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# POLAND
## UNESCO World Heritage Sites

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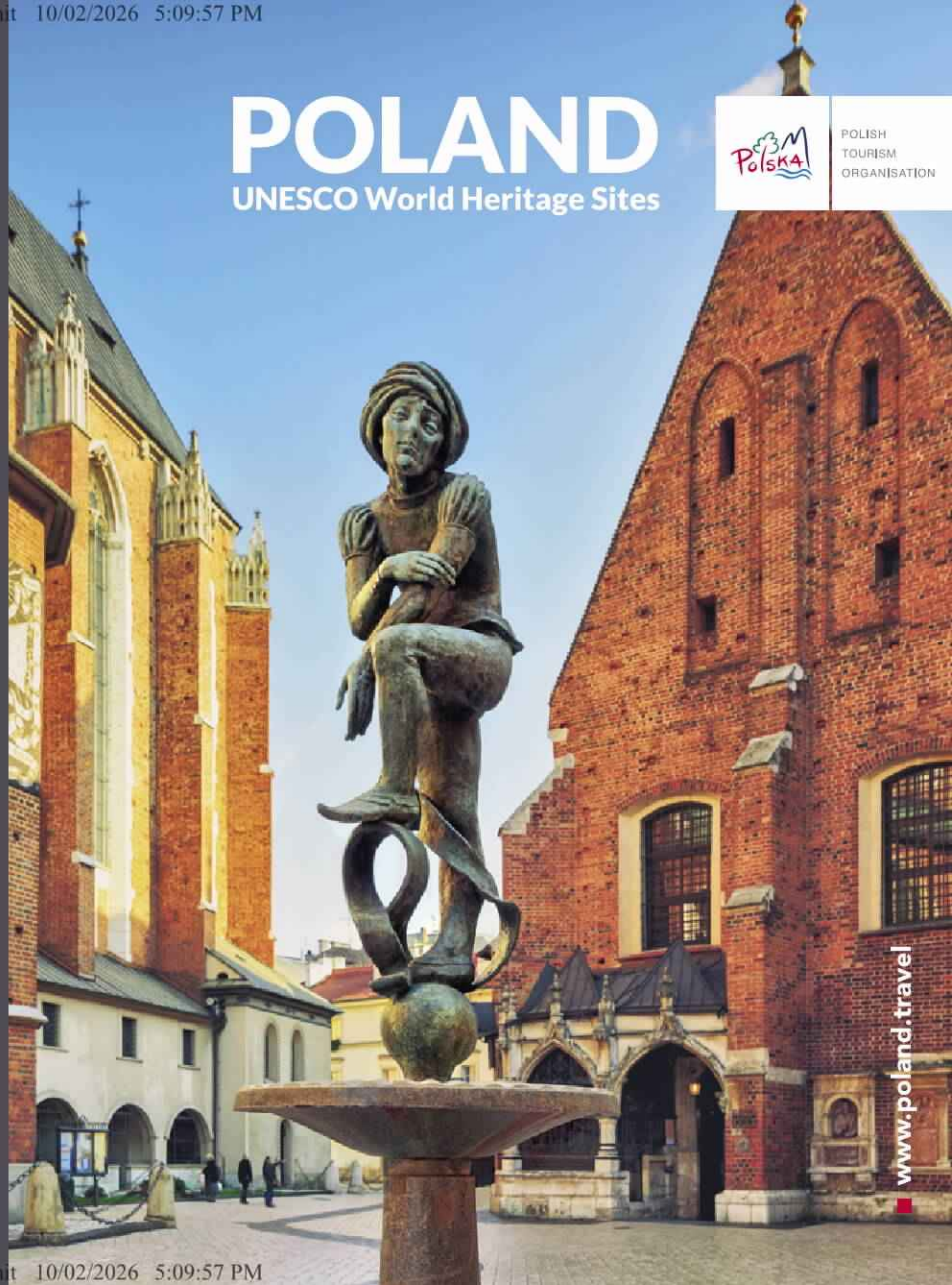

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# UNESCO World Heritage Sites

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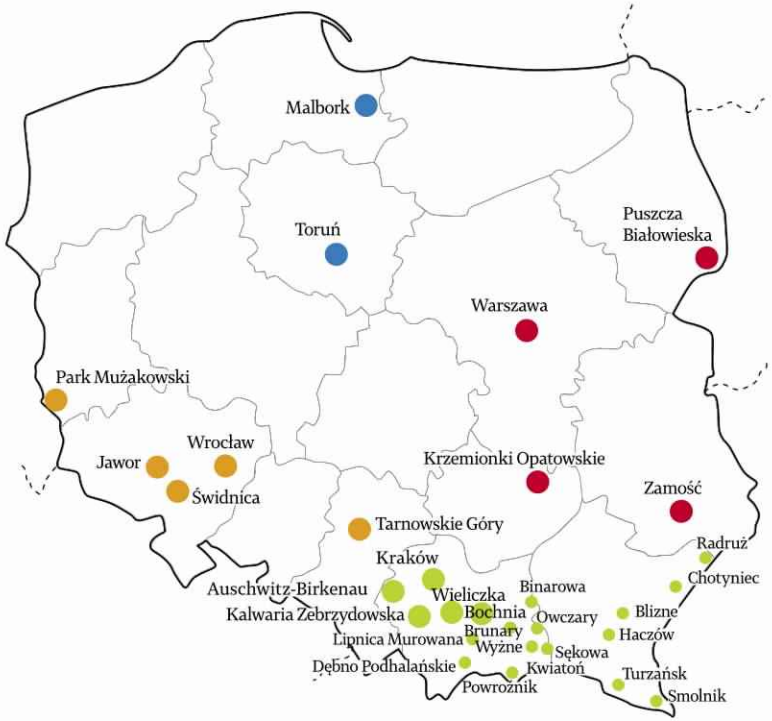


# Poland's Contribution to the World's Natural and Cultural Heritage

Travelling around Poland, it is worth noting its many unique historical and natural treasures. Some of them have been entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. They include castles, historic urban areas, churches, old mines, and even forests. The list features as many as 17 such sites. Alongside their unquestionable value for global cultural and/or natural heritage, they are also must-see tourist attractions.

Next to Kraków, Toruń and Zamość, where the architecture of the historical city centres never ceases to enchant visitors, the list also includes Warsaw's Old Town. UNESCO experts were moved by the extraordinary story of the Polish capital's reconstruction. Also on the prestigious list is Malbork Castle, which is the world's largest historical brick structure, and the Centennial Hall in Wrocław, a milestone in the history of architecture. Wooden churches — Catholic and Orthodox — testify to the great artistry of past craftsmen and are still active religious sites. A very special and shocking site on the list is Auschwitz-Birkenau, the former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp (1940–1945), which will leave no one indifferent to the tragic events that befell Poland in its history. These are just some of the sites on the list. The Carpathian beech forests and Białowieża Forest are a completely different kind of attraction: they are primeval forest complexes unique on a European scale.

All fans of wild nature should also visit the biosphere reserves, which show the wealth and diversity of the natural environment in Poland.

■ **www.poland.travel**

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# Secrets Hidden in Monumental Malbork

The castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork is an absolute must-see. It is an unforgettable journey taking you back hundreds of years in the company of the ghosts of knights and treacherous monks as well as the incredible power of architecture.

The mightiest Gothic stronghold in Europe is located on the banks of the River Nogat. It is also the largest brick building in the world. It was built to host the head of the Teutonic Order who was protected by armed monks. A monastery, military barracks and a war campaign command centre were founded within the monastery's monumental walls. The site's attractions include a medieval fair, which takes place in the third week of July on the castle ramparts, and one of the largest historical re-enactments in Poland, the Siege of Malbork. From April to August, amazing night-time light and sound shows take place in the castle. It is impossible to ignore such a powerful stronghold. Three parts are especially impressive in size: the Upper Castle made of 4.5 million bricks, with the Capitular Room, the Treasury, the Refectory, the Chapter, the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint ▶

**The mightiest Gothic stronghold in Europe towers above the banks of the River Nogat.**

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► Anne's Chapel – where the Grand Masters were buried, the Middle Castle with one of the most beautiful and greatest medieval secular interiors – the Grand Refectory, the exquisite Grand Masters' Palace, Saint Bartholomew's Chapel and the Infirmary for elderly and ill monks, and the Lower Castle with an arsenal, a bell foundry, stables, a brewery and Saint Lawrence's Church. The whole is surrounded by vast moats and once intimidating defensive walls.

