning fruit, cheap jewellery, odds and ends, and trinkets and antiques are sold all around the **Okraglak**. The stalls with grill-barbecued sausages, shish kebabs, black puddings, and Oscypek cheeses open past midday. You eat them under the sky or the eaves of your stall. However, the place owes its character to the pubs and bars in a ring around the square. You walk from one to another, especially in the evenings. Life and the din won't fade until dawn, especially at weekends. The square is a film location, and home to festivals, events and concerts. It's been colourful and homely almost from the moment of its establishment.

Our suggestion is to leave Nowy Square along Meiselsa Street. Perhaps the most charming corner of Kazimierz awaits you im-



mediately behind the Centre for Jewish Culture (which also has a pleasant café and a roof terrace with a fantastic vista) – it is the **courtyard** opposite No. 21. Come spring, people sit here at wooden tables to have a drink and a snack under the horse chestnut tree. Yet the tree is not the only attraction of the place. Move deeper into the courtyard and see a typical Jewish tenement house extending its long external balconies around you. The location starred in Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* in a scene where Jews were evicted from their homes.

This is how we enter **Józefa Street**, full of antique and second-hand shops and galleries. Here we can find works of established and debutante artists, as well as by art naïve painters and sculptors.

In Józefa, you're welcome to try French cuisine (at very reasonable prices), and have delicious pancakes and a good roast hand of pork. *Eszeweria* commands a great view of the roofs, the tower and the spire of Corpus Christi Church. The café only takes up a small section of a huge courtyard thickly overgrown with brambles, mallows, and mint at the back of a huge mediaeval house standing in *Bożego Ciąła Street* and the building of the monastery of the Order of the Canons Lateran Regular.

The Corpus Christi Church is one of the most magnificent Gothic churches of Krakow. It was founded in 1340 by King Casimir the Great. Legend speaks of robbers who stole a monstrance. When they realised it was gilded rather than gold, they cast it out into a pond in what was at the time the village of *Bawół*. The water began to shine with a singular glow. The precious artefact was fished out, and the King found the location suitable to build a church. You alight on the green sward surrounding the church, which shows how the street level of the city has risen. Stained-glass from the



Wolnica Square

15th century has been preserved in one of the chancel windows, and a Gothic painting of Madonna banishing demons graces the treasury.

Go out from the church to Wolnica Square. Giving the city its charter in 1355, King Casimir (Kazimierz) the Great wanted the new city to be as splendid as Krakow, and its main square as big as that of his royal capital. Malicious tongues believe it was the doing of *Esterka*, the king's lover, as when

Krakow reproached the monarch for indecent behaviour, she suggested "Come, love, why don't you build yourself a new city? Best call it Kazimierz." Moved by King John Albert (Jan Olbracht) from Krakow, Jews moved in here in the 15th century. Wolnica Square was the centre of the Christian side of Kazimierz. The building of the former town hall is today the seat of the **Ethnographic Museum** (magnificent collections of folk costumes and nativity scenes).

In the shadow of **Mostowa Street**, you can reach the Vistula River and the **Father Bernatek Footbridge** in a matter of minutes. From its opening in 2010, the foot (and cycle) bridge became a favourite haunt, and a pleasant brace tying together Krakow and Podgórze. "Love padlocks", with the names of lovers, cropped up here soon after completion. You simply fix the padlock to the railing of the bridge, and throw the key into the river.

The Father Laetus Bernatek Footbridge



Jewish traditions

The world of Krakow Jews with its colourful traditions was lost in the turmoil of the Second World War. However, Sabbath dinners are celebrated in some Kazimierz hotels and the Galicia Jewish Museum, and such Jewish delicacies as *tzimmes*, *gefilte fisz*, and *kreplach* can be tasted in restaurants. It may be worth remembering that most of the dishes and customs were connected to holidays commemorating Jewish history and are enshrined in their religion. On Rosh Hashanah – the New Year (September, October), the symbolic ram's head, alluding to Abraham's sacrifice, lay on a table among the honey challah, apples with honey, gingerbread cakes, and *tzimmes* made from slices of carrot symbolising gold coins. On Yom Kippur, a few days later, the table remained empty, as the last meal of *gefilte fisz*, *bullion*, and poultry

with vegetables was eaten on the evening beforehand. When time came for the Feast of the Tabernacles, *Sukkot*, known in Poland as *Kuczki*, everyone drank wine, and ate spring rolls (*holiszkes*) and *pierogi* (*kreplach*). December was the joyful time of Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, when delicious *latke* potato cakes were eaten. On Purim, the tables were graced with triangular cakes stuffed with poppy seed, honey, or jam. A month later, in April, Passover was celebrated symbolising the exodus of Jews from Egypt. The ritual feast contained a baked lamb shank bone (symbol of Abraham's sacrifice), an egg baked in its shell (symbol of life), bitter herbs of pungent taste, notably horseradish (time of the Egyptian captivity), and wine with thinly chopped nuts and apples. In May, on Shavuot, meat is replaced on the table by pancakes (*blinches*) and *pierogis* with cheese (*kreplach*).



PODGÓRZE



The Bell of Artist Blu, a mural in Józefińska Street

Chairs in the plac Bohaterów Getta square



(unorthodox building design, thought provoking exhibitions, performances and workshops). You take Nadwiślańska Street or Józefińska Street to **Plac Bohaterów Getta**, literally the square of the heroes of the ghetto. This was the centre of the ghetto operating in 1941–43. The **empty iron chairs** commemorate the segregation of Jews evicted from the nearby houses and their looted property.

The people gathered here were taken in trucks to concentration camps. If you follow Kącik and Lipowa streets, you are only a few minutes away from the **Oscar Schindler Enamel Factory**, MO-CAK Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, and the Glass and Ceramics Centre Lipowa 3.

