MAŁOPOLSKA

- 8 UNESCO sites
- 250 attractions on the Wooden Architecture Route
- Wadowice – town of birth of Pope John Paul II
- Salt mines in Wieliczka and Bochnia
- 9 spa resorts
- 6 national parks
- 4 geothermal pools
- Rafting down the Dunajec gorge
- 2600 km of bicycle trails
- 3360 km of mountain trails
- 250 ski runs

www.visitmalopolska.pl
MAŁOPOLSKA

Capital of the region: Kraków
Major cities: Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Oświęcim
Surface area: 15,190 km² (about 5% of the surface area of Poland)
Population: 3.28 mil. (about 8% of the population of Poland)
Landscape:
- the tallest peak – Rysy: 2499 m asl
- mountains – Tatras, Beskids, Pieniny, Gorce
- foothills – Carpathian Foothills
- uplands – Kraków-Częstochowa Upland
- lowlands – Vistula valley
- main rivers – Vistula, Dunajec, Poprad, Raba, Skawa, Biała
- water reservoirs – Czorsztyński, Rożnowski, Czchowski, Dobczycki, Klimkówka
- the highest located, cleanest lakes – Morskie Oko, Czarny Staw, the lakes of the Valley of Five Polish Lakes
- the largest and deepest cave – Wielka Śnieżna Cave: over 22 km of corridors, 824 m deep

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Castles, ruins of medieval fortresses and aristocratic residences from the era of Renaissance and Baroque can be found at every turn in Małopolska. Built on high hills and visible from afar, they constitute one of the most characteristic features of the region's landscape. The greatest attraction is of course the Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków. Together with the Cathedral Basilica of Sts. Stanislaus and Vaclav, they create a unique example of historic built heritage.

Also well known are the Jurassic castles, referred to as Eagles’ Nests on account of their location on top of rocky peaks. Most of them were built by order of King Casimir the Great along the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, creating a fortified route protecting the kingdom’s borders from the side of Silesia. Most castles on the Trail of the Eagles’ Nests fell into ruin, but there are some that were fully preserved, such as the marvellous Renaissance residence in Pieskowa Skała, or reconstructed, such as the enchanting knights’ fortress in Korzkiew. Many castles can also be found in the Carpathian Mountains among the mountain ridges of the Beskidy or on the foothills. The Dunajec Castle in Niedzica and the Wronin Castle in Czorsztyn situated by the Czorsztyn Lake in the Pieniny Mountains are the most beautiful and famous ones. While exploring the Carpathian Foothills, you can also visit the wonderful palazzo in fortezza, that is the Nowy Wiśnicz Castle — a beautiful late-Gothic castle in Dębno, or the castle in Wieliczka, whose history is entwined with the famous local salt mine. It is also worth visiting the Renaissance residences in Niepołomice and Sucha Beskidzka, which merit the name of “the Small Wawel”.

Wawel hill seen from the tower of St. Mary’s Basilica, photo by M. Zaręba
Kraków and its surroundings

Kraków – Wawel Royal Castle

It is one of Europe’s most famous historic buildings, and one of the two largest and most important castles in Poland. The courtyard of the Royal Castle, which impresses with the grandeur, but also the lightness of its slender arcades, as well as “the pearl of Tuscan Renaissance north of the Alps”, i.e. the Sigismund’s Chapel of the Wawel Cathedral, were both raised in the 16th century by Italians, brought from Tuscany by King Sigismund I of Poland. Thanks to the architect and stone mason Bartolomeo Berrecci from Florence, both the chapel and the castle’s arcaded cloisters became the repeatedly copied, yet unrivalled patterns of Renaissance buildings on Polish lands.

The Royal Castle and the Wawel Cathedral are perched on a limestone hill overlooking a bend of the Vistula river. Fortified by nature, the place was subsequently developed and surrounded by powerful fortifications.

The pre-Romanesque Rotunda of St. Felix and Adauctus is the evidence of its ancient history. For a few centuries, the Wawel Castle was the seat of rulers from the Piast and Jagiellon dynasties, as well as the first elective kings. Although King Sigismund III Vasa and his court moved to Warsaw at the end of the 16th century, the importance of Wawel did not diminish. The Wawel Cathedral remained the site of coronation ceremonies and burials of most of the subsequent Polish Kings.