■ **www.zamek.malbork.pl**

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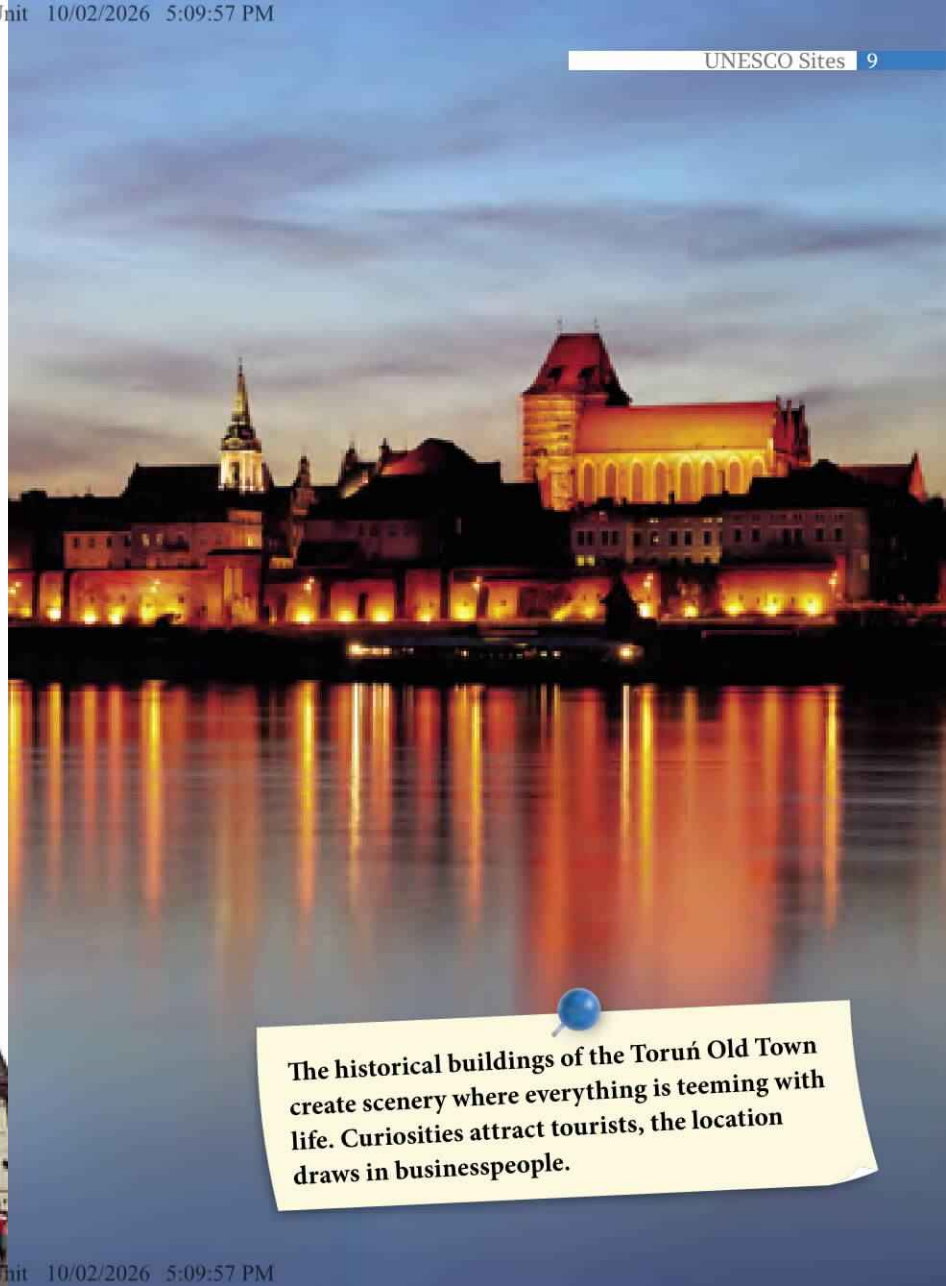
# Toruń:
## Where Nicolaus Copernicus Stopped the Sun and Moved the Earth

The vibe of Toruń's Old Town is created by close to a thousand medieval buildings, all with walls made of red brick.

Historical Toruń examines its reflection in the River Vistula. The layout of squares and streets has not changed since the Middle Ages when Toruń was a political and economic power. It owed its wealth to the Order of Teutonic Knights, who made it their headquarters, plundered, seized lands and eventually became a threat to the Crown of Poland. Included on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the medieval urban complex encompasses the Old and New Town as well as the ruins of the Teutonic castle. The remains of old fortifications are visible in fragments of walls, gates and towers, including the legendary Leaning Tower. The most valuable sites are the Old Town, considered one of the greatest wonders in Poland, and preserved churches, granaries and the town hall. ▶



The historical buildings of the Toruń Old Town create scenery where everything is teeming with life. Curiosities attract tourists, the location draws in businesspeople.

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► The Copernicus House is the townhouse where the great astronomer was born. A modern planetarium enables visitors to examine outer space, observe phenomena occurring in the universe or steer a model of the Cassini probe circling Saturn. You can also learn about the formation of cloud oceans, the flattening of planets, weight and the duration of interstellar travels. Toruń is famous for delicious gingerbread as well. After space adventures, it is worth visiting the Gingerbread Museum where you can bake a sweet souvenir according to a traditional recipe in a reconstructed bakery from the 16th century. According to readers of the Polish edition of *National Geographic*, the Old Town and Town Hall in Toruń are the third most beautiful site in the world.

■ **www.visittorun.com**

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# Historical Centre of Warsaw:
## Like a Phoenix from the Ashes

The post-war reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town was an unprecedented project. A reconstruction on such a scale had never taken place in the world before.

During World War II, the Nazis razed the oldest part of Warsaw to the ground. Out of 260 townhouses, only six remained untouched. Archaeologists and conservators rediscovered the city's extraordinary history which dates back to 1300. Warsaw impressed the world not only with the scale of the work but also the precision shown in reconstructing the city as it had been in its heyday, namely the 17th and 18th centuries. All surviving pieces of facades, even the smallest architectural details and elements of interior design were used in the reconstruction. Paintings, engravings and pre-war photos were also helpful. Famous vedute by Italian painter Canaletto were especially important for restoring the authentic appearance of buildings. ▶

**Thanks to great archaeologists and conservators, we can once again see Warsaw's history which dates back to the 14th century.**

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▶ Historical Warsaw is teeming with life. Lots of restaurants and cafe gardens can be found here. The Fountain Park holds multimedia shows. In August the Old Town welcomes everyone to the prestigious Jazz in the Old Town international festival. Sigismund's Column near the Royal Castle is the starting or final point of walks and rides down the Royal Route which goes past the most important national public institutions, including the Sejm (lower house of the Polish parliament) and the University of Warsaw. The widely available Veturilo network of urban bikes makes such trips much more convenient. The Old Town can be seen from above – from the bell tower of Saint Anne's Church or from the gallery on the 30th floor of the Palace of Culture and Science.

■ **www.warsawtour.pl**

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Unengineered rivers and wetlands create perfect living conditions for many species of plants, animals and fungi.

# Białowieża Forest:
## Ruled by Nature

This impenetrable primeval forest is home to trees of exceptional size, majestic European bison and unique species of fauna and flora.