You can also reach the centre of Podgórze – Podgórze Market Square – along Lwowska Street

The bridge made the other bank of the Vistula come alive. People come attracted by small restaurants and bars situated in its vicinity, and the sunsets over the river. In **Józefińska Street** on the other side, we are welcomed by The Bell of Artist Blu, a large mural that is a product of Art Boom Festival 2011; just a block farther on, there is Stanislaw Lem's robot painted on a residential block.

Cricoteka that is the Centre for Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor stands closer to the Vistula, in Nadwiślańska Street



Exhibition at the Oscar Schindler Enamel Factory



The Krakus Mound

and the picturesque Rękawka, where the rites of spring used to be celebrated in pre-Christian times. Sacrifices of eggs, apples and bread were made, and the dead were remembered.

To counter these traditions, with the advent of Christianity, the

church decided to set up nearby the diminutive **Church of St Benedict** (unfortunately open to visitors only on 21 March and 24 December). If you walk up Lasoty and Andrzeja Potebni streets, you reach the **colourful stairs** in Tatrzańska Street (they look best from the Potebni side). The place is hardly visited by locals, and is unknown to tourists. Pity, for it has a great deal of charm. Before climbing the first step, take a look back, as this is one of the best panoramas of the **Church of St Joseph**, providing a grand closure to

the southern face of the Podgórze Market Square. This impressive structure in the style of the Gothic revival has 3 aisles, and its spire topped tower is modelled on the taller tower of St Mary's. It is 74 m tall and dominates the cityscape of Podgórze.

The Father Bernatek Footbridge is only a few minutes away, of course unless you are waylaid by the kneipes (pubs and bars) and, why not: mozzarella with basil, rose or roasted coconut ice cream.

Ghetto: Jews of Krakow in the Second World War

Immediately after entering Krakow on 8 September 1939, the Nazis prohibited entry to the Main Market Square and the Planty garden ring to people of Jewish origin. On 3 March 1941 a ghetto was set up in Podgórze. In just 17 days all the Jews living in Krakow had to move in there. Around 17,000 people were crammed inside, and lived in horrible conditions until the ghetto was liquidated on 13 and 14 March 1943. The survivors were taken to concentration camps in Auschwitz and Plaszow, the latter established by the Germans in 1942–45 in the Podgórze district. Jews were killed here together with Poles, Gypsies, Hungarians, Italians, and Romanians.



Colourful stairs in Tatrzańska Street



Cricoteka

OUTSIDE THE PLANTY GARDEN RING. FROM THE YOUNG POLAND MOVEMENT TO A NOBELIST



Matopolska Garden of Art

Let Teodor Talowski (1857–1910), an eminent slightly eccentric architect, lover of birds and plants, be a pretext to saunter along this walk. He rebuilt the seat of the Sokół Gymnastic Society, designed houses in Retoryka Street, a bridge over Lubicz Street, and the Hospital of the Brothers Hospitallers of St John of God. His works give an impression of being torn out from some other time and space: a world governed by alchemy and magic, perhaps thanks to the sentences, ornamentation,

sculptures and bas reliefs placed on the façades. Talowski adored brick, and followed an alternative understanding of harmony: he emphasised differences in texture, hated obvious solutions, embellished asymmetricality and magnified detail.

The iron ball lodged in the wall of the **House Under the Spider (Pod Pająkiem, 1889)** on the corner of Batorego Street and **Karmelicka 35** is reminiscent of a siege or a careless magician who failed to foresee the results of his

experimentation. The house of red brick (some of which look purposefully crushed) reminds one of a castle with a tower. Gothic revival mingles with neo-Renaissance. The metal spider suspended over the sundial in the top section of the façade is the emblem of the house and patron of our walk. There'll be too many places trying to ensnare us into the web of temptations and pleasures. It's best to take a look at Talowski's house from the opposite corner. You can then retrace your steps

towards the Market Square and turn into Rajska Street to take a peek into the **Małopolska Garden of Art** at No. 12: home to creative artists, attractive lectures, unorthodox exhibitions and meetings (can be useful to check the programme online).

Between ul. Karmelicka and Dolnych Młynów, inside a compact downtown area dominated by 19th-century tenement houses, a green space has been created to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Wisława Szymborska (02.07.2023). The park, which is named after the Nobel Prize winner, can be seen from afar with a giant mural on the wall of a building at 28 Karmelicka Street, with a motto taken from one of Szymborska's poems, "Nic dwa razy". A small orchard with fruit trees recalls the Carmelite orchards that were once located here. In turn, the semi-circular space in the centre of the park, overgrown with grass and flowers, is a reference to the parade ground of an Austrian barracks. Along the main avenue, a cascading stream with aquatic vegetation was created, alluding in form to the fishponds historically found on Piasek. It also serves as a retention facility for rainwater from the park and surrounding buildings, mainly from the roof of the Voivodship Public Library building. About 125 trees were planted here – chestnut, maple, oak, hornbeam and poplar trees, as well as many species of fruit trees. The other, smaller greenery consists of more than 1,500 shrubs, thousands of perennials, and multi-coloured flowers, including more than 1,000 aquatic plants.

The vegetation was selected to give a varied and equally beautiful effect whatever the season.



Wisława Szymborska Park

However, the originality of the park is created primarily by elements referring to its patron, Wisława Szymborska. It features umbrellas, a reference to the anecdotes that tell that the poet was prone to losing them frequently. There are also moving elements that make sounds, have a utilitarian or purely decorative function, and various installations – such as plaques containing words and pictures from which sentences can be composed, as well as boulders and letters in steel with excerpts from the poem "Możliwości".

