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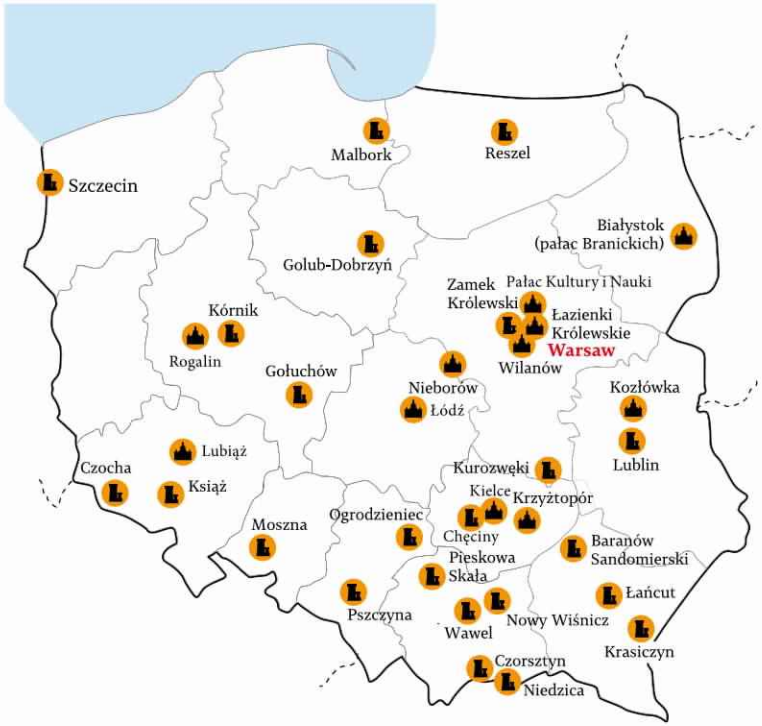

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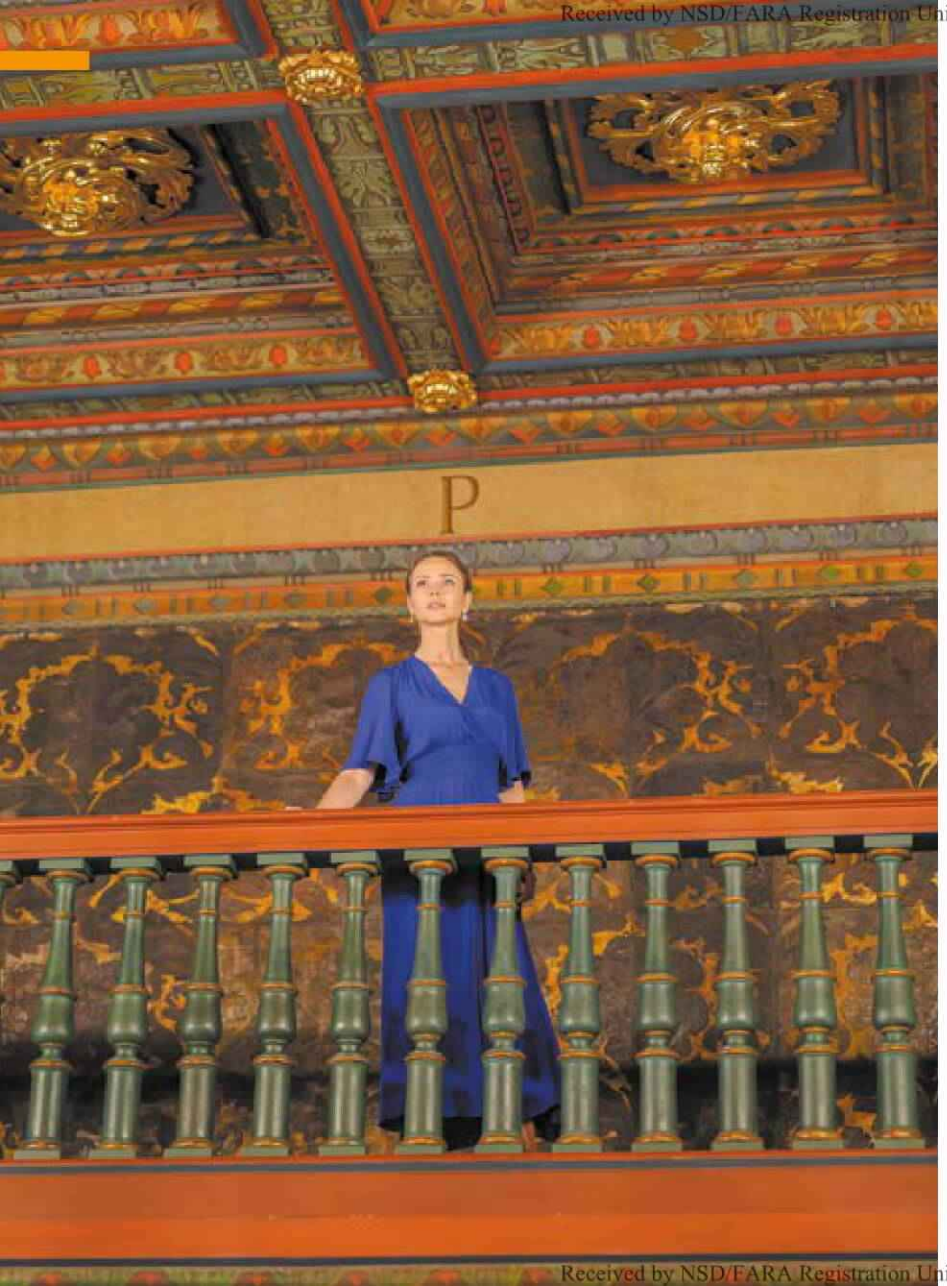

Chivalrous Past and Aristocratic Luxuries

Visiting castles and palaces in Poland is a fascinating journey through the ages. They witnessed the country's complicated past and its many transformations.