The forest's ecosystem has been preserved in its natural state. Unregulated watercourses and wetlands create perfect living conditions for many species of plants, animals and fungi. Therefore, the forest is an excellent place for natural observations and an area of scientific research, mainly concerning endangered species. This is where the restoration of the European bison, Europe's largest mammal and a relative of the American bison, took place. The species became extinct during World War I. Only a few specimens survived, scattered around the world in zoological gardens. The bison brought to the breeding centre in Białowieża helped restore a stable population, which currently numbers approximately one thousand specimens in Białowieża Forest on both sides of the border. ▶

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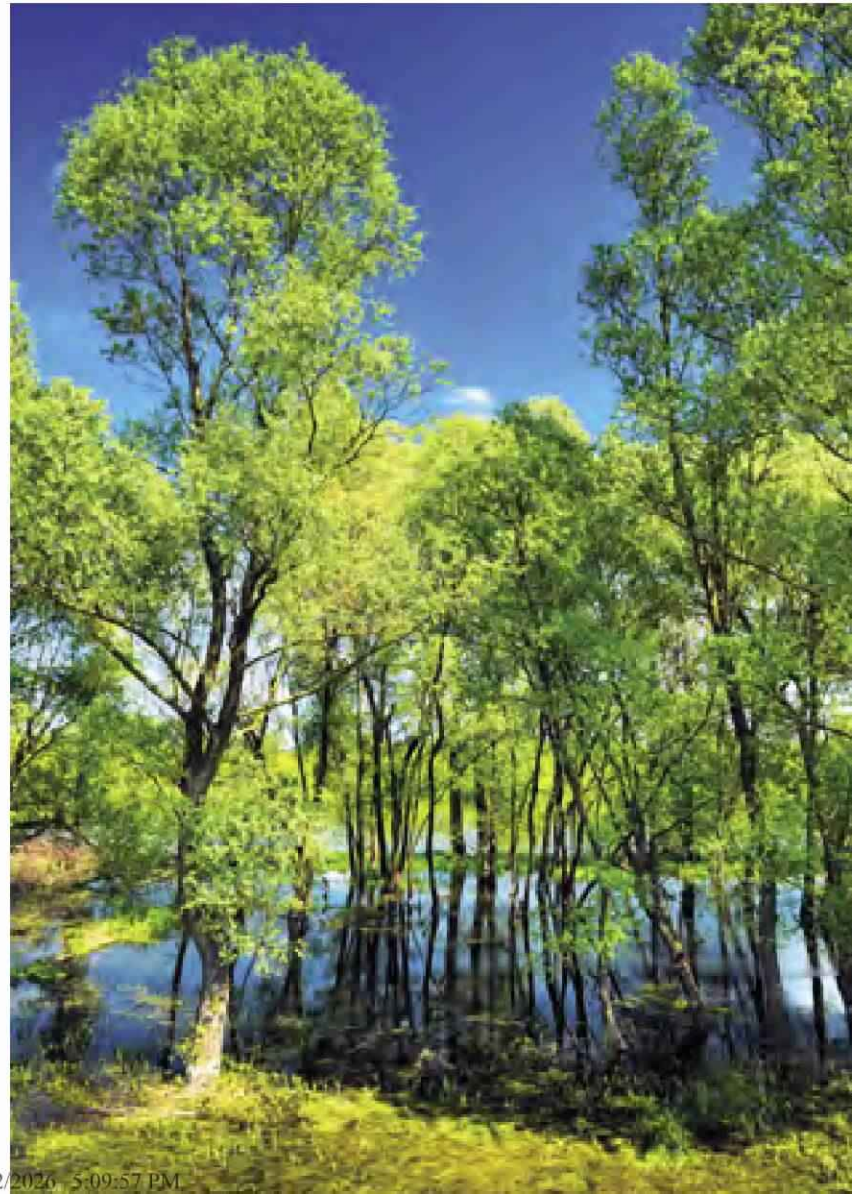
▶ This extraordinary forest underwent only natural changes over several thousand years. People walking down the forest paths are extremely impressed with the mighty old trees, also fallen ones whose rotting trunks are left to natural processes. The Trail of Royal Oaks is an interesting tourist route that also invokes Polish history, as the monumental trees along it bear the names of Polish rulers. The forest also tempts birdwatchers, especially those who enjoy watching woodpeckers and owls. Białowieża Forest is a perfect place to rest in direct contact with extraordinary nature.

■ **www.bpn.com.pl**



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# Old Town of Zamość:
## Gem of Renaissance Architecture

Founded in 1580, Zamość was meant to be the embodiment of the concept of the "ideal town". Indeed, it remains a vibrant centre of industry and culture to this day.

Commissioned by Chancellor Jan Zamoyski, Italian architect Bernardo Morando designed the city by skilfully consolidating the concepts of the Italian Renaissance with Polish traditions, as well as with the sponsor's expectations. Thus, Zamość became a symbol of co-existence and peaceful cooperation between the cultures of Eastern and Western Europe. Poles, Italians, Germans, Ruthenians, Armenians, Greeks and Jews lived in the town in a cultural harmony rather surprising for those days. The Town Hall and the collegiate church towered over townhouses with arcades bustling with trade. The town was surrounded by fortified strongholds. Owing to the intellectual ideas of the times, as well as the ambition and fortune of its aristocratic founder, Zamość has been admired for centuries as a "pearl of the Renaissance". ▶

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▶ The Zamość of today is the scene of major cultural events. The Old Town boasts 120 historical buildings and, at the same time, is a dynamic city centre. It is full of galleries, cafes and restaurants located in cosy interiors. The square easily turns into a venue for theatre performances and concerts. Festivals celebrating films, folklore or music are organised here. The city also plays an important role in the Euro-Park Mielec Special Economic Zone. It is proud to have the oldest symphony orchestra in Poland, founded in 1881. When it comes to hospitality, Zamość has a great selection of hotels, which makes it a perfect starting point for trips to the nearby Roztocze Hills, a region of breathtaking natural landscapes.

■ www.turystyka.zamosc.pl

**Owing to the intellectual ideas of the times, as well as the ambition and fortune of its aristocratic founder, Zamość has been admired for centuries as a "pearl of the Renaissance".**

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# Kraków's Magical Old Town:

## Where a Trumpet Marks the Passage of Time

The Old Town in Kraków is shaped like a teardrop. Its narrow end touches the Wawel Castle, the historical residence of many Polish kings.

Surrounded by rows of townhouses, Krakow's main market square was one of the largest town squares in medieval Europe. It is here that the city's most famous landmarks are located, including St. Mary's Basilica. From a window in the taller tower, a trumpeter plays a broken bugle call every hour on the hour. According to legend, the two towers are of uneven height as a result of a tragic envy: a builder killed his brother, also a builder, for making quicker progress than he was. Construction went on for almost 200 years and has never been completed. The main altar in St. Mary's Basilica is the largest Gothic altarpiece in Europe. It is a masterpiece by the distinguished sculptor Veit Stoss, who worked on it with his apprentices for 12 years. In the very centre of the square, the Cloth Hall (Sukiennice) continues its centuries-long tradition of trade, its stalls a veritable beehive of activity. ▶

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**The total number of historical monuments to see in the Old Town, the Kazimierz Jewish quarter and within the Wawel Castle complex reaches over a staggering three thousand.**

▶ Every year as many as 3 million visitors from Poland and abroad come to Kraków's Old Town. The underground vaults below the square offer a fascinating journey back in time with amazing artefacts within arm's reach. Planty Park, built on the site of the town's medieval defensive walls pulled down in the 19th century, is a green belt surrounding the Old Town.

The total number of historical monuments to see in the Old Town, the Kazimierz Jewish quarter and within the Wawel Castle complex reaches over a staggering three thousand. The old Jewish quarter, Kazimierz, known these days for its artsy and bohemian nightlife, is especially worth a look with its synagogues and old cemetery. Orthodox Jews from all over the globe come to pay homage to distinguished rabbis and tsaddikim buried here. Towering over the area are the majestic walls of the Wawel Castle, once Poland's royal residence. Most Polish kings as well as many eminent figures are interred in the vaults of the Wawel Cathedral. A brilliant 19th-century painter from Kraków, Jan Matejko, depicted many of Poland's rulers in his impressive paintings.

**www.krakow.pl**

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# Wieliczka and Bochnia:
## Royal Salt Mines

Deep beneath the ground, these are truly unique cities of salt: with churches, chapels, and legendary ventilation, drainage, lighting and transportation systems.

The salt mine in Wieliczka was one of the first sites in the world to be placed on the list of UNESCO World Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites. Immersed in its unique microclimate, you can walk down tunnels adorned with amazing sculptures carved in salt or sit back in one of the many chapels to reflect on the spirituality of the pious miners. A weary traveller can enjoy spa treatments and various innovative therapies, or even spend the night in one of the special saline chambers. If that's not enough, those seeking adventure can go for a boat ride on an underground lake. The mine in Bochnia offers a journey back in time, thanks to a multimedia exhibition documenting the development of mining technologies over the centuries. ▶

**You can walk down tunnels adorned with amazing sculptures carved in salt or sit back in one of the many chapels to reflect on the spirituality of the pious miners.**

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▶ Today these old excavation chambers and chapels serve as venues for various events. The biggest event at the Wieliczka Salt Mine is World Art Underground, a music, dance and performance festival. The mine hosts all sorts of events: concerts, theatre performances, art exhibitions, balls, weddings and conferences. Film crews shoot here too. St. Kinga's Chapel, where even the chandeliers are made of salt, is the location for services celebrated on all major religious holidays. The Kraków Saltworks Museum exhibits the world's only collection of horse-powered, wooden mills, the predecessors of steam and electrical technologies. Another curiosity is the only collection of salt shakers in Europe. A sports field is located in the Ważyn Chamber about 250 metres below ground, and a ride down a 140 metre long slide is definitely something to remember.