Close by, at ul. Krupnicza 26, we enter an entirely different world. The House of Józef Mehoffer, where the artist spent the last 12 years of his life, is an authentic, perfectly preserved building. Among the furniture and trinkets, the lavish yet cosy interior boasts 75 oil paintings, drawings, decorative art, design, and family souvenirs. A leading painter of the Young Poland movement, Mehoffer was famous for stained glass designs (they can be admired

in Fribourg Cathedral) and was a talented painter and draughtsman (his frescoes decorate the Armenian Cathedral in Lviv). You can relax under the huge trees in the great wonderful garden behind the house (entrance is free). Just birdsong, quiet, and peace. Sitting among that lush greenery, you believe the gate to Paradise must be hovering somewhere above your head.

It is time to return to Krupnicza Street, which is an important street as far as Krakow literature is concerned. In 1945–95, the **Dom Literatów at No. 22** was home to artists and their families, notably Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński with his wife Natalia and daughter Kira, Stefan Kisielewski, Sławomir Mrożek, Jerzy Andrzejewski (that's where he wrote *Ashes and Diamonds*), Stanisław Dygat, Leon Kruczkowski, Kazimierz Brandys with his wife Maria, Jerzy Broszkiewicz, and Wisława Szymborska. The place developed an incredible atmosphere: Dygat and Andrzejewski are rumoured to

have enjoyed banging on the neighbours' door in the middle of the night, and when the door finally opened, make heartfelt excuses for being unable to pay a visit at such a late time. Wisława Szymborska treated her friends to an artificial rat, which she ordered from her sister who worked in a furmaking company. A theatre director and set designer Jan Polewka reminisces that you could brush shoulders in the corridors not only with the Polish masters of the pen but also with John Steinbeck or Jean-Paul Sartre.

From Krupnicza turn into Loretańska and take a look into the little **Capuchin Church** from the 18th century, believed for 200 years to be the place to go for exceptionally happy weddings. Adjacent to the north is Loreto House, a faithful copy of the sanctuary. It was built in 1712-19. It is here where Tadeusz Kościuszko had his sabre blessed during a mass on 24 March 1794, and on 25 August 1887 Adam Chmielowski took the vows and cloth to become Brother Albert, later made a saint. Go on along Loretańska, and take Jabłonowski and Czapskich, to reach the **Hutten-Czapski Palace** (1884) at Piłsudskiego 22.

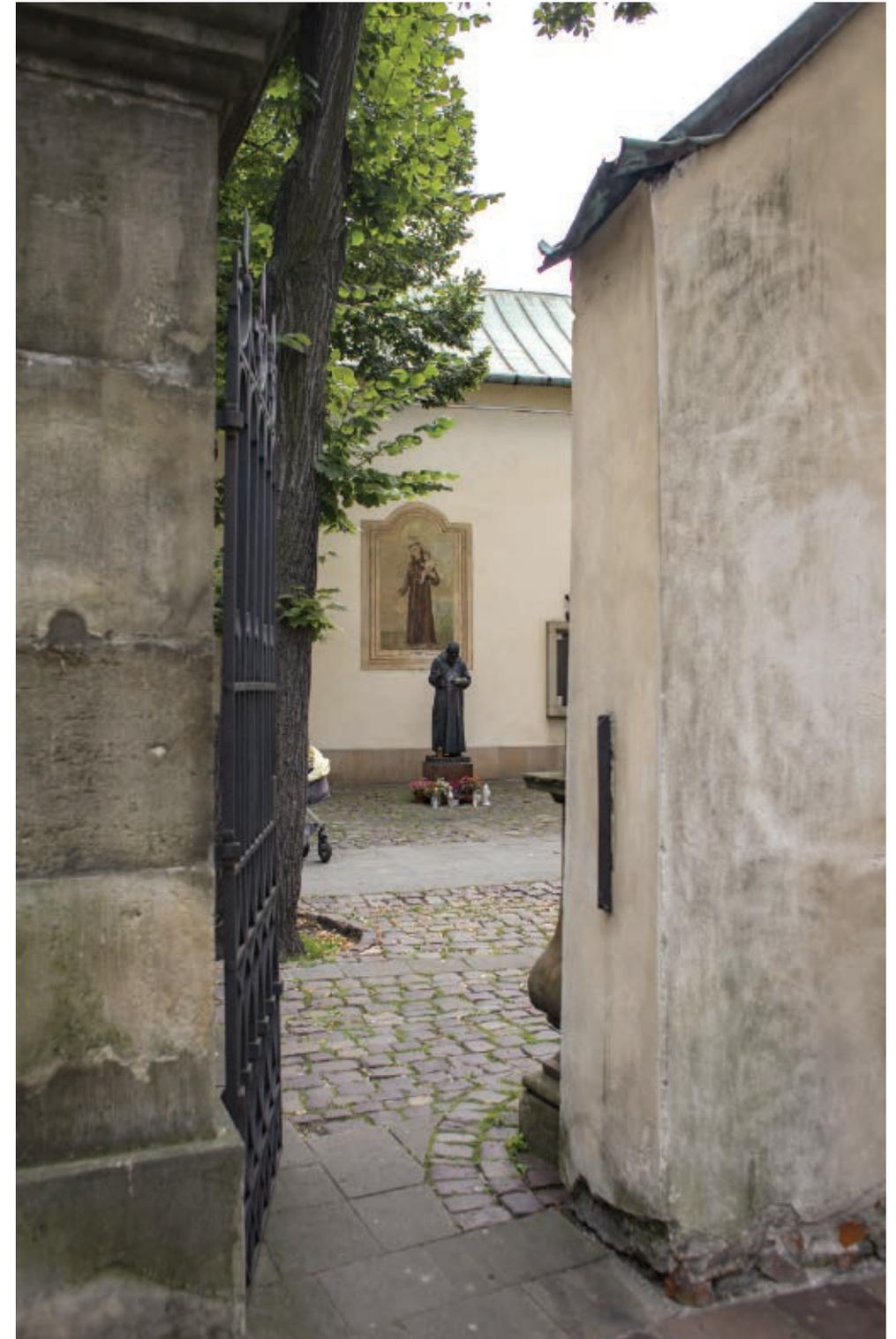


This is where the hearts of aficionados of numismatics skip a beat or beat harder owing to the denarii of Mieszko I and Boleslaus the Brave, bracteates of Mieszko III with Hebrew inscriptions, rare coins of Livonia and the Teutonic Order, as well as antique, mediaeval ones (also from the Piast dynasty) – there are 280,000 exhibits in this section altogether. It is also accompanied by a lavish collection of cartography, including 700 maps of the bygone Commonwealth of Poland-Lithuania. There is a lapidarium behind the building as well as a pleasant garden, and the Józef Czapski Pavilion, (with a permanent exhibition of works by the writer cum painter, his room in Maisons-Laffitte in France recreated in the most minute detail, a multi-media room, and a café).