After countless wars, partitions and other political and social turbulence, preserved and restored castles and palaces are now part of Poland's historical heritage. Despite wartime destruction, priceless monuments of the past remained untouched in many places. Others were restored or reconstructed with such meticulous care that they became works of art no less important than the original structures. By far the boldest such undertaking was the reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw.

Whether preserved or restored, castles and palaces are full of life these days. They are home to museums and/or education centres. They serve as venues for cultural events or outdoor sound and light shows. They function as luxury hotels with spa facilities, while restaurants in castles and palaces take diners on journeys to the times of hunters' parties and opulent feasts of the Polish nobility of olden days.

Many layers of history are still waiting to be discovered. They are hidden in medieval strongholds made of earth, stones and wood, or in ruined but still impressive fortifications, or castles of the Teutonic Knights, or castles remodelled by aristocrats to become family residences, each more opulent than the last.

Mysteries also remain to be uncovered in royal castl es, late Renaissance family residences and exuberant palaces copying Europe's most exquisite designs. All these buildings withstood changing times, fashions, philosophies, trends in interior design. The interiors are just as spectacular as the collections displayed within them. Palaces were often surrounded by sumptuous parks, French or English gardens, often with romantic or downright fairy-tale gazebos and pavilions. They would become art salons, oases of peace and reverie. And so they remain to this day.

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Castle of the Pomeranian Dukes in Szczecin:
Kingdom of Clocks

The main attraction here is a collection of timekeeping pieces, and in particular a clock whose face is a green man mask.

The light grey, exquisite outline of a Renaissance castle with green cupolas on its towers can't be missed by anyone entering the centre of Szczecin via the bridges over the River Oder. This is the ancient seat of the dukes of the Pomeranian House of Griffins dynasty. For more than 500 years, they ruled over the southern Baltic and lands lying between the island of Rugia and the towns of Lębork and Pyrzyce. Works of art associated with the House of Griffins which survived the numerous wars in the region can be admired at a permanent exhibition at the castle entitled *At the Court of the Pomeranian Dukes*. The courtyard is graced by a 17th-century astronomical clock, while another timepiece adorns the clock tower. It was quite a curiosity at the time it was created, in the late 17th century. The green man mask's moving eyes which follow the hour hand, the current date showing in the mask's open mouth, the jester beating out the hours with his left hand and quarter-hours with his right, all the while snapping his jaws and rolling his eyes, and a ball which shows the current moon phase above the clock face, were always the high point of a visit to the castle. And so they are today, as fortunately the castle was reconstructed after the devastation of the last war. In addition to exhibitions, the castle also hosts film screenings, theatrical presentations and lectures.

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Malbork:
The World's Largest Brick Stronghold

This imposing fortress was built on Polish lands by the Teutonic Knights.

Malbork was the headquarters of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. Built with considerable ostentation, the castle inspired both awe and fear in the folk of its day. Its core is the Upper Castle, built of 4.5 million bricks, the production of which was an immense undertaking in the 13th century. Mighty defensive walls, moats, drawbridges and iron portcullises, cannon stands, stone-throwing machines and storehouses: all those elements together form a monumental work of Gothic architecture, and are the reason this fortress has now been placed on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Visitors can also admire the chapel and the Grand Masters' Palace, the chambers of the monastic knights, as well as military barracks. From April to August, you can watch stunning sound and light shows in the castle grounds.

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Golub-Dobrzyń:
Where Knights Cross Swords

The castle is situated on a verdant escarpment above the River Drwęca.

Built in the late 13th century by the Teutonic Knights, the castle owes its current appearance, with its Renaissance accents and corner turrets, to a remodelling carried out 400 years later. Today this is a museum and a living cultural centre, hosting spectacular events during the largest knights' tournament in Central Europe. Spectators can watch knights jousting on horseback and their combat on foot, archery competitions, shows by historical re-enactment groups and stuntmen's acrobatics. The tournament is always accompanied by concerts and a fair with handicrafts inspired by the culture of the Middle Ages. The castle's former kitchens are now restaurants, and some of the living quarters have been arranged to accommodate guests. There is also an equestrian facility nearby with an indoor riding hall. In summer, the castle attracts fans of tournaments not only from Poland but from all over the globe.

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Reszel:
Art and Leisure in a Mighty Old Castle

Mysterious Gothic interiors are home today to a hotel with a restaurant, conference rooms and exhibition space.

This stronghold, built in the 13th century by the Teutonic Knights, has a long, rich history. Situated on the River Sajna, in an area of scenic pristine forests and lakes, it served as a hunting lodge for the bishops of the Warmia region and later as a Prussian prison. After World War II this historic structure was turned into an artists' retreat and an art gallery. Its meticulously preserved Gothic interiors evoke fascination. The castle hosts numerous international open-air events, exhibitions, meetings and conferences. The owners guarantee mouth-watering dishes in the restaurant and top entertainment, as well, for those who crave an adrenaline rush. Besides feasts and parties in the castle halls, the repertoire includes climbing, paintball battles, zorbing, off-road trips in the area, and powered hang-gliding over Masurian lakes.

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Royal Castle in Warsaw:
Monument of Polish History

The royal residence, austere from the outside, astonishes visitors with the opulence of its interiors.

The focal point of the square stretching before the castle is Sigismund's Column. It commemorates King Sigismund III Vasa, who moved the Polish capital from Kraków to Warsaw. The column is one of the favourite meeting points in the city. It is also either the starting or finishing point of walks and rides along the Royal Route.

Considering the austerity of its external appearance, the castle's interiors surprise visitors with their sophisticated decorations, delicate mouldings and painstakingly chiselled ornaments gilded with gold leaf. It was here that Europe's first and the world's second constitution was drafted and adopted. The castle, which was almost entirely destroyed during World War II, was rebuilt thanks to public fundraising efforts. The redecoration of the castle's chambers was entrusted to contemporary artisans specialising in antiquated crafts. The Castle Square (Plac Zamkowy) offers a magnificent view of the Vistula River with its verdant banks. On the opposite side of the river, more and more lively pubs and city beaches are opening for business, inspired by the unforgettable panorama of the Old Town and the castle.

Together with the Old Town, the Royal Castle is included on the list of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites.