Before entering Wawel, visitors pass mighty fortifications surrounding the hill. They were built by the Austrians in the 19th century. However, even older walls with the Thieves’ Tower, Sandomierz Tower and Senator’s Tower still stand. From the arcaded courtyard, you can enter the magnificent chambers to admire, among other things, the famous Flemish tapestries and the ceiling decorated with the “Wawel Heads”. The castle adjoins a Gothic cathedral surrounded by a corona of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque chapels. The most beautiful among them is the already mentioned Sigismund’s Chapel. The cathedral and the underground crypts hold the tombs of not only Polish kings, but also national poets and heroes such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Tadeusz Kościuszko and Józef Piłsudski. Visitors can climb one of the cathedral’s towers in order to have a close look at the famous Royal Sigismund Bell, which is rung only on very significant national occasions.

Wawel Royal Castle Museum, Wawel 5, ☏ +48 12 422 5155, @ www.wawel.krakow.pl; opening times: Tue–Fri 9.30am–5pm, Sat–Sun 11am–6pm; Nov–March, Tue–Sat 9.30am–4pm, Sun 10am–4pm; ⏰ tickets for permanent exhibitions: PLN 10–27.

Wawel Cathedral, ☏ +48 12 429 3327, @ www.katedrawawelska.pl; ☑ opened for visitors: Apr–Sept, Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 12.30pm–5pm; Oct–March, Mon–Sat 9am–4pm, Sun 12.30pm–4pm; admission free, ⏰ tickets are obligatory only to visit the Clock Tower or the Royal Tombs: PLN 12, concessions: PLN 7.

Other local attractions

Kraków Old Town situated in the Planty area (a park surrounding the centre of Kraków), and the Kazimierz district that used to be home to the “Jewish town”. Both are inscribed on the UNESCO list.

Nowa Huta, i.e. the industrial district of Kraków, with characteristic architecture of socialist realism, the historic Cistercian Abbey and the charming small wooden Church of St Bartholomew situated on the territory of the former Mogiła village.
Niepołomice – the royal castle

Hunting was one of the favourite pastimes of many Polish monarchs, starting from King Casimir the Great. This last Polish ruler from the Piast dynasty ordered to build his Gothic residence near the Niepołomice Forest.

Today, at the location of the Gothic Niepołomice Royal Castle, visitors can admire a beautiful Renaissance building. This edifice, erected on a square plan, was built during the reign of King Sigismund II Augustus. The design of the Niepołomice residence was based on the architecture of Wawel. The castle is entered through a still-existing Renaissance portal, while the courtyard is surrounded by two storeys of arcaded cloisters.

The castle is presently home to the Niepołomice Museum containing hunting trophies, the study of Włodzimierz Puchalski and an exhibition in the castle’s chapel. The other part of the building is an elegant hotel and conference centre. Many entertainment and cultural events are organized in the castle, e.g. the “Ballads of Europe” Festival and the Days of Niepołomice.

Niepołomice Museum, ul. Zamkowa 2, ☏ +48 12 261 9851, @ www.muzeum.niepolomice.pl; ☑ daily, 10am–5pm; ⏰ PLN 3, concessions: PLN 2.

Other local attractions

Niepołomice, where you can visit the Gothic Church of Ten Thousand Martyrs situated by the market square. The church was also founded by King Casimir the Great.

Niepołomice Forest, an extensive forest complex with numerous tourist trails.

Pieskowa Skała – the fortified castle

The most wonderful view of the Pieskowa Skała castle stretches from the Prądnik Valley. In the foreground, you can see a limestone outlier known as the Mace of Hercules.

The fortified building was erected by order of King Casimir the Great already in the 14th century. It gained its Renaissance character more than 200 years later thanks to its owners, the Szafraniec family. They followed the verified example of Wawel. Architects brought from Italy raised the arcaded courtyard, while the clock tower was given a helmet similar to that from the towers of the Royal Castle. Next to the castle, the masters from Italy erected an architectonic gem: the arcaded loggia. Later they designed an Italian garden located on the terrace above the precipice. Today, the castle houses a museum presenting style changes in European art and Poland’s biggest gallery of English painting. The castle is also a perfect spot for the Renaissance Days organized here every June.

The Castle in Pieskowa Skała, ☏ +48 12 389 6004, @ www.pieskowaskala.eu; ☀ May–Sept, Tue–Thu 9am–5pm, Fri until 1am, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; Apr and Oct, Tue–Thu and Sat–Sun 10am–4pm, Fri until 1am; Nov–March, only Sat–Sun 10am–4pm; ⏰ admission to permanent exhibitions: PLN 10 and PLN 8, concessions: PLN 7 and PLN 5.