From here, it's only minutes to the corner of ul. Piłsudskiego and al. Krasińskiego 21, where in 1902 architect Władysław Ekielski and artist Antoni Tuch set up the **Krakow Stained-Glass Studio**, which still operates as Krakowski Zakład Witrażów S.G. Żeleński, although it moved to the building at **al. Krasińskiego 23** in 1906. This is where the famous stained-glass windows by Józef Mehoffer and Stanisław Wyspiański were created. Today a **Stained Glass Studio and Museum** operates at this address. Exhibitions are interspersed with new works being developed by the artists. This living museum is attractive for both adults and children. Krakow has been the city of the art of stained-glass decoration since the 14th century. The practice experienced a rebirth early in the 20th century. The townhouses of Krakow boast over 200 stained-glass compositions from the time of Young Poland. Wyspiański's "lay" works adorn, among other buildings, the Medical Society House at ul. Radziwiłłowska 4, and the house at ul. Batorego 12. Yet the most impressive are his works for churches. They can be seen in Wawel Cathedral, St Mary's Church, and the Franciscan Church.

Retrace your steps a bit along Piłsudskiego Street and turn into Retoryka. You'll find a handful of attractive houses designed by Teodor Talowski standing here, a perfect showcase of his style. Note the asymmetrical windows, variety of motifs, and play of lights and shadows matched with the care for materials and detail. Talowski made no use of serial casts; all the elements were carved in stone. He produced special darkened, irregular, and rough bricks with ceramic



Capuchin churchyard

protrusions in his own brick kiln. They pretended to be old demolition material. Looking at his works, it's worthwhile fishing for minor details, for example, the holes for the grapevines which give the whole building its romantic character by creeping up the walls.

The façade of the **House Under the Singing Frog (Pod śpiewającą żabą, ul. Retoryka 3, 1890)** is graced not only by a frog that sings and plays the lute, but also a music sheet. It is a score by a Krakow composer, Jan Gall (probably an acquaintance of Talowski) entitled *The Girl with a Face like a Raspberry*. Where did the frog come from, however? While the architect was designing his houses, the river Rudawa flowed in the middle of the street, and loud croaking could be heard everywhere around. Another house (1887) designed by Talowski stands not far distant, at **ul. Retoryka 7**. It is decorated with Latin sentences *festina lente* ("make haste slowly") and *ars longa vita brevis* ("art is long, life is short").

The artist himself lived on the ground floor of the house Under the Donkey (Pod ostem, **ul. Retoryka 9**) built in 1891. The head of the donkey in the façade is a sym-

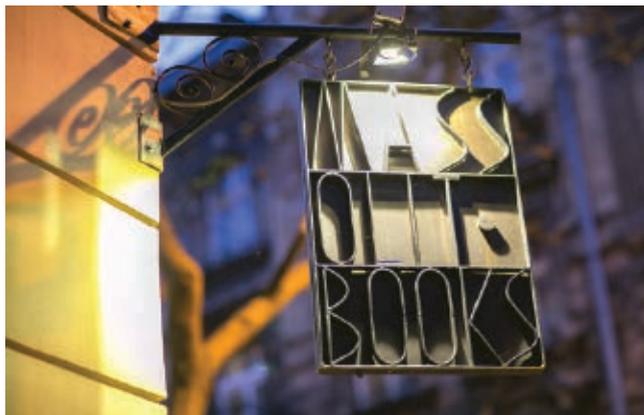


Decorative elements on the façade of the House Under the Donkey

bol of obstinate pursuit of a goal. This is further emphasised by the sentence *faber est suae quisque fortunae* ("every man is the architect of his own fortune").

Turn left from ul. Retoryka into Smoleńsk to reach ul. Felicjanek 4 (first turning right) and make a visit to **Massolit**, an American reading room and café. The interior gives the impression of an established Krakow home. It is a peculiar bookshop, café, and literary salon with literary evenings where meetings with poets, writers, and translators are held. You can browse to your heart's content and read (as this is a book friendly café) or take a cup of coffee and rest in a comfortable armchair before taking a further stroll through the hidden side of Krakow.

Massolit café sign



Plac Matejki square

TOWARDS KLEPARZ AND RAKOWICKI CEMETERY

With all its hustle and bustle, Kleparz, which now lies in the centre of the city, was only a suburb a hundred years ago. Długa Street, the last stage of a long route connecting Krakow to the north of the country, was famous for inns and taverns. This is where merchants stayed overnight before entering the city. What has always been the heart of the district is the **open market**, which to this day is very popular with the locals.

