

CURIOUS CITIES... KRAKOW

Unique locations, hidden corners and unusual objects as recommended by...



GOTHIC CATHEDRAL

A cathedral has stood on Wawel Hill since around 1000 AD, with the present Gothic structure begun in 1320 and consecrated in 1364. Poland's spiritual centre, it is here that many of its monarchs have been christened, crowned and buried.



MIGHTY MOUNDS

Four great earthen mounds stand in Krakow's suburbs, two of which were raised during the Middle Ages for calendric purposes. The other two are 19th century, built to commemorate Polish freedom fighters Tadeusz Kościuszko and Józef Piłsudski.

“Krakow has been described as a city of painters, poets, grand tombs and stained glass...a city of life and art.”



MODERN ART

The former industrial district of Zabłocie is buzzing with new visitor attractions, including the Museum of Contemporary Art (Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej). Showcasing the work of Polish and international, it features these novel concrete bicycles.

STAINED GLASS

This stunning stained glass window is the work of Krakow-born artist Stanisław Wyspiański and can be found in the Basilica of St. Francis (Bazylika św. Franciszka) on plac Wszystkich Świętych. Representative of Polish Art Nouveau, it depicts God as an alchemist.



BIGGEST SQUARE

Krakow's great architectural superlative is its main square (Rynek Główny). Created in 1257 and the size of six football pitches, it is Europe's largest medieval marketplace dominated by the famous Renaissance Cloth Hall (Sukiennice).



ART PALACE

The Palace of Art (Pałac Sztuki) on plac Szczepański is a Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) in which various artistic styles and techniques are synthesised to create a satisfying and coherent whole. Finished in 1901, it is Krakow's premier exhibition space.



JEWISH WORLD

Until the Second World War, Jews accounted for a third of Krakow's population. Most lived and worked in Kazimierz, once an island in the Vistula, where their former synagogues, shops and cemeteries are poignant reminders of a lost world.



CAMP MEMORIES

A monument to victims of the Nazi regime at the former Plaszów Concentration Camp in Podgórze. This is where many of Krakow's Jews ended up after being forced from their homes and where the main events of Steven Spielberg's film Schindler's List take place.



“Legendary churches and mysterious monasteries, novel art spaces and industrial remains, colourful customs and candlelit cellars.”

MILK BARS

An endearing hangover from Soviet times is the milk bar (bar mleczny) originally designed to keep workers away from alcohol. The first one opened in Krakow in 1948, where a handful still provide no-frills Polish food at very affordable prices.



OLDEST UNIVERSITY

The Jagiellonian University (Uniwersytet Jagielloński) in Krakow's Old Town is Poland's oldest. Founded in 1364 by King Casimir III the Great, many of its original buildings remain, where astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus once studied.

PAPAL TOURISM

Pope John Paul II, the first non-Italian pontiff in 455 years, spent much of his life in Krakow. Since his death in 2005, devotees have celebrated his legacy at various locations, including the new John Paul II Centre (Centrum Jana Pawła II) in Łagiewniki.



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Published by The Urban Explorer
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