- **www.muzeum.wieliczka.pl**
- **www.wieliczka-saltmine.com**
- **www.kopalnia-bochnia.pl**

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# Auschwitz-Birkenau:
## German Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camp (1940-1945)

Preserved as a memento and a warning, the concentration camps are a poignant memorial to the victims of the worst atrocity in the history of humanity.

In the world, Auschwitz is a symbol of war, terror, genocide and the Holocaust. The camp was set up by the Nazis in occupied Oświęcim for Polish political prisoners but soon became the site of the annihilation of Jews from all over Europe. Day after day, the genocide continued under the tragically ironic sign over the entrance gate spelling out "Arbeit macht frei", which means "Work makes you free". As a result of mass murder in gas chambers, inhumane living conditions and slave labour, an estimated 1.2 million men, women and children lost their lives at this camp and the neighbouring Birkenau. ▶

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► Most of them were Jewish. Their bodies were systematically cremated. Many prisoners also perished from the horrific medical experiments they were subjected to.

Personal belongings preserved in the Auschwitz camp speak volumes. Withdrawing before the arrival of the Soviets in 1945, the Nazis didn't have time to destroy the camp's buildings or Nazi documentation. For this reason, we can now view the shocking archives featuring photographs illustrating their crime. What is particularly moving are the meticulously segregated and stored personal effects of the victims: clothes, shoes, suitcases, prosthetic limbs, glasses, hair... It is impossible to stay indifferent in the face of it all. The Nazi concentration camps stand in opposition to the very idea of the legacy of Western civilisation. Why they ought to be preserved was expressed in the words of Pope John Paul II: "Auschwitz is a place that must not be merely visited. Coming here, one must reflect with anxiety on where the borders of hatred lie".

**The day of liberation – 27 January – has been designated as International Holocaust Remembrance Day by a resolution of the UN.**

■ **www.auschwitz.org**

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# Kalwaria Zebrzydowska:
## Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park

Legend has it that magnate Mikołaj Zebrzydowski saw a burning cross from the window of his castle. He founded a monastery at the site of the miraculous sighting and surrounded it with chapels linked by paths.

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska is a truly extraordinary place. Here, nature intertwines and blends with man-made shrines of prayer. With its forty chapels, Kalwaria is one of the most splendid sites of worship in Europe. Some of the chapels stand along the Way of the Cross, others along the so-called Mary's Trails and trails devoted to the souls of the departed. Many names allude to Jerusalem, as architect Paul Baudarth found inspiration in drawings from the Holy City when he designed the area. ▶

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▶ The River Skawinka became Kidron, Żar Hill was called Calvary, and Lanckorona Hill became the Mount of Olives. The chapels along the Way of the Cross include Pilate's House and Herod's Palace and the Chapel of the Third Fall. In the mid-17th century, a painting of the Madonna with the Infant Jesus was declared miraculous. The number of pilgrims rose sharply as a result.

Regardless of the weather, up to 100,000 pilgrims come to the complex during Holy Week. The Mystery of Christ's Passion lasts a week and culminates on Good Friday, the day Christ was judged and crucified. Local parishioners take on the roles of the protagonists. The man playing the role of Jesus carries a heavy oak cross, so the suffering on his face is authentic. The procession stops to pray at every station and the final Mass is celebrated at the Chapel of the Crucifixion.

**The Mystery of Christ's Passion lasts a week and culminates on Good Friday, the day Christ was judged and crucified.**

**www.kalwaria.eu**

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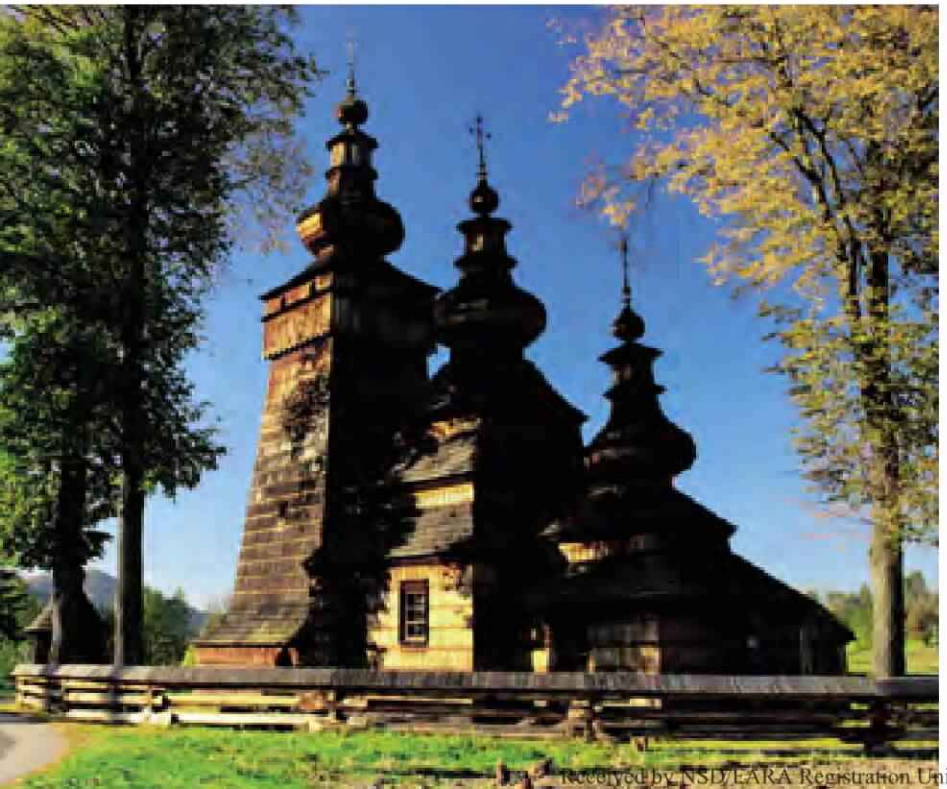
# Wooden Tserkvas of the Carpathian Region in Poland and Ukraine:

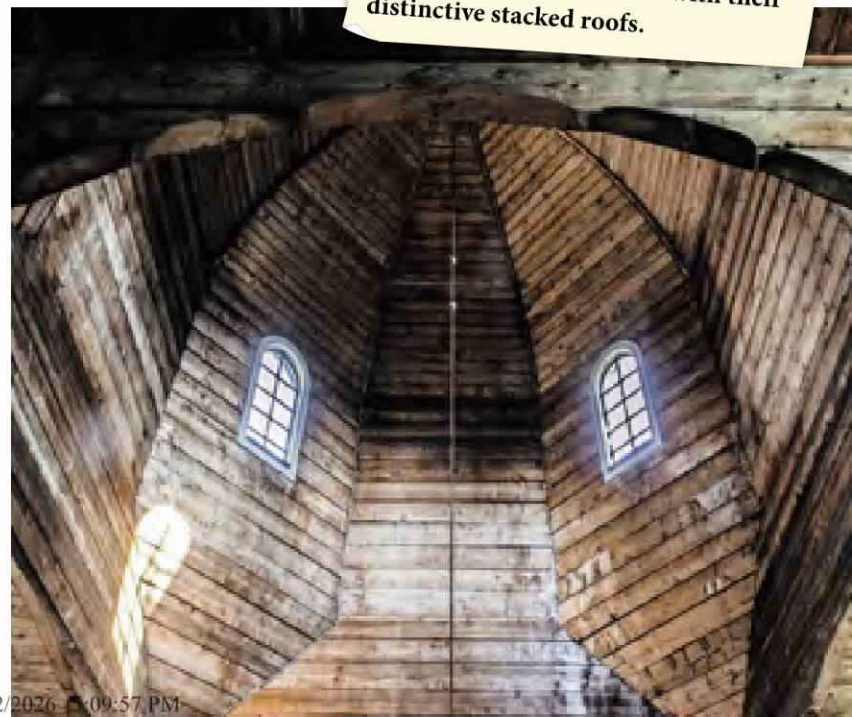
## Amazing Wooden Treasures

Their unique beauty is a feast for the eyes and soul. They were made by folk architectural carpenters who turned soaring larches into crafted temples.