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Wilanów:
Residence of the Saviour of Europe

Today Wilanów is a true treasury displaying remarkable works of art. Surrounded by lush gardens, the palace is connected to Warsaw's Old Town via the Royal Route.

This Baroque residence was a gift of King Jan III Sobieski to his beloved wife, Marie Casimire Louise. As such, it is a monument to love and partnership. The architecture of the palace in Wilanów is a fusion of the achievements of European art with the predilections of the Polish nobility. The rich collection of art has been arranged so as to represent different periods. It includes antique vases, paintings by Cranach, Rubens and David, fine porcelain from China as well as many objects of everyday use. The former riding hall in the palace is now home to the Poster Museum. The interiors and the outdoor area often host exhibitions, meetings and concerts, as well as music workshops during the International Summer Academy of Early Music. The garden has arrangements with very neatly trimmed trees. In spring, the gardens explode with blossoming magnolias which are the oldest specimens of this species in Poland.

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Royal Łazienki Park:
Warsaw's Most Beautiful Park

It is truly amazing how classical architecture is combined here with spectacular gardens.

Royal Łazienki Park is a magical place. It is situated on the gentle slope of the Vistula's escarpment which forms a high riverbank, and is one of the largest garden complexes in Europe. Adorned with a multitude of gazebos, little bridges, sculptures, ponds and brooks, the park is one of the most alluring, scenic stops along the Royal Route, the historical trail leading from the Old Town in Warsaw to the palace in Wilanów. The neoclassical Łazienki Palace, also known as the Palace on the Water, is the heart of the park. Visitors can admire its historical interiors as well as the nearby Amphitheatre and the Old Orangery. On summer weekends, the park becomes a venue for open-air piano concerts during which Fryderyk Chopin's music is played at the foot of his famous statue.

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Poznański Palace in Łódź

The Luxuries of a Factory Owner

The Izrael Poznański Palace in Łódź, built at the end of the 19th century, is sometimes called the "Louvre of Łódź".

With its monumental architecture and decorative grandeur, the palace is one of the most spectacular factory owners' residences in Łódź. This eclectic structure, combining elements of neo-Renaissance and neo-Baroque, was the main seat of the company founded by the Poznański family, and the richly adorned interiors feature a number of high-quality sculptures and paintings. Currently, the palace houses the Museum of the City of Łódź, showcasing the history of the city and its most notable residents. The museum's permanent exhibitions include rooms dedicated to Karl Dedecius, Jan Karski, Jerzy Kosiński, Arthur Rubinstein and Julian Tuwim.

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Nieborów:
Residence of Polish Nobility amid Captivating Gardens

What makes Nieborów stand out among other palaces is its thrilling architecture, its original interiors and its inestimable art collection.

Walking through the palace chambers is a journey back in time across European styles and fashions from the 17th to the early 20th century. The highlight of the sightseeing tour is the charming second floor with the largest ballroom in the palace.

Moreover, there is an artistic majolica workshop in the palace grounds. Established in the late 19th century and relying on local clay reserves, it first copied the products of renowned European manufacturers and eventually focused on local traditions for inspiration.

The palace is surrounded by a French garden with fine specimens of trees and harmonious floral arrangements. Near Nieborów you can also visit Arkadia, an English garden. It is definitely one of the most beautiful romantic gardens in Poland, and perhaps even in Europe.

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Białystok:
Polish Versailles in a Fairy-Tale Garden

This aristocratic residence is surrounded by Baroque gardens considered the most beautiful in this part of Europe.

The spatial arrangement of the Branicki Palace bewilders visitors with its perfect symmetry. The meticulously arranged flowerbeds, the regular network of lanes, and the fountains and sculptures which fill the garden all enhance the feeling of expectancy as one approaches the main facade. The palace in Białystok was designed in the 17th century by the highly skilled architect Tylman van Gameren. Due to his ingenuity, the seat of the aristocratic Branicki family is referred to as the Versailles of the North and finds no equal in this part of Europe. Many cultural events are held in its fascinating setting. The most esteemed one is the international soul music festival called Good Vibrations (Pozytywne Wibracje).

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Lublin Castle

A Symbol of Eastern and Western Unity

It was here that the act was signed under which Poland and Lithuania merged into one state for several centuries. The Union of Lublin, adopted in 1569, is considered a precursor of the European Union.

The Union of Lublin created the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a vast state with a shared monarch and parliament but which also allowed each nation a significant degree of political autonomy. Of the many artworks depicting the Great Sejm where this historic document was signed, the most famous is Jan Matejko's painting, and it can be seen today in Lublin Castle, which now serves as a National Museum. The highlight of the museum is the Gothic Chapel of the Holy Trinity, adorned with priceless Byzantine-Ruthenian frescoes commissioned by King Władysław Jagiełło. Remarkably, the chapel survived the fire that ravaged the royal castle in the 17th century, as did the oldest part of the complex, the Romanesque tower, which offers a superb view of Lublin's Old Town. Following the fire, the castle itself was subsequently rebuilt in a slightly different – but still very characteristic – shape.

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Kozłówka:
Palace Reminiscent of Versailles

Home to one of the most intriguing museums in the country, Kozłówka will bewitch you with its elaborate collection of paintings and sculptures as well as the opulence and colours of its interiors.

The owners of the palace intentionally emulated the design of the Palace of Versailles (with the French *entre cour et jardin* model), in the hope that their residence would overshadow the homes of other aristocratic families. A fairy-tale French garden leads up to the palace. The interiors still have their original furnishings from the early 19th century. The museum prides itself on its collection of Zamoyski family portraits and copies of European masterpieces. The former carriage house has been turned into the Socialist-Realist Art Gallery with over 1,600 authentic sculptures, paintings and posters made by Polish artists in the 1950s, at a time when art was used as a tool for Communist ideology.

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Krzyżtopór:
Ruins of a Gigantic Calendar

The castle's proud name comes from the Polish words for a cross ("krzyż") and an axe ("topór"), symbolising the faith and the coat-of-arms of its owner.