Stary Kleparz is the market to shop for specialities from the country: cottage cheese, milk, cream, gherkins, and cabbages. In autumn: mushrooms, in summer: blueberries and raspberries. Every stall offers a different range of products, different meat and cold cuts. Delicacies of other, foreign cuisines are making an increasingly daring entry into this open market. The market itself belongs to an ancient settlement which received its city charter from King Casimir the Great in the 14th century. In 1792 Kleparz was

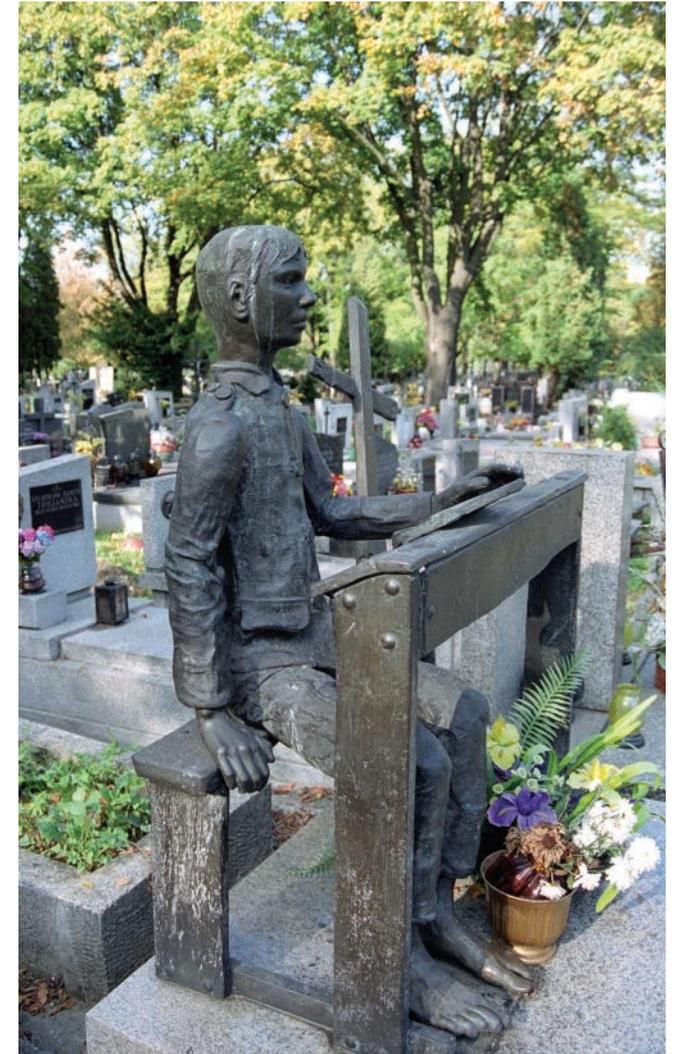


incorporated into Krakow.

If you take a walk from Stary Kleparz (passing between Basztowa and św. Filipa streets) to Długa Street, you will reach the corner of Pędzichów Street with a mansion decorated with a **minaret and turrets with a crescent**. The building has quite a romantic history. After the collapse of the January Rising, its owner, Teodor Rayski, emigrated to Turkey. In one of his eastern voyages, he visited Egypt,

where he fell in love with a beautiful Muslim girl. He later wed her and brought her to Krakow. Having returned, Rayski purchased a house on the corner of Długa and Pędzichów, and had a minaret appended to its façade in 1910. To the horror of the neighbours, a specially imported muezzin announced the time for prayers with his call. In a particular counterbalance, the locals soon put up a figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary in front of the house.

If you turn right from the end of Stary Kleparz, you'll reach **Jan Matejko Square**, offering a nice vista of the Barbican and St Florian's Gate. The square was developed in the 19th century, when the old open air market was divided into two sections: one for commerce, and an elegant square which was soon flanked by the neo-Renaissance Academy of Fine Arts (1879) and the railway building (1889), which at the time was the most modern structure in Krakow with its own gas lighting, running water and lifts. Standing in the centre of the square is the Grunwald Monument. Founded



by world-class pianist and composer Ignacy Paderewski in 1910, it was destroyed during the Second World War and rebuilt in 1976. The Grave of the Unknown Soldier is situated in front of the monument.

From Warszawska Street and Matejko Square, you can reach the **Main Railway Station** in just a few minutes and from Bosacka Street on the other side, the **Rakowicki Cemetery** in less than 10 minutes. Many outstanding Poles, includ-

ing Helena Modrzejewska, Jan Matejko, Wojciech Kossak, Piotr Michałowski, and Tadeusz Kantor rest here among old trees and sculptures (by Ksawery Dunikowski, Konstanty Laszczka, Antoni Madeyski, and Bronisław Chromy among others). Laid out in 1802 on the premises of Rakowice Manor, owned by the Discalced Carmelites, it lay far away from the city of the time, yet by now it has become part of its centre.

WEST OF THE MAIN MARKET SQUARE: ZWIERZYNIEC, SALWATOR

This is from where the Lajkonik (hobby horse of Krakow) sets forth, and the Emaus religious fair is held on Easter Monday. Salwator and the Mound of Kościuszko command a breathtaking panorama of the city – from here you can see Błonia Green, the towers of St Mary's and of Corpus Christi, and the Mound of King Krak (made, most probably from the 7th-8th century). Looking west, you can see the Mound of Józef Piłsudski, and – over the crowns of the Lasek Wolski woods – the silhouette of the Camaldolese Monastery and Hermitage in Bielany.

Picturesquely situated in a bend of the Vistula, the **Premonstratensian Convent** looks most beautiful at sunset. It is one of the most charming corners of Krakow. The powerful walls used to defend it from enemies, and Ta-

tars frequently raided the area. The Premonstratensians arrived here from Bohemia in 1162, and their church and monastery are a 12th-century foundation of Jaksa of the clan of Gryf. Until the 16th century, there were two

Emmaus



Shots of toy pop-guns, the squealing of people being doused with water, crackers bursting. The area around the Church of the Holy Saviour, and the Premonstratensian Monastery fills up with quite a crowd on Easter Monday. The people of Krakow throng to the fair, walk among the stalls with souvenirs, sweets, and seasonal toys. A visit to "Emmaus" is all but a duty on Easter Monday; you come here with your whole family. Unfortunately, as this is also Wet Monday when you can impudently drench fellow people with water, this means that you're very unlikely to return home in dry clothes.