Tserkvas are mementos of the old times when Poland's borders spread far eastwards, setting the country within Europe's cultural and religious borderland. The oldest ones date back to the 15th century. The creators of the Carpathian temples drew on monumental architecture. They had Byzantine roots, thus they were more attracted to Baroque forms than to Gothic ones. Approximately 100 wooden tserkvas with distinctive stacked roofs crowned with onion-shaped helmet domes have been preserved in the area. The World Heritage list features wooden tserkvas in the Polish and Ukrainian region of the Carpathians as a cross-border entry. It includes 16 tserkvas, 8 each in Poland and Ukraine. ▶

**In the region of the Lower Beskid (Beskid Niski) range, approximately 100 tserkvas have survived with their distinctive stacked roofs.**



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▶ The Polish tserkvas are: the Tserkva of Saint James the Less the Apostle in Powroźnik, three Tserkvas of Saint Michael the Archangel in Brunary Wyżne, Turzańsk and Smolnik, the Tserkva of Our Lady's Protection in Owczary, the Tserkva of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chotyniec, and two Tserkvas of Saint Paraskeva in Kwiatoń and Radruż.

Wooden tserkvas match the surrounding landscape of forested mountains perfectly. They usually stand on hills and are surrounded by circles of old trees and beam fences with picturesque gates. Fir was the timber used to build country houses, whereas larch was reserved for churches. The artistry of carpentry masters was manifested in the beam joints at wall corners and in the sophisticated modelling of rooftops and bell towers. The interiors sometimes contain polychrome frescos, but it was icons that were particularly important. They are images painted on wood, depicting Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, saints and biblical scenes. Icons are always positioned in the same, traditional sequence according to the requirements of liturgical order. Before an icon was blessed, the characters it portrayed were signed.

**www.podkarpackie.travel.pl**

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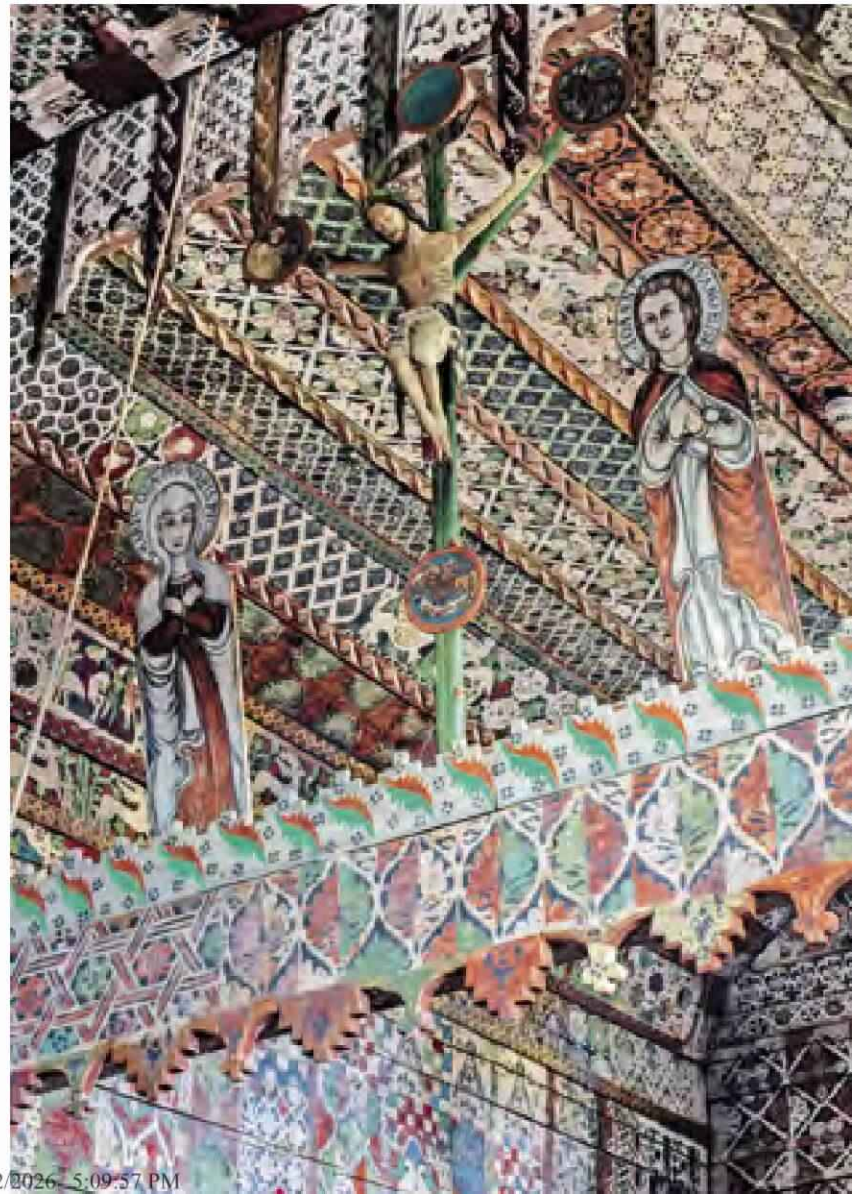
# Centuries Enchanted in Wood:
## Wooden Churches of Southern Małopolska

There are few places in the world where larch and fir were used to conjure up architectural wonders; the most valuable examples are the wooden churches of southern Małopolska.

Once we leave historical Kraków with its monumental churches, it is worth following the trail of wooden temples built hundreds of years ago, with soaring Gothic shapes, steep pitch roofs, and sometimes high, pointed bell towers. The Wooden Architecture Route includes as many as 125 priceless historical churches, among which the six most valuable are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Binarowa, Blizne, Dębno Podhalańskie, Haczów, Lipnica Murowana, Sękowa. Masters of carpentry usually built them from larch and sometimes fir timber, masterfully making the walls of entire logs which were not joined with nails but using precisely hewed scarf joints. The roofs were shingled. ▶



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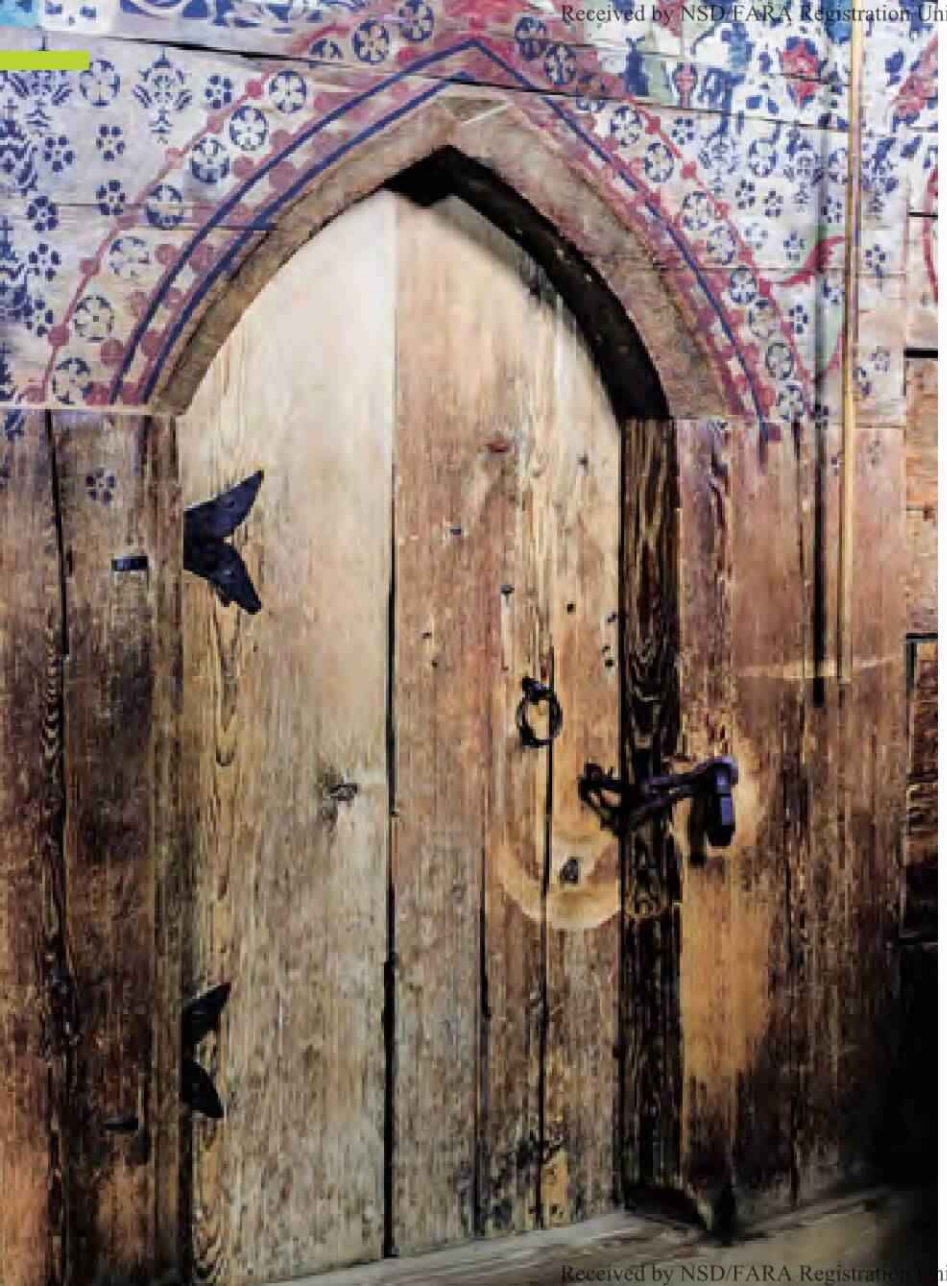