Other local attractions

Baroque Church from 1642 established on the remains of a Romanesque sanctuary, and the Hermitage of Blessed Salome situated in Grodzisko, between Pieskowa Skała and Ojców, on a hill above the Prądnik Valley.
Ojców – ruins of the Gothic fortress

Legend has it that the name “Ojców” came to be thanks to King Casimir the Great. The castle, built on his order, was supposed to be named “father by the rock”, referring to the events from the life of his father Władysław Łokietek, who was supposed to have hidden in the Prądnik Valley during his fights for Kraków with the Czech king.

There is a grain of truth in the legend: the construction of the stone castle on the spot of a former fortified settlement was ordered by King Casimir the Great. It was one of the most important fortresses on Polish Jurassic Highland. The starosta of Ojców had his seat here, and the castle was inhabited until the end of the 18th century (the last Polish king Stanisław August Poniatowski was a guest here as late as in 1787), but the building fell into ruin following the partition of Poland. Fragments of walls and of one of the towers survived until today, as did the gate tower that houses a small museum chamber.

| Ojców Castle; | ☇ mid Apr–May and Aug–Sept, daily from 10am to 4.45pm; June–July, 5.45pm; Oct, 3.45pm; first half of Nov, 2.45pm; | PLN 2.50, concessions: PLN 1.50 |

Korzkiew – the knights’ fortress

As recently as a mere fifteen years ago, all that rose above the hill overlooking the scenic Korzkiew Valley were the ruins of the walls, gates and home of a knight who occupied the medieval castle. Today, a stone fortress stands here, reverently reconstructed on the basis of ancient drawings.

The fortress was erected in the 14th century by Jan of Syrokomla. The Gothic castle was extended in the 16th century in Renaissance style. In the following centuries, it was used as a hunting residence by the Jordan family.

Deserted at the end of the 18th century, it started to fall into ruin. Today, the reconstructed castle houses a stylish hotel. Medieval tournaments and court dance shows are frequently organized on the courtyard, while the meadow by the castle hosts theatrical performances and open-air concerts.

Korzkiew Castle Hotel, ☎ +48 12 419 5590, @ www.korzkiew.donimirski.com.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Łokietek Cave, where, according to the legend, the future Polish ruler was hiding from the army of Czech King Wenceslaus II Premyslid, open to visitors from May to October.

Ojców National Park, the smallest Polish national park, famous for its unique limestone rocks and referred to as the Polish Jurassic Park.

Chapel On the Water located on the Wooden Architecture Route, built on stilts over the waters of the Prądnik river.
Rabsztyn – ruins of the Gothic castle

The white limestone crags on a hill near Olkusz, surrounded by fields and woods, are the favourite spot of ravens. This seems to be confirmed by the name of the ruins of the Rabsztyn Castle that can be found here. The name comes from German and means “The Raven Rock”. The castle's history is a mystery. It is believed that the fortified tower on the top of the rock was erected by Silesian Prince Henry I the Bearded in the first half of the 13th century. Rabsztyn was made famous by Cossack Hawryło Hołubka, the commander of the castle's defence. His soldiers, together with the coal miners from Olkusz, defeated the troops that were marching towards Kraków to support Archduke Maximilian I of Habsburg, who besieged the capital of the kingdom. At the beginning of the 17th century, Mikolaj Wolski conducted major Renaissance style extension work. Unfortunately, the Swedish invasion in 1657 left the fortress devastated. Work aimed at protecting the ruins has been going on for the last couple of years. A wooden bridge was constructed over the moat and the gate tower was reconstructed. Every year at the beginning of July, a medieval tournament is held at the foot of the castle.

Rabsztyn Castle, [www.rabsztyn.ilkus.pl](http://www.rabsztyn.ilkus.pl), until protection works are not completed, sightseeing is available only from the outside.

Other local attractions

Olkusz, old centre of silver and lead mining, with the market square in the Old Town, and the splendid nearby Gothic Basilica of St. Andrew. In this temple can be found, among other things, organs from the beginning of the 17th century, believed to be one of the oldest in Europe which remained in the original state.

Bledów Desert, the only such area in Poland and an attractive hiking route.

Rudno – Tęczyn Castle

The huge ruins of the Tęczyn Castle in Rudno are located on a volcano. There’s no need to panic though, as the volcano is not active.