By erecting a palace exemplifying the calendar, 17th-century nobleman Krzysztof Ossoliński wanted to overshadow contemporary castles and leave a lasting sign of his family's power. The architectural elements were symbolic and highly impressive. There were four turrets, one at each corner, representing the seasons of the year. Inside, there were as many large chambers as there are months and as many smaller rooms as there are weeks in the year. The number of windows corresponds to the number of days in the year.

But, Ossoliński did not stop there. Even the stables had crystal mirrors and horses had their hay served in marble mangers. In the tower over the gate, one of the rooms was topped with a glass ceiling. The floor above it was arranged as an aquarium so that guests gathered at the table could admire exotic fish while enjoying their dinner.

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Former Palace of the Kraków Bishops in Kielce

A Unique Blend of Polish and Italian Architecture

The palace is the best-preserved noble residence from the Vasa dynasty era in Poland.

Commissioned by Bishop Jakub Zadzik, this early Baroque palace was built in the 17th century as a temporary residence for the bishops of Kraków. Originally designed as a symbol of the bishops' power and prestige, the palace interiors later housed the offices of various public, military and educational institutions during the 19th and 20th centuries. These days, the palace serves as a branch of the National Museum in Kielce, with important exhibits of artistic craftsmanship and paintings displayed in its well-preserved historic interiors. The original polychromes are especially noteworthy, while the adjoining Italian garden has also been meticulously reconstructed based on historical sources.

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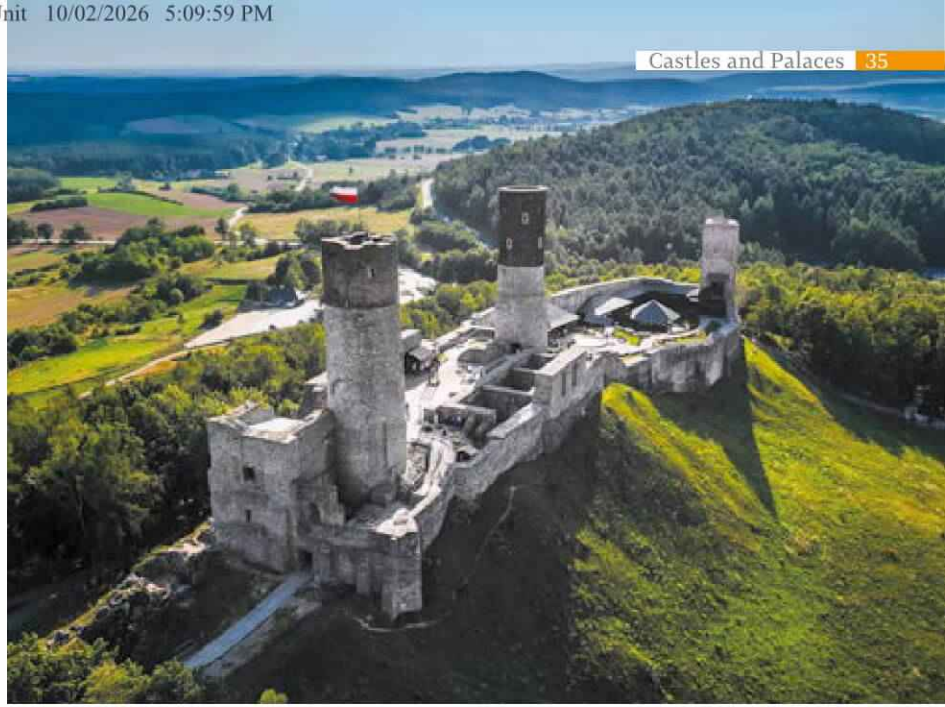
Royal Castle in Chęciny
A Mighty Stronghold

The rugged ruins of Chęciny Castle are among the most beautiful and frequently visited historic sites of this type in Poland.

Built at the turn of the 14th century on a hill towering over the area, the castle was once considered the most formidable Polish stronghold of its time, serving as a high-ranking political centre and also a royal residence that hosted queens and gatherings of knightly fraternities. The castle's complete outer defensive walls, massive towers, and some original buildings have all survived today. Legend has it that treasures left by Queen Bona remain hidden in the underground dungeons. The ruins offer a wonderful panoramic view of Poland's oldest mountain range, and on clear days you can even see the peaks of the Tatra Mountains!



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Kurozwęki:
Palace with a Touch of the Wild West

People come to Kurozwęki to try their luck in the corn maze, admire Arabian horses at the local stud farm and see American bison up close.

Embellishments and improvements take place all the time at this complex. The palace at the centre of the park houses a plush hotel, a restaurant, a cafe, a pizzeria and a "buffalo bar".

By far the main attraction is the American bison herd, the only one in Poland. Today it has around 80 of these majestic creatures. That is enough for bison meat dishes to appear on the restaurant menu. The events organised here all echo Wild West traditions. They include a Buffalo Safari, horseback riding and horse races but, above all, the annual August festival known as Wild West at Kurozwęki (Dziki Zachód w Kurozwękach). The programme of the festivities includes horse shows, lessons in archery and tomahawk throwing, riding a mechanical bull as well as pop music concerts.

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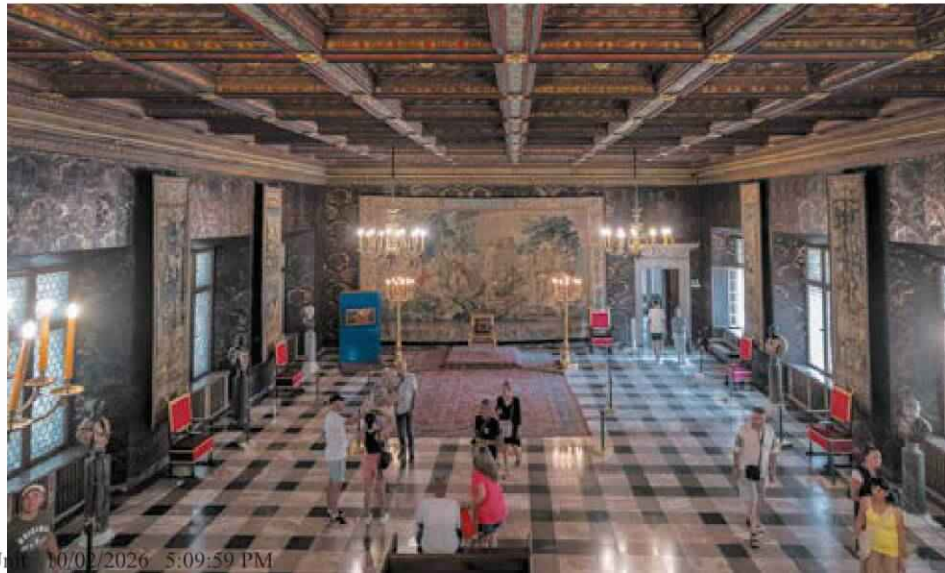
Wawel:
National Symbol