The Convent of Premonstratensian Nuns in Salwator



Aleja Waszyngtona avenue



The Krakow hobby horse cavorting in the courtyard of the Premonstratensian Convent

abbeys, of Premonstratensian monks and nuns, operating a single church. Until 1917, the ten bells tolling at 9:10pm every day summoned people to prayers in memory of those who had drowned in the Vistula. A legend speaks of a drowned bell that only floats to the surface on Midsummer Night and "bangs the wet edges with its shaking clapper, and makes its voice carry far away". When the clocks strike midnight, however, it sinks back into the mud.

The porch of the Church of St John, adjacent to the convent, sports a well preserved 13th-century Romanesque portal and its side altar – a little coffin with the relics of Blessed Bronisława. In June, on the Octave of Corpus Christi, the carousing cortege of Lajkonik (whose costume was designed by Stanisław Wyspiański himself) sets off from here into the city.

You are close to the district of Salwator, where magnolias bloom and fruit trees blossom in spring-time, and in winter the silver snow turns the picturesque hill into a fairy-tale illustration. Salwator might lie slightly off the road, yet it

is still close to the centre. Streets shaded with trees gently climb towards the Mound of Kościuszko. Although the Art Nouveau houses of this villa enclave were built around 1908, the pedigree of Salwator (part of Zwierzyniec district) is much older. A testimony to that is one of Krakow's most ancient churches: **Holy Saviour's** in ul. św. Bronisławy. It was built around 1148, and probably founded by Piotr Włast, the over-

lord of Zwierzyniec.

While in Salwator you certainly need to take a walk in **Gontyny Street** where houses with attractive Art Nouveau façades stand in private gardens. The name *gontyna* denotes a sacred temple of Polabian Slavs, and a temple is said to have stood there centuries ago. Today, its place is taken by the small (11 m in diameter) domed octagonal wooden Church of St Margaret.

Lajkonik, the Hobby Horse of Krakow, or the Pony Zwierzyniec

On the octave of Corpus Christi, Lajkonik with his cortege sets off on his wooden horse from the Premonstratensian Convent, accompanied by the sounds of the kettle drums and fifes of the *mlaskoty*: musicians from the suburbs, usually from Wola Justowska. In a turban with a crescent moon, Turkish kaftan and a *kontusz* robe of the Polish nobility (The Lajkonik costume weighs 40kg and was designed by Stanisław Wyspiański over a century ago.), he cavorts for six hours in the streets of Krakow on a wooden horse: first in Zwierzyniecka Street, where he performs a traditional dance by the Philharmonic Hall, and later up Franciszkańska, across Wszystkich Świętych Square and along Grodzka to reach the Main Market Square. Here, the Mayor of the City entrusts him with a chalice of wine. Grateful, Lajkonik goes on dancing and then galloping in the Main Market Square, pounding the passers-by with a mace made of rugs (its touch is rumoured to bring good luck), and tries to take girls captive. His cavorting usually ends at the Hawetka Restaurant. All this because of a legend of the *włóczkowie* (raftsmen) of Zwierzyniec, who, during the Tartar raid on Krakow in 1287, defended the city by killing the Tartar khan, and later "invaded" Krakow dressed up as the enemies they vanquished.



The Emaus fair in the Zwierzyniec district

NOWA HUTA

Nowa Huta, with its socialist realism, and Krakow are worlds apart. The authorities of the People's Republic of Poland failed to merge or even bring together these two separate organisms. Yet where politicians failed, artists have succeeded. The avant-garde projects of the Łąźnia Nowa Theatre and the activity of the Ludowy (People's) Theatre and of local young artists have made Nowa Huta a fashionable place to be.

A walk here is best begun in its most characteristic location, Ronald Reagan Square, which both locals and Krakovians still call **Centralny**. It was designed in 1949 by Tadeusz Ptaszycycki, inspired by the monumental complexes of the Renaissance. The square is surrounded by four residential estates: Centrum A, B, C, and D. Districts B and C are separated by Aleja Róż, where the monument to Lenin used to stand (set up in 1973 and removed in 1989). The Stylowa Restaurant



supports the aura of socialist realism, like a magnet attracting tourists eager to feel the atmosphere of those years.

Nowa Huta was the first city built in post-war Poland. It must be admitted that the planning was good, with the core built in 1949–55 and the plan based on, believe it or not, the American model of the so-called neighbourhood unit. The severalstoreys-high blocks were surrounded by greenery;

schools, kindergartens, and nurseries as well as healthcare centres were included; cinemas, a theatre, and shops were also built.

What used to be the Lenin, and later **Tadeusz Sendzimir, Steelworks** is easiest to reach on a tram (light rail) from Ronald Reagan (Centralny) Square. Its administrative buildings are known as the Doge's Palace, as the roofline does actually remind one of the Venetian model. The competition (1951) for its construction was won by Janusz Ballensted from Poznań, and Janusz and Magdalena Ingarden from Krakow. The interiors still hide interesting artistic metalwork, marble floors and fireplaces, coffered ceilings, crystal chandeliers, and furniture designed by Stanisław Siegmund, professor of Krakow Academy of Fine Arts. One of the most interesting examples of architecture from the 1950s, the steelworks grew to employ no fewer than 38,500 people in the 1970s, and now sometimes also functions as



Tank: a monument of the past at os. Górali 23

a backdrop for concerts and stage productions.

The **Mound of Wanda** lies nearly on the outer perimeter of the steelworks. In its vicinity, there are carefully designed cycle paths and the well-kept, spacious **Zalew Nowohucki Reservoir**: a favourite recreation destination for people living in this part of the city. There is an open air cinema in the summer, as well as theatre productions, board games, and yoga lessons.