► Enchantingly beautiful, these churches invite visitors to come inside for a short slip into reverie and prayer among rich polychromes. The historical churches are living places of religious worship. They also host cultural events. The oldest wooden churches in Małopolska date back to the 15th century, but they feature much older elements. These often found their way to the countryside when big city churches changed their decor. Hence, in some rural churches you can admire priceless beautiful Madonnas and Pietas – masterpieces of medieval religious art.

If you plan your journey well, you can also observe Mass celebrated in these churches. Biblical scenes are interwoven with episodes from the lives of saints, and folk and religious art are mixed together, for example in a summer concert cycle called Music Enchanted in Wood.

**The Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska includes as many as 125 priceless wooden churches.**

■ **www.drewniana.malopolska.pl**

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# Muskauer Park:
## Fulfilled Vision of Paradise

Endless meadows, majestic trees, lakes and rivers with winding roads in between.

Muskauer Park (Park Mużakowski in Polish) is one of the most outstanding landscape gardens in Europe. The author of the park was Prince Hermann von Puckler who, inspired by English gardens, decided to create a perfect landscape around his family manor in Bad Muskau at the beginning of the 19th century. To do that he used the natural land arrangement in the valley of the Lusatian Neisse River and in the arch of the largest terminal moraine in Europe. Natural small ponds, gorges, streams and glades were linked by a network of horse and pedestrian paths. Later, footbridges and bridges, garden houses and viewing terraces were added to this. Although this visionary project has never been completed, Muskauer Park is one of the most outstanding examples of 19th-century European garden art. Moreover, due to the fact that after World War II the Polish- German border cut through the park, it is the only cross-border park in the world.

The setting encourages visitors to go for romantic walks, ride bicycles and stylish carriages or to sail in boats.

This natural phenomenon also covers the area of the Muskauer Arch – the only terminal moraine visible from space.

The park sits astride the Lusatian Neisse River which also marks the border between Poland and Germany.

www.park-muzakowski.pl

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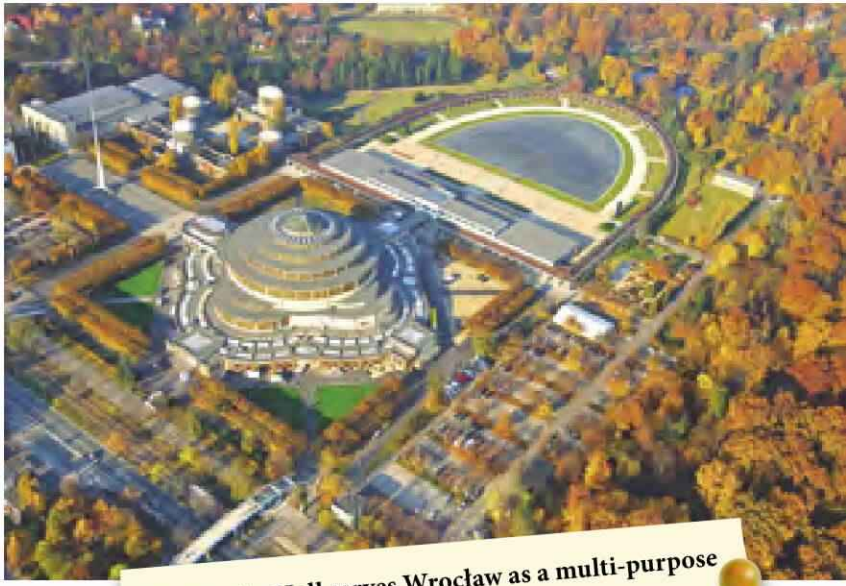
# Centennial Hall in Wrocław:
## Gem of Modernist Architecture

Considering its enormous size, the airiness of Wrocław's Centennial Hall (Hala Stulecia) is quite surprising. Because of the building materials and the technologies used, the Hall is considered a truly ground-breaking project in the history of world architecture.

This engineering marvel is 42 metres high and its axis is 152 metres long. The diameter of its dome spans 65 metres. Not only was it the first public venue built of reinforced concrete, but it's also one of the largest in the world. Its designers were well ahead of their time when they used raw concrete to form daring and complex structural elements. Erected in the 1910s, the Hall is surrounded by areas of exceptional charm, such as a Japanese garden. Its main attraction, the Pergola, is an intricate semi-circular colonnade winding around Europe's largest fountain. Covering an area of approximately 10,000 square metres, the fountain shoots water out of 300 nozzles and is illuminated with 800 lights. ▶



Today, the Hall serves Wrocław as a multi-purpose venue for various large-scale events.

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► Today, the Hall serves Wrocław as a multi-purpose venue for various large-scale events. It has hosted cultural and sporting events, exhibitions, music concerts, conferences and congresses, of both local and world standing. It was here that Pope John Paul II held an ecumenical service during his 1997 pilgrimage to Poland. In 2010, the Dalai Lama spoke on this site about the need for peace and solidarity in the world. The European Culture Congress was held in the Centennial Hall in 2011. Events of such scale reverberate around the world, proving this World Heritage Site to be an extremely vibrant centre.

**www.halastulecia.pl**

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# The Churches of Peace in Jawor and Świdnica:
## Power in a Fragile Setting

They were supposed to be a sign of reconciliation between Roman Catholics and Protestants ending the longest war in the history of Europe. Made of wood and clay, they have survived to this day.