Wawel Hill with the Royal Castle, the Cathedral and the Dragon's Den are by far the most popular attractions of Kraków.

The Royal Castle was the seat of Polish rulers until the end of the 16th century. The majestic castle perched on top of Wawel Hill is both a monument of history and architecture and a treasury full of works of art and national heirlooms. Today the castle is a museum. Its permanent exhibition comprises the State Rooms, Royal Private Apartments, Treasury and Armoury. In the Audience Hall (Sala Poselska), 30 sculpted heads look down on visitors from the ceiling. These visages portray the local community from the times of the Renaissance. The heads are amazingly detailed, but the most precious collection at the castle is the awe-inspiring tapestries known as arrases. Woven in the late 16th century, they depict biblical scenes and some of them bear the coats-of-arms of Poland and Lithuania.



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Baranów Sandomierski:
Stone Masterpiece Like a Jeweller's Gem

There is absolutely no exaggeration in nicknaming this place a "pearl of the Polish Renaissance" or the "little Wawel."

The park and palace complex in Baranów is a precious historical monument and a luxurious hotel oasis. It was designed by Italian architect Santi Gucci, the court artist at the Wawel Castle, and built in the 16th century on a rectangular plan. The inner courtyard was closed on all sides, with arcaded cloisters resembling Wawel's. What is surprising is that to enter the courtyard, you need to climb stairs. It was placed this high intentionally, for protection against any flooding from the River Vistula nearby. The palace is home to a museum and a restaurant. Adjacent to it there is an elegant hotel, and some of the historical interiors of the palace have been arranged as stylish luxury suites. In addition, there is also a conference centre and a golf academy.

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Łańcut:
Interiors Filled with Music

This is one of the most fabulous aristocratic residences in Poland.

During concerts and festivals, its original preserved chambers come alive with music.

Walking through the rooms of this palace feels like a fascinating journey in time. The interiors mirror fashions ranging from the 17th century to the turn of the 20th century. Great attention was paid to every detail, and every element of the furnishings is a historical artefact in itself. Each of the collections is equally impressive, whether paintings, drawings, furniture, musical instruments, porcelain, glass, lacquerware, silverware, tapestries, or the library full of books. The most prized part of the entire collection at Łańcut is the assortment of horse-drawn carriages once belonging to former palace owners. Parked in the stables and the carriage room, these handsome conveyances make a spectacular exhibition, one of the largest in the world. The palace is surrounded by a grand English park. Almost year-round, the interiors and the gardens are filled with music. The tradition of organising concerts in Łańcut dates back to the 18th century.

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Wiśnicz Nowy:
Palazzo in Fortezza

This 17th-century castle is one of the most precious examples of military architecture in Poland.

The castle in Wiśnicz bears testimony to past military power. The fortified bastions were once equipped with 80 cannon and, thanks to the supplies stored in the castle, inhabitants could survive even a three-year siege. Near the end of the Renaissance, when warfare techniques had evolved and even the highest Gothic walls could no longer guarantee safety, the stronghold was remodelled. As a result, residential chambers were arranged, with sweeping views of gentle hills, forests and localities in the valley. The castle was then surrounded with fortifications shaped like a pentagon. These days the castle houses a history museum, a stylish hotel and a restaurant. The old rooms often become venues for classical music concerts and many festivals, e.g. the culinary Broth Festival (Festiwal Rosołu).

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Niedzica and Czorsztyn:
Castles Rising over Tranquil Waters

The ring of mountains around the valley and its broad lake are part of one of the most picturesque landscapes in southern Poland.

Medieval castles at the foot of the Pieniny mountain range are an unusual accent in the scenery. The castle in Czorsztyn is a romantic ruin, while the one in Niedzica is preserved in remarkably good condition. The museum in Niedzica Castle is dedicated to the region's history and its original culture, and the stone terrace offers a magnificent vista. The castle towers over Lake Czorsztyńskie, a man-man reservoir.

The cruise ships circumnavigating the lake: the *Biała Dama* (White Lady), the *Harnaś* and the *Dunajec*, dock right below the castle. Popular hiking trails begin at the castle, and during winter the area becomes a mecca for skiers. Every August, Niedzica is also the host of an entertaining music festival, Baroque in Spisz (Barok na Spiszu).

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Krasiczyn:
Noble Vision of the World Order

This is one of Poland's most exquisite residences, its architecture expressing the ideals the nobility once believed in.

The castle was built in such a way that the onlooker would realise right away the hierarchical organisation of the world. The social order recognised by the 17th-century Krasicki magnate family is represented by the corner towers. Each of them is different. The most magnificent one, called Divine, is topped with a dome and shelters a chapel. The Papal tower has a crown-shaped attic, echoing the Roman Catholic papal tiara. The Royal tower, decorated with six little turrets, resembles a castle. The Noble tower is fortified with battlements. The walls of the residence are decorated with hunting and biblical scenes, along with great wall medallions depicting emperors and Polish kings. The castle is surrounded by a lush park with a special microclimate.

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Pieskowa Skała:
Renaissance Gem amid Limestone Cliffs

The Renaissance form of the castle was inspired by the Wawel royal residence.