Nowa Huta and the steelworks were to become the model communist city. In fact, they became one of the centres of anti-communist resistance. This is where two worlds collided: that of the power and ideology of the party with that of holding to beliefs, patriotism, and solidarity. Its symbol is the **Ark of the Lord**: the Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland in the shape of a boat, designed by Wojciech Pietrzyk. In 1977 it was consecrated by Cardinal Karol Wojtyła. Worthy of attention inside is the eight-metre-tall crucifix, a work of Bronisław



Ark of the Lord Church

Chromy. Standing in the vicinity, in the centre of a square, is a cross commemorating the place where 20-year-old Bogdan Włosik was shot dead by the secret police during a demonstration on 13 October 1982.

The **Łąźnia Nowa Theatre**, operating in the building of the school workshops in **Osiedle Szkolne** residential estate, became an important point in the culturescape of Nowa Huta. The projects and campaigns of the theatre, tease, ridicule, amuse, and

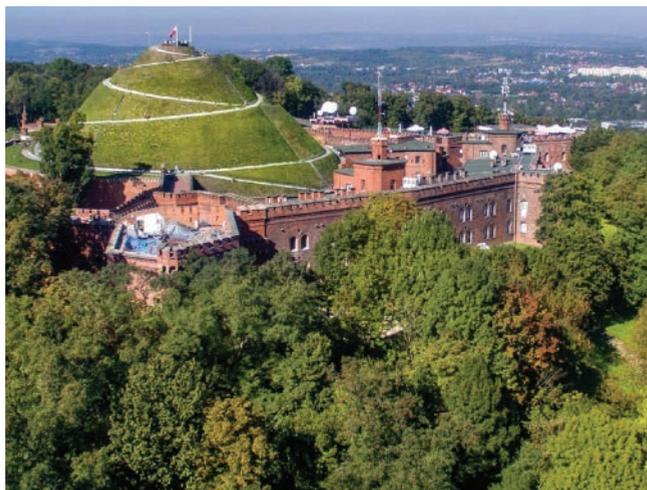
inspire. It is not the only theatre in the district, as the **Ludowy (People's) Theatre** was set up in **Osiedle Teatralne** in 1955. Krystyna Skuszanka, Jerzy Krassowski, and Józef Szajna made the Ludowy an important stage in Poland. Interesting performances continue here to this day. Standing nearby are two important symbols of Nowa Huta: **a wooden cross** and **a tank**. The communist authorities built a school in the place where the church had been designed. Yet people put up a cross in that place, and gathered around it for daily prayer. The Shepherd's Mass drew especially large crowds. This upset the authorities: when they decided to remove the cross on 27 April 1960, people stood up to defend it. Today you can see a school, a church and the cross in that same place.

What about the tank? The conqueror of Berlin from 1945 stands on the pavement by the Museum of Armed Effort (os. Górali 23). Independent of their political affiliation, the locals are very attached to it.



KRAKOW IN GREEN

The Botanic Garden of the Jagiellonian University



The Kościuszko Mound



Zakrzówek Pools

You can find shelter from the hustle and bustle and the hubbub of the city in Krakow's parks, in monastery gardens, on the banks of the Rudawa river, on the embankments of the Vistula and by the picturesque Skałki Twardowskiego Rocks. The valleys, hills, and forests in the vicinity mean that you need but several minutes to escape from the city.

The rocks in Bolechowice encourage climbing, the criss-crossing parts of the Lasek Wolski Woods walks, and there is even a vineyard to be admired on the southern slopes of the Bielany.

In Kopernika Street, no more than 10–15 minutes away from the Main Market Square, there is a place to relax among the old trees, exotic plants, and colourful

flowers of the **Botanical Garden**. Krakow owes this garden to the efforts of botanist Jan Jaskiewicz, and King Stanisław August Poniatowski surrendered former Jesuit lands for the purpose of founding it in 1783. Soon glasshouses and hothouses were built. In an area of over 10 ha, 5000 plant species with 6000 tree and bush specimens are brought together. The

oldest among them, the 500-year-old Jagiellonian Oak, is the only reminder of the primeval forests that used to rustle on both banks of the Vistula in bygone days.

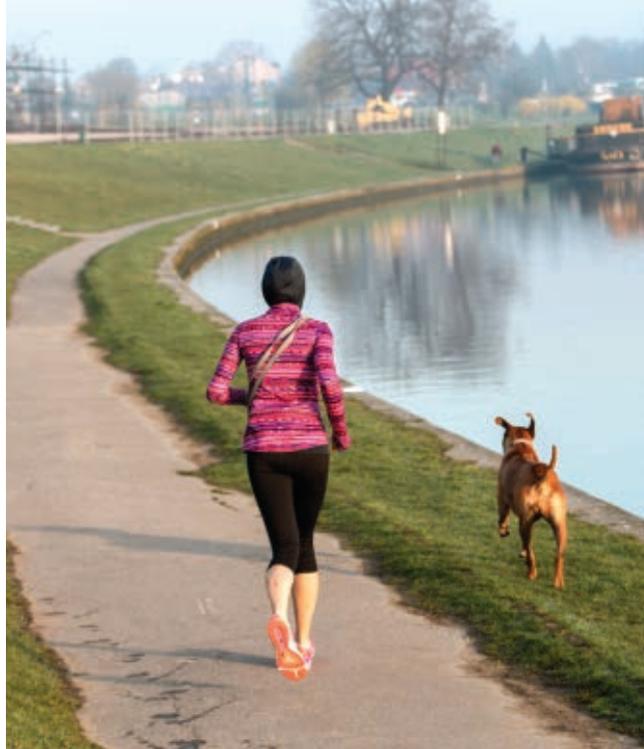
The **Błonia Green** is another recreation area that lies within walking distance (15 minutes away) from the Main Market Square. The green triangle between 3 Maja, Piastowska, and

Focha streets covers 48 ha and, like the Planty Garden Ring, is among the most famous oases of green in the city. In the Middle Ages it was marshland, to whose little isles situated among marshland bogs cholera patients were brought. A property of the Premonstratensian Order, Błonia was swapped by the nuns for a house in Floriańska Street in 1366. Today it is primarily a site of recreation and the perfect site for major mass events. This is where popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis celebrated holy mass, each attracting congregations counted in millions.