The construction of the fortress was initiated in the middle of the 14th century by Andrzej Tęczyński. The surrounding walls with towers created an oval plan, while the entrance led through a tremendous, square-shaped gate tower. This tower, topped by a hip roof, is the best preserved part of the castle. Around 1570, the medieval fortress was transformed into a Renaissance residence with arcaded cloisters in the courtyard and walls featuring decorative attics. At the beginning of the 17th century, the castle’s fortifications were extended, creating a powerful fortress with an impressive barbican that survives until today. The result was one of the biggest castles in Małopolska, and the biggest one in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. After the Tęczyński family, the castle was owned by the Opaliński family, and then by the Lubomirski family, who reconstructed Tęczyn after the damage done during the Swedish invasion. After the fire of 1768, the abandoned castle fell into ruin. Today its walls are in danger of collapsing and are hence not open to visitors. They can only be admired from the outside.

Ruins of the Tęczyn Castle can be visited freely, but caution is advised due to the state of the building. More information: [www.ratujtenczyn.org.pl](http://www.ratujtenczyn.org.pl).

Other local attractions

Krzeszowice Forests stretching at the foot of the Tęczyn castle hill are a perfect place for a walk, a hike or a bicycle trip.
Kluczwoda – ruins of the knight’s castle

Above the winding Kluczwody Valley appears the limestone wall of rocky crags referred to as Zamkowa Skała (Castle Rock). The name is no coincidence, as remains of limestone walls can be found on its top. These are the remains of ruins of a 14th century knight’s castle; one of the Eagle’s Nests, called so on account of its stunning location.

The castle’s history is difficult to reconstruct. The nearby village of Biały Kościół, mentioned for the first time in 1325, belonged to the powerful Syrokomla family at that time, so the castle must have been built by them. It is not known exactly when it was deserted, but it happened already in the 14th century. The probable reason was the construction disaster that caused a large portion of the castle’s walls, including a tower, to collapse together with a part of the rocky slope.

Oświęcim – the castle by the Soła river

Right next to the Old Town in Oświęcim, on a steep slope above the waters of the Soła river, there is an impressive tower that remained after a fortified medieval seat of knights. It is a symbol of the town’s long history.

Nothing remains from the former castle apart from the massive, square-shaped, 13th century brick tower. The remaining part of the complex was claimed by a fire in 1503. The castle edifices were rebuilt several times and hosted eminent figures, such as: Elżbieta Rakuszanka (the future wife of King Casimir IV Jagiellon), Czech King Ladislaus Jagiellon or Bona Sforza d’Aragona (the future wife of King Sigimund I the Old). Currently, the main chamber of the castle is the Museum in Oświęcim with historical and ethnographical collections. It is also possible to visit two underground tunnels located under the castle: one of them was created during World War I, while the second one was built during World War II by the Germans and used as an air-raid shelter.

Oświęcim Castle Museum, ul. Zamkowa 1, ☎ +48 33 842 4427; ⏰ Mon–Fri 10am–3pm, Sun 11am–3pm; PLN 2, admission + permission to take photographs and/or record video: PLN 6.

Other local attractions

Kluczwoda Valley Reserve, where there is a marked trail along the valley, featuring some impressive rocks, such as Zamkowa, Kobyłka, Leśna Baszta or Gackowa Baszta.

Wierzchowska Górna Cave, the biggest of the local caves, adapted for visitors and famous for interesting dripstone forms.

Oświęcim, where it is worth visiting the historic monuments of the Old Town (one preserved synagogue, a Gothic parish church, the market square with 19th century tenement buildings, the church and the Salesian monastery), and, above all, the Auschwitz Birkenau Memorial and Museum inscribed on the UNESCO list.
Wygiełzów – Lipowiec Castle

West of Kraków, above the road towards Lubiąż, there is a high, forested hill that can be seen from a large distance. A huge, white stone tower protrudes from its top and resembles a limestone crag.

Although only the tower can be seen from a distance, there are walls of a magnificent 18th century Episcopal castle hiding among the trees. At that time, bishops from Kraków erected a fortress, which they owned until the partition of Poland. Although the building has been ruined since the beginning of the 19th century, the walls have been protected and adapted for visitors. New stairs lead to the tower itself. You can also see the empty interiors, partially filled with rubble, as well as a small exhibition in reconstructed rooms on the first floor of the castle. It features old pictures and graphics of the castle and a small collection of various items found in the ruins. Two interesting events take place in Lipowiec every August: a Knights and Archers Tournament at the beginning of the month, and the Reunion of Hags and Witches towards the end.