Pieskowa Skała drew from the best architectural examples. Along with the surrounding opulent gardens with ponds and a zoo, the architecture proved that, at the end of the 16th century, the castle could rival the royal residence in character and exuberance.

The courtyard encircled by cloisters impresses visitors even today. Every room in the castle is dedicated to a different period through appropriate interior decor. The view from the loggia is particularly captivating, as the castle is situated high amidst the picturesque limestone cliffs of the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. The most distinctive monadnock in Poland, widely known as Hercules' Club (Maczuga Herkulesa), stands 25 metres tall in the vicinity of the castle. Pieskowa Skała is one of the most precious gems of the Polish Renaissance and a major landmark along the Trail of the Eagles' Nests (Szlak Orlich Gniazd).

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Ogrodzieniec:
Echoes of Past Splendour

Due to its turbulent history, all that is left of this once resplendent castle is a ruin. The stark white stone walls of the castle and limestone monadnocks stand out against the hillside greenery. Even today, the ruin itself remains a magnificent testimony to its past.

Built in the Middle Ages, a chain of 25 castles known as the Trail of the Eagles' Nests stood among limestone outcroppings and guarded the important trade route leading from Kraków to Silesia. All of them except Pieskowa Skała fell into ruin, but their remnants are very picturesque accents in the region's landscape.

Situated on a vast treeless hill, Ogrodzieniec is the largest of them. During its construction, the existing limestone rock of the hill was incorporated into the line of the outer walls. The limestone building material was obtained locally, and the whiteness of the walls remains in stark contrast to the grassy surroundings. This scenery has proved very popular among historical re-enactment groups and present-day knight fraternities. From May to September, people can watch shows organised by the local knight brotherhood (Bractwo Rycerskie Ziemi Ogrodzienieckiej).

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Pszczyna Castle

The Domain of Telemann and the Hochberg Family

Known for its exceptionally rich interiors, the castle retains 80% of its late 19th and early 20th-century furnishings, which are still remarkably intact despite numerous wars.

Originally built as a Gothic stronghold that resisted the Hussite invasion, Pszczyna Castle was later transformed into a Renaissance residence and then a Baroque palace with 17th-century architectural influences. Its final form was shaped by the Hochberg family, who had arrived in Silesia from Meissen in the 13th century. In 1907, the estate passed to Hans Heinrich XV, whose wife, the English aristocrat Maria Theresa Olivia Cornwallis-West, commonly known as Princess Daisy, was celebrated as one of the most beautiful women of her time. Notably, Georg Philipp Telemann, one of Europe's most prominent Baroque composers, served as the court musician and organist in Pszczyna for several years. Today, the Castle Museum boasts lavish rooms that are open to visitors, along with an impressive Armoury and Miniatures Room. Nearby, the Bison Show Farm provides visitors with another interesting attraction.

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Palace in Lubiąż

An Underrated Gem of Silesian Baroque

The Cistercian abbey and the abbots' palace in Lubiąż form one of the largest Baroque complexes in Europe.

A monastery was initially founded by monks in this small, scenic village along the Oder River in the 12th century. The abbey subsequently underwent numerous renovations over the centuries, culminating in an impressive structure with a monumental façade stretching an astonishing 223 metres! The abbey's golden age ended with secularisation in 1810, after which the building slowly but steadily lost its importance and fell into complete ruin. Restoration work began in the mid-20th century, and today the partially restored palace serves as both a fascinating tourist attraction and also a venue for artistic events, with its interiors captivating visitors with their intricate details and stunning frescoes.

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Rogalin Palace
Jewel of the Raczyński Family

The palace is surrounded by a beautiful garden and a grand park famous for the Rogalin Oaks.

Built in the late Baroque style, Rogalin Palace is one of the most important noble residences in Poland. Once the seat of the distinguished Raczyński family, today the palace houses a museum featuring works by some of Poland's most renowned painters from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The beautiful library is just one of the many highlights for visitors.

The palace grounds include a garden and a park containing a number of architectural and natural marvels. These include the Rogalin Oaks, a stand of about 1500 trees, the most famous of which – the Lech, Czech and Rus oaks – are estimated to be around 800 years old.

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Gołuchów:
"Loire Castle" in the Wielkopolska Region

A true jewel among castles.

The architecture of the castle in Gołuchów echoes the look of the famous French chateaux on the River Loire. Its exterior neo-Renaissance traits are evident in its pitched roofs and ornate chimneys. The halls and study rooms are decorated with magnificent furniture, sophisticated fireplaces, paintings and tapestries. Throughout, the castle boasts a rare collection of Greek vases. Its decor is enhanced by authentic historical architectural elements conceived in other European countries and incorporated here. The adjacent park is filled with about 1,500 rare and precious trees. Right next to the park, visitors can admire bison, fallow deer and the *konik polski* (Polish primitive horse) at the Model Animal Farm. One of the castle's outbuildings is home to the only museum in Poland devoted to forestry.

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Książ:
Jewel of Lower Silesia

This medieval residence of princes, redecorated in the Baroque style by its later owners, is in the same league as the largest Polish castles, sitting right next to Wawel and Malbork.

This impressive structure with a large garden complex is surrounded by hills. The gardens catch the eye with their sophisticated flowerbed arrangements. Maximilian's Hall and the apartments of Princess Daisy are opulently decorated in the Baroque style. Daisy von Pless was one of the most interesting figures to have lived in the castle, remembered not only for her charm and beauty but also for her pacifist stance during both World Wars. Night sightseeing tours of the castle are especially exciting. These days, Książ offers luxury hotel accommodation and fine dining in its restaurant. It is also a venue for exhibitions and festivals, among which the most interesting are the Festival of Flowers and Art (Festiwal Kwiatów i Sztuki) held in May and the Princess Daisy Ensemble International Chamber Arts Festival (Międzynarodowy Festiwal Kameralistyki Ensemble im. Księżnej Daisy).

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Moszna Castle

The Belle Époque in Every Detail

This eclectic castle boasts 99 towers and 365 rooms, and legend has it that the Knights Templar lived here in the Middle Ages.