The churches were built in the second half of the 17th century, when Ferdinand III's Protestant subjects were allowed to build three temples (the church in Głogów has not existed since the 18th century). However, the buildings could not be built within the city walls, look like existing churches or have towers. The structure is supported on a wooden framework filled with straw and clay briquettes. Such a technique was used in north-western Europe for centuries to build houses and outbuildings, but it had never been used in a larger building before. Paradoxically, the restrictions which were meant to hinder the construction of the churches led to the creation of exceptional buildings. The churches in Jawor and Świdnica are the largest wattle-and-daub buildings in Europe. Both churches, built according to Albrecht von Sabisch's designs, testify to a centuries-old tradition of wooden and half-timbered building as well as being an example of harmonious merging of Baroque art forms with Lutheran ideology. ▶

**The buildings are timber-framed, filled with vertical wooden slats wrapped in straw and plastered with clay.**

Jawor

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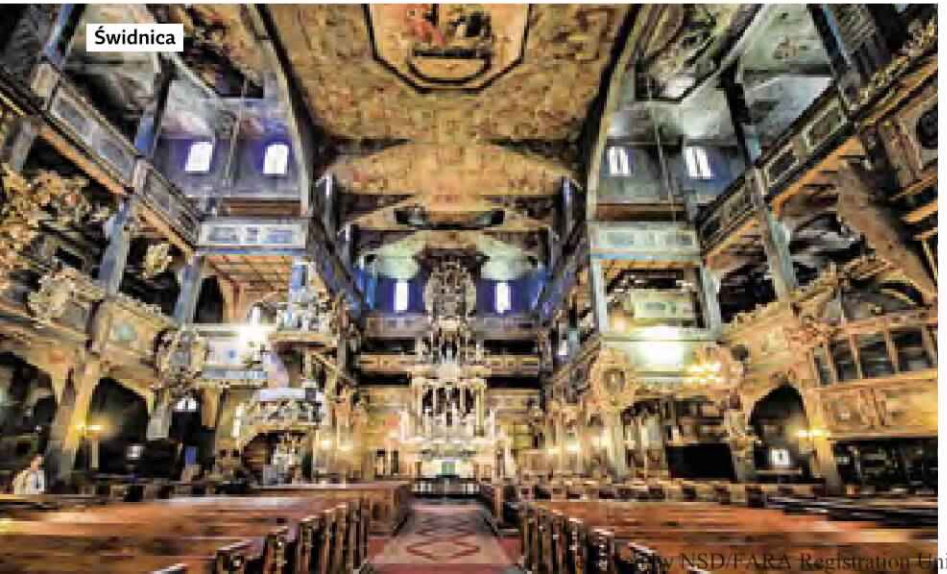
Świdnica


Świdnica

▶ Events held in the Churches of Peace are always motivated by the ideas of cooperation, tolerance and international integration. The uniform interiors enhance a sense of solidarity among the gathering and strengthen human ties. Typical of both churches is the fact that a modest architectural form contrasts with their rich interiors. Woodcarvings and painted decorations as well as pipe organs constitute outstanding Baroque pieces of art made by local masters. By moving biblical scenes and principles of faith in a vivid form to extensive surfaces of the walls and ceilings, the decorators turned the interiors into opened books. Between May and September, these interiors are filled with music and singing. The churches are visited by artists from around the world. Classical music, jazz as well as gospel can be heard there.

- **www.kosciolpokojujawor.pl**
- **www.kosciolpokoju.pl**

Jawor

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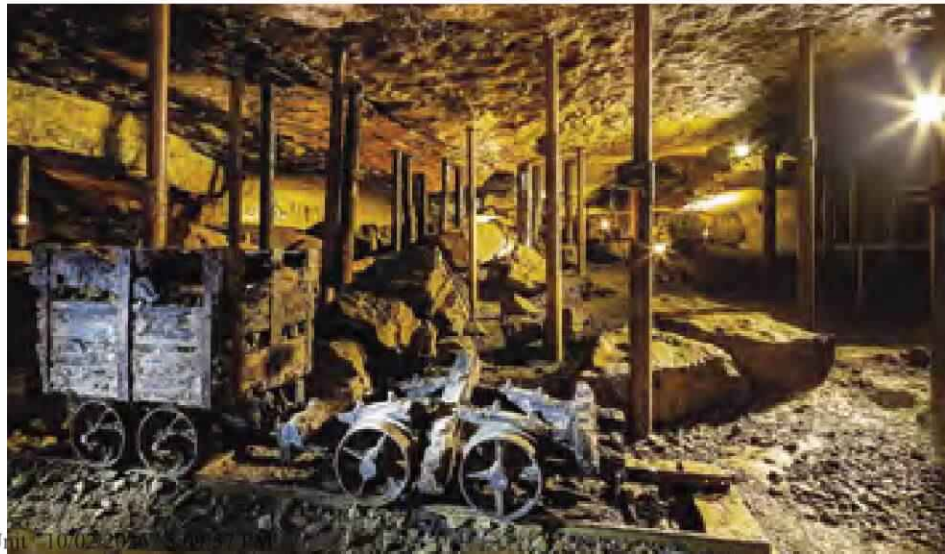
# Tarnowskie Góry Lead-Silver-Zinc Mine

The "silver rush" in this area was supposedly started by a certain Rybka, a peasant who found a silver nugget while ploughing his field.

As with every legend, there must be a grain of truth in this. Such a spectacular discovery, presumed to have occurred in 1490, must have started an "invasion" of prospectors in the area of the discovery. It soon turned out that the ground of this region hid not only rich deposits of silver but also of lead, zinc and iron ores. Soon the first settlements were built, housing the early miners and their families. In lands belonging to the village of Tarnowice, 'gory' were dug (Old Polish for 'mines'), which is where the name of Tarnowskie Góry comes from. Royal privileges and charters were granted left and right, and laws were enacted to support mining. And so within a short 100 years, Tarnowskie Góry became one of the largest ore mining sites in Upper Silesia as well as in Europe. The plague and wars in Silesia did not stop the development of mining here, and tunnels and shafts continued to be dug using the latest technological achievements. For example, at the end of the 18th century a steam-powered machine for draining water from the shafts was built. It was one of the first of its kind on the continent of Europe, having been imported from faraway England. At the beginning of the 19th century, the first mining academy was opened. A century later, though, the deposits were depleted. But the memory of those prosperous times, when this bastion of scruffy miners was visited by rulers and poets, such as Vienna's saviour Jan III Sobieski and his wife Marysieńka, and the globetrotting Johann Wolfgang Goethe, meant that these ancient lead, silver and zinc mines, along with their innovative drainage systems, were included on the UNESCO list at the behest of local authorities. In total, 28 buildings within city limits are listed, including the Historic Silver Mine and the Black Trout Adit.

Visitors to the Historic Silver Mine can enjoy a boat ride 40 metres underground. First they have to descend the 40 metres below ground, and then cover nearly 2 kilometres on foot and over water. These brave visitors are treated to special effects, including the sound of pickaxes, the screech of a rock face collapsing, and the squeal of transport wagons carrying the mined material along the tracks. The longest underground waterway in Poland can be seen at the Black Trout Adit, covering 600 metres in boats between the Ewa and Sylwester shafts. Both these attractions are part of the Silesian Industrial Monuments Route, which was visited by 120,000 tourists in 2016. Inclusion on the UNESCO list may even double this number. The historical city centre, with its 16th-century square surrounded by gabled townhouses and featuring a lovely town hall considered a gem of Upper Silesian architecture, is a fascinating addition to any tour programme. Along the way, visitors will come across sculptures of miners which dot the streets of Tarnowskie Góry, much like the dwarves in Wrocław.

■ **www.kopalniasrebra.pl**



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# Krzemionki

## Prehistoric Striped Flint Mining Region

The site of the prehistoric striped flint mines in Krzemionki near Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski has the status of an archaeological museum and nature reserve.

The most recent UNESCO-listed historical site in Poland, it was made a protected area due to the unique architecture of its underground parts and the excellently preserved post-mining landscape as well as the site's scientific value. Krzemionki — mines from the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age (ca. 3900 to 1600 BCE) — is an official Polish historic monument. It is one of the largest and best-preserved sites of its kind in the world.

The Krzemionki mining area spreads across approx. 80 hectares with over 4,000 mines up to 9 metres deep. The surface area of individual excavations reaches up to 800 sq. m. The flint mined here was used to make objects like smoothed axe blades, which were distributed across large areas of Central Europe. Flint pieces were brought to the surface and then worked into shapes similar to axe blades and chisels.

Today Krzemionki's greatest attraction is its underground route, almost 500 m long, the only such trail in the world open to the general public. Visitors can also view a reconstructed Neolithic settlement, where archaeological workshops and museum lessons are held. The newly opened display rooms present an innovative exhibition related to archaeology and nature.