Lipowiec Castle, ul. Podzamcze 1, Wygiełzów, ☏ +48 32 613 4062, @ www.zamek-lipowiec.republika.pl; ☀ Apr–Sep, daily 8am–6pm; Oct–March, daily 8am–3pm; ⚪ PLN 5, concessions PLN 3.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Vistula Ethnography Park in Wygiełzów covers over 50,000 sq m and features 25 wooden historic buildings, representing mainly the architecture of the people from western Kraków.

Wieliczka – The Saltworks Castle

Wieliczka Castle is the only place in the world where you can see so many salt cellars in one place! The collection consists of about 400 glass, wood, silver and, above all, porcelain salt cellars.

The royal castle, referred to as the Saltworks Castle, is located in the very centre of Wieliczka. These fortified buildings were home to the Wieliczka Salt Mine administration already in the 13th century. The “House amidst the Salt Mine” was established in this period. It presently houses archaeological exhibitions (in the castle’s cellar) and historical exhibitions, as well as the already mentioned exhibition of salt cellars. You can also visit the elegant Gothic hall, referred to as the Magistrate Chamber, with the vault supported by a single pillar. The Castle was extended and incorporated into the municipal fortification system of Wieliczka in the middle of the 14th century. The so-called Northern Castle was also built in this period, but it is not open to visitors. However, you can visit the Królewska (Royal) restaurant located in the 19th century Central Castle.

The Kraków Saltworks Museum in Wieliczka, ul. Zamkowa 8, ☏ +48 12 278 3266, @ www.muzeum.wieliczka.pl; ☀ May–Aug, Tue–Sun 9am–8pm; Sept–Apr, Tue–Sat 9am–3pm; ⚪ PLN 4, concessions: PLN 3; admission free on Sat.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The Salt Mine in Wieliczka is inscribed on the UNESCO list and consists of kilometres of marvellous underground corridors, chambers and beautiful chapels with museum exhibitions. The Church of St. Sebastian in Wieliczka located on the Wooden Architecture Route.
Dobczyce – ruins of the royal castle

The ruins of the royal castle can be found on a hill towering over the Dobczyce lake. Unlike many other strongholds, the castle was not destroyed by fire or during a war, but instead devastated by treasure searchers! A pot full of coins was accidentally discovered there in the middle of the 18th century. A nanny, trying to entertain the starosta’s child, hit a key against the wall. Damage to wall plaster revealed a secret hiding place. News of the discovery electrified the inhabitants of the castle and the town and soon only the foundations of the building remained intact.

According to a legend, the castle dates back to the time when a warrior of Mieszko I of Poland named Dobek was to build a castle by the Raba river. The town of Dobczyce soon developed in the castle’s neighbourhood. However, it is almost certain that the castle was built in the first half of the 13th century and reconstructed in Renaissance style some three hundred years later.

Today, the castle is partially reconstructed and its interiors are home to a small museum managed by the local branch of PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society).

**Dobczyce Castle Museum,** +48 12 271 1455, [www.zamek.dobczyce.pl](http://www.zamek.dobczyce.pl); 🌐 Apr and Oct, Tue–Sun 10am–4pm; May–Jun and Sept, Tue–Fri 10am–4pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; Jul–Aug, Tue–Fri 10am–6pm, Sat–Sun 10am–8pm; 🌉 PLN 6, concessions: PLN 4.

**OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS**

**Heritage Park in Dobczyce** is located on the slope right in front of the castle and comprises a few charming old wooden buildings, e.g. the grand tavern.

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Sucha Beskidzka – the castle

Few castles in Poland deserve the name of “the small Wawel” as much as the aristocratic residence in Sucha Beskidzka. The arcaded cloisters of two out of three wings of the castle yard are characterised by their lightness and elegance worthy of a royal residence.

The castle in Sucha was built by Kasper Castiglione, who took the Polish surname Suski after his residence. In 1554, the goldsmith from Florence built a Renaissance manor, which today is part of the southern wing. Thanks to the subsequent owners (the Komorowski family), the manor was transformed into an impressive residence with an arcaded courtyard at the beginning of the 17th century. Despite numerous subsequent reconstructions, the Suski Castle retained its beautiful Renaissance appearance. Some rooms are open to visitors, as they are home to the Municipal Museum, while the castle also houses a community centre and a hotel with a restaurant.