The castle owes its current distinctive design to one of its later owners, Franz Hubert von Tiele-Winckler. Interestingly, his grandfather had been a miner in nearby Tarnowskie Góry, but a fortuitous marriage to a mine owner's widow and a noble title from the Prussian king had elevated the family's status. The castle itself is an eclectic marvel, mainly Baroque in style but infused with influences from other eras, including Art Nouveau, which emerged just as the building was being renovated. In line with Belle Époque ideals, the castle's picturesque qualities are highlighted, aided by its harmonious integration into the surrounding park. Today, Moszna Castle hosts outdoor events, artistic gatherings and a jazz concert series called "Jazz in the Palaces". Some of the historic rooms are available for rent, while the restored orangery nearby also adds to its unique charm.

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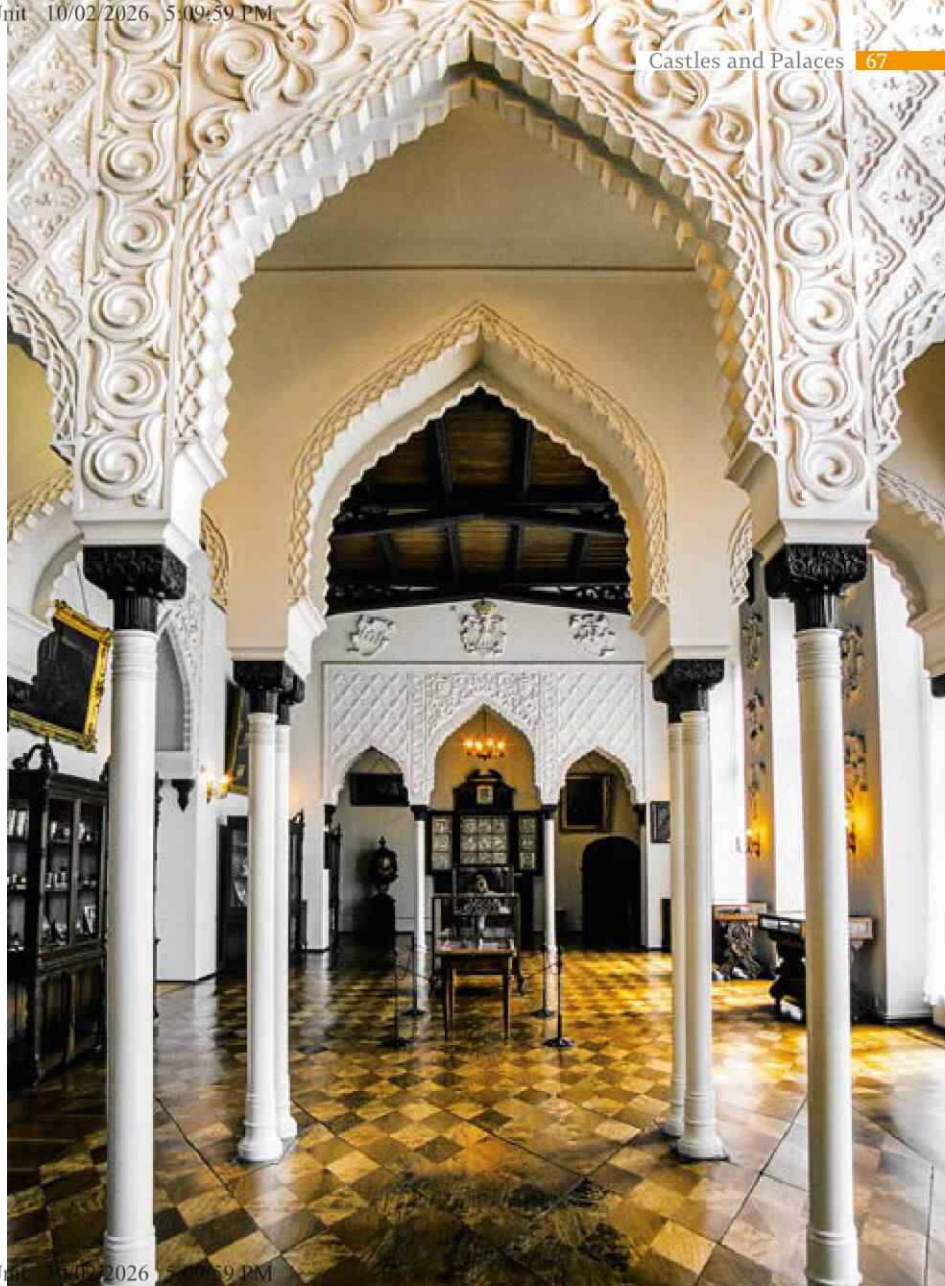
Kórnik:
Precious Book Collection in a Romantic Setting

Located not far from Poznań, the castle houses one of the most valuable book collections in Poland while its surrounding gardens are home to rare and protected tree species.

The design of the residence was the creation of Italian and German architects. Its original architecture alludes to English trends of the Romantic period. Modifications from the 19th century, such as adding turrets and battlements to the palace's lofty silhouette and surrounding it with a moat filled with water, were supposed to emphasise the appearance of a residence of knights of long ago. Again following English tendencies, Oriental motifs were integrated into the decoration of the facade. In keeping with this design pattern, the castle was surrounded by English gardens arranged in such a way as to create the impression of a natural formation. The Kórnik arboretum is famous for its fabulous rhododendrons. Because of the presence of many rare species of plants, it enjoys special protection.



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Czocha Castle:
Venerable Historic Building and Elegant Hotel

At first Czocha Castle was a frontier stronghold, and later a magnate family's residence. Today it welcomes visitors from all over the world.

The castle was designed as a fortress in the 13th century. After centuries of political turbulence followed by a fire which destroyed the castle in the 18th century, the structure was restored to its former glory thanks to ample funding. Thus, it became one of the most interesting landmarks of Lower Silesia. Unfortunately, after World War II almost all the furnishings fell victim to looters. Today the impressive monumental stronghold is home to an elegant hotel and its historical interiors can be visited like any other museum. Knights' tournaments, dance shows, comedy acts and concerts organised here add to the appeal, along with a stylish cafe and a restaurant specialising in Polish cuisine. The castle grounds have also been used as the set for many feature films and documentaries. The castle's wine cellar hosts mead-tasting events, promoting this drink so strongly connected to the culture of old Poland and appreciated by gourmets.