There are several **large parks** in the city. One of the most beautiful is **Park Jordana** set up on 22 ha between al. 3 Maja and Reymonta Street in 1887. It features children's playgrounds, a hedged labyrinth, flower beds and little paths, a hill for tobogganing, a jogging path, and a café.

Standing tall over Podgórze is the **Mound of King Krak** (16 m high, 255 masl) believed to be the grave of Krak, the legendary founder of the city. It was most probably constructed in the 7th century AD. The Krakow mounds are an important part of the cityscape.

The **Mound of Kościuszko** (called Kościuszko's Grave in the 19th century) was constructed "by the will of the nation" in 1820–23. It stands 34 m high, with its crown reaching 333 masl, ca. 133 m above the surface of the Vistula River. In 1856 the Austrians surrounded it with fortifications. If you meet a serpent with a diamond crown on its head in aleja Waszyngtona (yes, that is how we spell "Washington") leading to it, don't disturb its peace. This is the serpent king. One hiss is enough to attract thousands of his



kin coming to his rescue. At least that's what a Krakow legend says.

The **Mound of Piłsudski** standing 35 m tall, 393 m asl is the largest of the Krakow mounds as it is the largest one in Poland. Built in 1934–37, it stands in the heart of the **Lasek Wolski Woods**, the largest green area in Krakow (422 ha). It is a memorial to the Polish fight for independence, containing earth from 20th-century battlefields where Poles shed blood.

The **Mound of Wanda** (14 metres tall, 238 m asl) lies close to the high riverbank of the Vistula, on the border between the Nowa Huta district and the steel mill development. It was quite probably a prehistoric watchtower, as the area around it was inhabited 2000 years ago. According to legend, it was made in memory of their beloved queen by her grateful subjects.

Almost in the centre of the city, there is the **Zakrzówek Reservoir** – a former limestone quarry transformed into a reser-

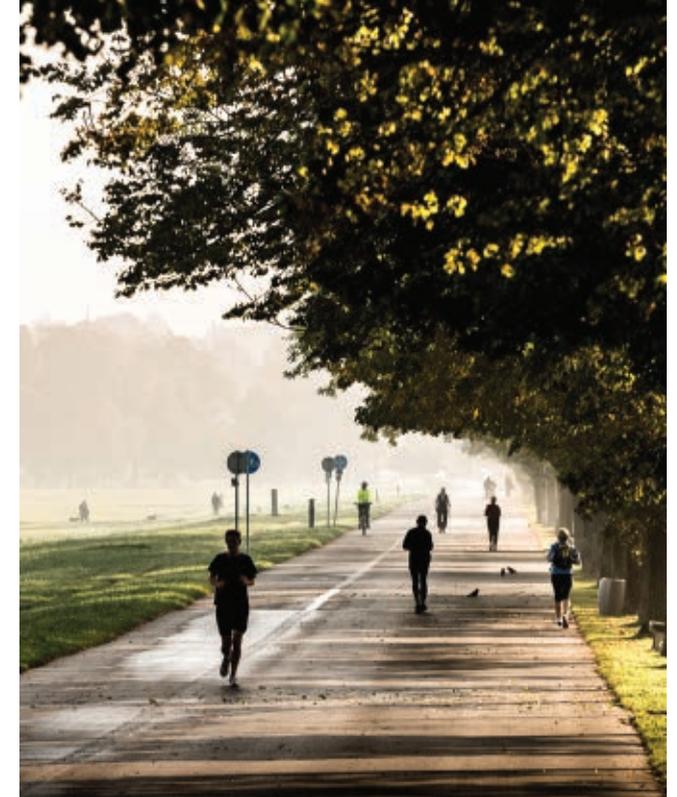
voir with crystal clear water of a beautiful turquoise colour, of unique scenic value. The area has been revitalized and is now Park Zakrzówek, open to all, since June 2023. Together with adjacent green areas, it forms an area of no less than 150 hectares, which is filled with charming walkways and numerous viewpoints. This place provides excellent opportunities for a wide variety of recreational activities, not only for water sports enthusiasts, but also for cyclists and climbers. Running paths have also been created here, specially measured and prepared for professional training, or for those who are just starting their running adventure. However, the main attraction for visitors to Zakrzówek are the openwork pools suspended on the surface of the reservoir, separated by wooden piers and forming an interesting mosaic by the shore of the reservoir.

The pools vary in depth, giving both children and adults, non-swimmers and seasoned swimmers the

opportunity to swim. Children have a 40 cm deep pool, and the deepest is 3.5 meters deep. While enjoying the delights of swimming, especially outside the areas designated by the pools, it should be remembered that in some places the reservoir reaches a depth of as much as 32 meters, and the average depth of the water at the piers is about 20 meters. It is worth a trip here, if only for the walk alone. Zakrzówek Park is one of the most popular recreational spots for Krakow residents, and at the same time an extremely valuable area in terms of nature, with an extraordinary range of flora and fauna.

A popular walking and cycling route runs along the **Vistula embankments as far as Tyniec**. Covering it on a bike takes more or less an hour. The most interesting section of the route on the other side of the river lies between the **Church "on the Rock"** and the **Premonstratensian Convent**.

The walk from the **Mound of Kościuszko via Sikornik to Lasek**



Wolski Woods is also very popular. On your way, passing among meadows, picturesque clearings, ravines, the Mound of Piłsudski,

and the Panieńskie Skały Rocks nature reserve, you can glimpse the Vistula in the bottom of the valley.



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