**Municipal Museum in Sucha Beskidzka,** ul. Zamkowa 1, +48 33 874 2605, [www.muzeum.sucha-beskidzka.pl](http://www.muzeum.sucha-beskidzka.pl); 🌐 May–Oct, Tue–Fri 9am–5pm, Sat–Sun 10am–6pm; Nov–Apr, Tue–Fri 8am–4pm, Sat–Sun 9am–3pm; 🌉 PLN 6, concessions: PLN 4.

**OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS**

‘Rzym’ (Rome) tavern in **Sucha Beskidzka** was built in the second half of the 18th century as a wooden tavern in the Sucha market square. Although it’s a unique historic building, it is still open to visitors, presently as a traditional restaurant.
Tarnów surroundings

Nowy Wiśnicz – Magnate’s Castle

The walls of this magnificent residence of the Kmita and Lubomirski families can be seen from afar. During the invasion in 1655, Swedish troops conquered the castle and took almost 150 carriages of spoils with them! It is quite uncanny that out of concern for the castle, its crew surrendered without a fight, although it consisted of 600 heavily armed mercenary soldiers, who had 80 cannons on modern bastions and stocks of food and ammunition to last them for 3 years!

The history of the castle dates back to the 15th century, while its great Renaissance expansion took place in the middle of the 16th century on the initiative of Piotr Kmita, a supporter of Queen Bona. In the middle of the 17th century, Stanisław Lubomirski surrounded the building with bastion fortifications, creating a type of residence called palazzo in fortezza.

Renovation work is presently underway, but some parts of the interior are open to visitors. During your visit, you can see some interesting scale models of Małopolska’s most famous castles.

Nowy Wiśnicz Castle, ul. Zamkowa 13, ☏ 14 612 8589, @ www.zamekwisnicz.pl, ☇ Apr–Oct, Mon–Thu 9am–4pm, Fri 9am–5pm, Sat 10am–5pm, Sun and public holidays 10am–6pm; Nov–March, daily 9am–4pm; ⏰ PLN 8, concessions: PLN 5.

Dębno – defensive residence

Hundreds of knights in shining armour convene at the enchanting castle in Dębno every September to compete for the “Golden Plait of Tarłówna”. The event is accompanied by stunt shows and ancient cannon salvos, as well as court dance performances and displays of juggling skills. The International Knights Tournament in Dębno has been organised for a dozen or so years and is one of the biggest events of its kind in Poland.

However, it is worth visiting the castle in Dębno not only during the tournament. This late-Gothic knight’s residence was built in the years 1470–1480 with funds from castellan Jakub Dębiński. The brick walls, richly decorated with stone ornaments (window frames, beautiful bay window trusses and impressive portals), create four wings surrounding a small internal courtyard. Step inside to see an interesting exposition of historic furniture, paintings, weapons, etc.

Museum of Antique Interiors – Dębno Castle, Branch of the Regional Museum in Tarnów, Dębno 189, ☏ +48 14 665 8035, @ www.zamekdebno.pl; ☇ Sept–Jun, Tue and Thu 10am–4pm, Wed and Fri 9am–3pm, Sat–Sun 11am–2pm; Jul–Aug until 6pm; ⏰ PLN 8, concessions: PLN 4.

Other local attractions

Nowy Wiśnicz, with a 17th century bastion fortress located on the hill near the castle. Presently serving as a prison, it used to be a Carmelite monastery in the past.

Wooden Manor House “Koryznówka” – a museum of Jan Matejko.

Church of St. Margaret in Dębno, erected in the years 1470–1504, also funded by Jakub Dębiński, is a precious historic building from the late-Gothic period.
Szymbark – fortified manor

There is a unique historic building you won't find anywhere else in the country, situated in the Ropa valley, at the foot of the Low Beskids. Unlike other typical Polish gentry residences, the fortified manor in Szymbark bears more resemblance to a plethora of similar buildings from the territory of Slovakia and Czech Republic.

The Renaissance defensive building with four tower-like corner annexes is crowned with a high attic, and there are remains of the sgraffito decoration on the walls. This manor was built as the seat of the Gladysz family of the Gryf coat of arms in the first half of the 16th century. The manor owes its present appearance to the reconstruction from around 1590, although the building was destroyed several times afterwards, e.g. by Hungarian Prince Rakoczy during the Swedish invasion in 1657 and during World War II.