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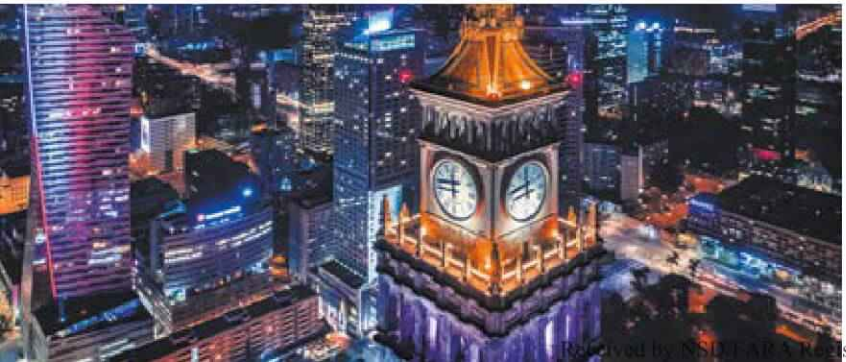
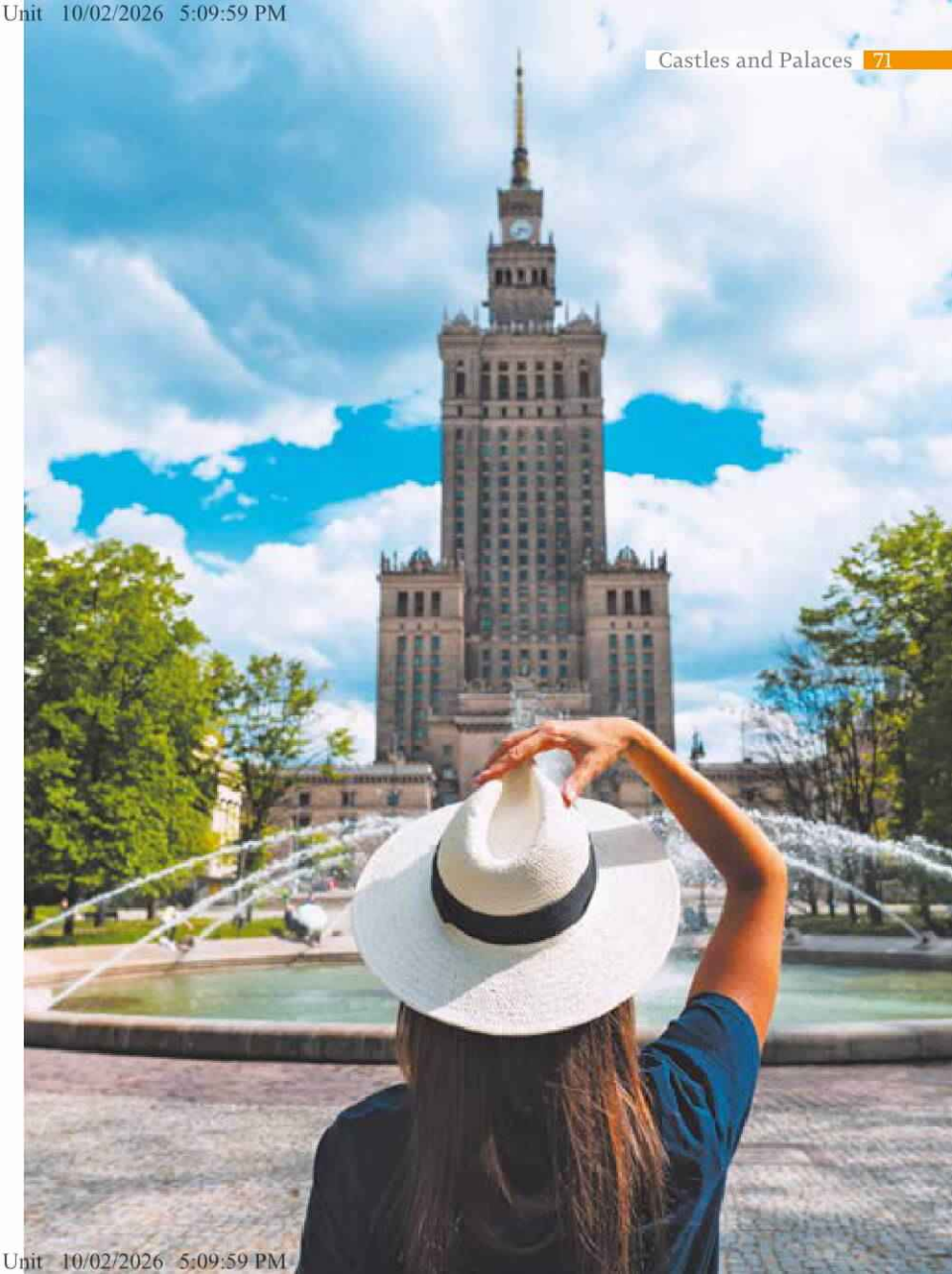
Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw

An Unwanted Gift and a Controversial Symbol

This iconic building, visible from nearly every part of the capital, was for many years Poland's tallest structure.

The Palace of Culture and Science, built in the 1950s in the heart of the city, was intended as a "gift from the Soviet people to the Poles". Despite the huge controversy it sparked, it has since become one of Warsaw's most recognisable landmarks. Architecturally, it combines the socialist realism style imposed at the time with elements of Polish historicism, such as the decorative parapets crowning each of the levels of the palace that are modelled on the characteristic tenement houses found in various Polish towns, including Kazimierz Dolny. Today, the palace houses cultural institutions, cinemas, theatres and museums, as well as the main Warsaw Tourist Information Point. The observation deck on the 30th floor offers a stunning view of Warsaw's skyline from a height of 114 metres. In the summer, the area around the palace comes alive with concerts, theatre performances and film screenings.





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