■ www.krzemionki.pl

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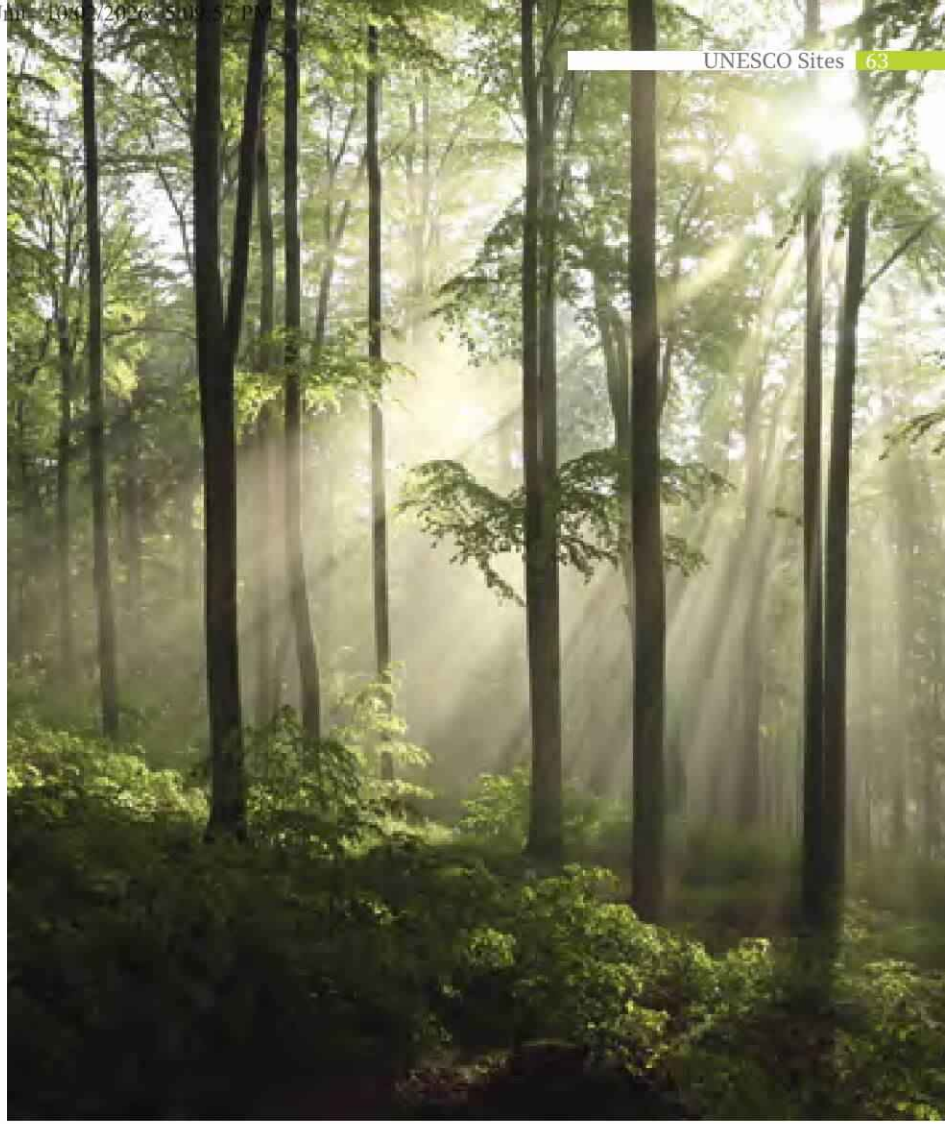
# Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians

The ancient Carpathian beech woods were the second Polish nature site, after Białowieża Forest, to make it on the UNESCO list. They lie within the Bieszczady National Park.

The beech forests in the Bieszczady Mountains are part of a supra-regional entry on the UNESCO list called the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe, currently comprising as many as 94 parts (called components) in 18 countries. In Poland, these forests lie in the most inaccessible corners of the national park: on the slopes of the Wetlina Mountain Pasture and Mount Smerek, in the Border Range and the Upper Solinka River Valley, in the valleys of the Terebowiec and Wołosatka streams. This is an area under strict protection, covering approx. 3,300 hectares. The ancient trees are a unique example of well-preserved beech forests in our climate zone, extremely valuable for scientists, but also an exceptionally beautiful area of ancient forest untouched by human hand.



www.bdpn.pl

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# Polish Reserves:
## Sites of Exceptional Beauty and Natural Value

Since the 1970s, UNESCO has been granting biosphere reserve status to the most valuable ecological sites in the world. Eleven of them are in Poland.

The purpose of sites included in the international MaB (Man and the Biosphere) programme is the engagement of local communities in activities serving environmental protection, culture and environmental education.

**Tuchola Forest Biosphere Reserve.** This is the biggest site of this type in Poland. It encompasses an extensive water ecosystem, forests and peat bogs.
www.borytucholskie.org.pl

**Słowiński Biosphere Reserve.** It protects seaside lakes, marshes, meadows, peat bogs, seaside forests, but above all the unique moving dunes of the Łebska Spit.
www.slowinskipn.pl

**Western Polesie Biosphere Reserve.** It protects natural forests, marshes and peat bogs.
www.poleskipn.pl

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The **Masurian Lakes Biosphere Reserve** comprises as many as 11 diverse nature reserves: ornithological, landscape, forest as well as a flower and a peat-bog reserve. The most famous places here are Lake Łuknajno, which is an ecologically pure habitat for 175 bird species and Europe's largest mute swan sanctuary, and the River Krutynia.
www.parkikrajobrazowewarmiimazur.pl

**Kampinos Forest Biosphere Reserve.** It contains extensive forests, agricultural areas as well as nature and historical monuments. The family home of Fryderyk Chopin in Żelazowa Wola is situated within its boundaries.
www.kampinoski-pn.gov.pl

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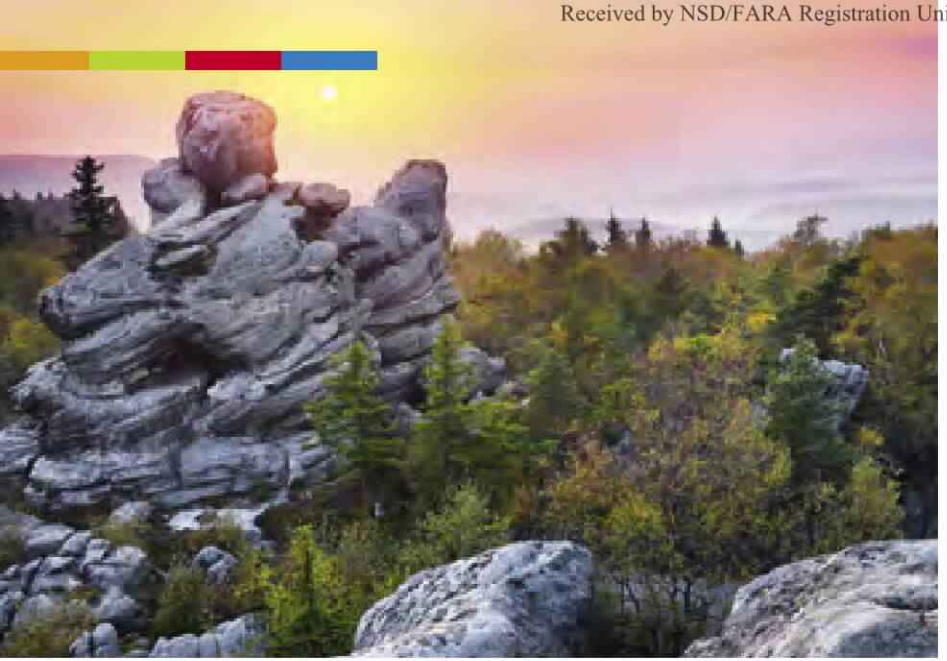

**Białowieża Biosphere Reserve.** The most valuable fragments of Europe's primeval forest are included within its area.
www.bpn.com.pl

**Karkonosze Biosphere Reserve.** It covers the highest range of the Sudetes: the Karkonosze. It stretches along the borderland of Poland and the Czech Republic.
www.kpnmab.pl

**Babia Góra Biosphere Reserve.** A mountainous area with unique natural and cultural features situated in the borderland of Poland and Slovakia.
www.bgpn.pl

**The Białowieża Biosphere Reserve protects a unique vestige of primeval forest which once stretched across the continent.**

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**Tatra Biosphere Reserve.** It contains the only alpine-type range of the Carpathians stretching along the borderland of Poland and Slovakia.
www.tpn.pl

**East Carpathian International Biosphere Reserve.** It encompasses mountainous areas. It was the first site on the UNESCO list situated in the borderland of three countries: Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia.
www.bdpn.pl

The **Roztocze Biosphere Reserve** is a transborder region between Poland and Ukraine boasting great biodiversity. Its western part is dominated by deep loess gorges, rivers in the central part form picturesque valleys with rock steps, while the southern part features fossilised trees and sulphate mineral springs.
www.roztoczanskipn.pl

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