Large-scale renovation work is presently taking place. When it’s complete, the building is to become the home of the Gorlice region cultural centre with museum, conference and concert rooms.

Gorlice – the court of the Karwacjan family

During a visit to Gorlice, you can visit the court of the Karwacjan family, which resembles the fortified manor in Szymbark a little. This bourgeois family from Kraków had their roots in France or Italy. The first building, a kind of fortified residential tower, was probably built at the beginning of the 15th century. The present building still features the relics of the old structure. The tower, rebuilt several times, was burnt down during the 1915 World War I battle of Gorlice, and almost completely demolished after the war. Its reconstruction didn’t take place until 1992, and today the court houses one of the branches of the museum in Gorlice, i.e. the art gallery that hosts temporary exhibitions, predominantly of modern painting, as well as historic exhibitions celebrating the history of the town and region.

Museum in Gorlice, “Dwór Karwacjanów” Art Gallery, Wróblewskiego 10a, 48 18 353 5618, www.gorlice.art.pl; daily 8am –6pm; PLN 1.50, concessions: PLN 0.70, admission free on Sundays.

Other local attractions

Pogórzańska Village Heritage Park, with 17 different wooden buildings from the local area gathered in a single location; you can also visit the small exhibition devoted to old gentry residences set up in a neighbouring municipal manor house from 1919, which was transported to Szymbark from Gorlice.
Nowy Sącz surroundings
Czchów – castle ruins and the defensive tower

A magnificent oval tower rises from the top of the Baszta hill above the charming town and the picturesque Dunajec valley. A wide view of the valley, the river, the dam and the Czchowskie lake stretches from its top.

This cylindrical tower with several-metre thick walls was built at the end of the 13th century to control an important trade route along the Dunajec river. In the following century, the tower was surrounded by a small castle, the seat of the Czchów starosta office. The building was deserted already in the 18th century and quickly fell into ruin. Only the oldest part of it, i.e. the aforementioned tower, survives until today. The last few years brought the reconstruction of a fragment of the walls and a small house of a guard, which presently houses a small archaeological exhibition, including a scale model of the complete castle.

Tower in Czchów; ☼ May and Sep, daily 10am–5pm; Jun–Aug daily 10am–7pm; Oct, Sat–Sun 10am–4pm, Mon–Fri 8am–4pm after prior phone arrangement: +48 14 663 5230; 🛋 PLN 3, concessions: PLN 1.

Wytrzyszczka – Tropsztyn Castle

An austere stone tower and walls of the Tropsztyn Castle in Wytrzyszczka rise just above the road and the water surface of the Czchowskie lake. Only when you are close will you notice that it is almost a new building, erected in recent years on the ruins of the original castle.

The first stronghold was built here at the turn of the 13th and 14th century by knights Zbrosław and Gniewomir from Tropie. The castle was later rebuilt several times, but at the beginning of the 17th century it was abandoned and quickly fell into ruin. Legend has it that it is there, in the tunnels and dungeons under Tropsztyn, where the Inca treasure was hidden in the 18th century, after being brought from the castle in Niedzica.

The castle is open to visitors only during summer holidays. You can explore the tower, the dungeons and the chambers, as well as see a documentary about the searches for the legendary Inca treasure.

Tropsztyn Castle in Wytrzyszczka; ☼ Jul–Aug, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, Sun 9am–7pm; 🛋 PLN 5, concessions: PLN 2.

Other local attractions

Czchów, where the market square and its surroundings are filled with 18th century houses with picturesque arcades, supported by wooden pillars. The Gothic parish church still has fragments of a 13th century Romanesque temple, as well as the relics of a 14th/15th century polychrome.

Romanesque Church in Tropie from the turn of the 11th and 12th century with, among other things, Romanesque paintings throughout its interiors. The temple is perched on a hill on the other side of the lake (you can use a ferry), where saints hermits Świerad and Benedykt used to live in a stone cave at the beginning of the 11th century.
Niedzica – Dunajec Castle

Dunajec Castle in Niedzica is one of the most marvellous buildings of its kind in Poland. It is famous for a secret hiding place discovered there in 1946, which contained a document “written” in talking knots, i.e. the quipus, which had once been used in the Indian Inca Empire in Peru! It is believed that this document contained information about the location of the hidden Inca gold. Quipu was probably brought to Niedzica by Sebastian – one of the castle’s owners from the Berzeviczy family, who travelled around Peru at the end of the 18th century.

The castle was rebuilt after it had been plundered at the end of World War II. Some chambers were turned into a small museum, and visitors can access the viewing terraces of the middle and upper castles. They provide a view of almost the entire Czorsztyn lake, together with the picturesque ruins of the castle in Czorsztyn on the opposite shore, as well as the steep and rocky slopes of the Pieniny mountain range.

Museum of the Castle Complex in Niedzica, +48 18 262 9489; ☎️ May–Sep, daily 9am–7pm; Oct–Nov, Tue–Sun 9am–4pm; ⚠️ PLN 9, concessions: PLN 7. Visits only with a guide; ticket price includes a visit to the tower and the coach house.

Czorsztyn – ruins of the Wronin Castle

When Polish troops fought Bohdan Chmielnicki’s Cossack army in the far Ukraine in 1651, the border fortress in Czorsztyn was attacked and conquered by Kostka Napierski. This troublemaker paid by a Cossack hetman was supposed to cause havoc and attract the attention of some Polish forces. He eventually got what a traitor deserves: Czorsztyn was conquered by troops sent by the bishop of Kraków, and Napierski was captured and sentenced to a horrible death by impaling.

The history of Kostka Napierski’s rebellion is the most famous event in the long history of the Wronin Castle in Czorsztyn. The stone fortress was built in the 14th century on the spot where the old ones once stood. It guarded the border with Hungary and the Dunajec river crossing. Today the castle has a form of a permanent ruin, while some rooms were reconstructed and host a small historic and archaeological exhibition.

Czorsztyn Castle ruins; ☎️ May–Sep, daily, 9am–6pm; Oct–Apr, Tue–Sun 10am–3pm; ⚠️ PLN 4, concessions: PLN 2.

Other local attractions

Other local attractions

The Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny Mountains can be seen best during a rafting trip with the experienced mountain raftsmen, who adroitly slip their wooden rafts between the boulders and precipitous, rocky cliffs of the Three Crowns Massif, or Sokolica. The water trail begins in Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty and winds up in either Szczawnica or Krościenko.

Czorsztyn Tourist Settlement lies on the uncovered Stylchyn Peninsula that cuts into the waters of the Czorsztyn lake. It features numerous wooden villas and huts transferred from flooded territories. The historic buildings house guesthouses and restaurants, as well as a small ethnographic exhibition.
Nowy Sącz – ruins of the royal castle

On the edge of the Nowy Sącz old town, where the Dunajec and the Kamienica rivers fork, stretches a park. Looking through the trees, one can spot a fragment of a wall, a tower and the remains of other buildings. These are the ruins of the old Nowy Sącz Castle.

The castle was built at the beginning of the 14th century and later extended by King Casimir the Great. The Gothic stronghold was rebuilt in Renaissance style by the starostas of Nowy Sącz at the beginning of the 17th century. The building had 40 chambers and was crowned with attics. Unfortunately, the 18th century fires and the flood in 1813 turned the castle into ruin. In the interwar period, the reconstructed building became a museum. During World War II, the German occupiers stored their ammunition here, and the castle was blown up together with it in 1945. A fragment of the wall and the Kowalska tower crowned with a Renaissance attic were reconstructed after the war. The foundations of the ruined castle can be seen close by.

The castle’s ruins can be visited from the outside without limitations.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Nowy Sącz is perfect for a walk about the Old Town stretching right next to the location of the former castle. You can admire a plethora of historic tenement buildings and churches, or visit the interesting District Museum. The Sądecki Ethnographic Park located at the edge of the city is the biggest heritage park in Małopolska.

Melsztyn – ruins of the knight’s castle

The tremendous square tower looming over the crown of trees high above the Dunajec valley is the best preserved relic of the castle in Melsztyn near Zakliczyn. The ruins can be accessed by climbing a steep path or by driving uphill from the other side.

In 1347, Spycimir Leliwita – a castellan of Kraków – had this fortress built on the hill over the Dunajec river. His descendants took their surname Melsztyński after the name of the building. The fortress occupied a long and narrow hilltop, which was fully surrounded by defensive wall. The most significant element of the construction was the square tower called donżon. It was the last, yet also the strongest point of the fortress’s defence system. In 1771, during the fights of the Bar Confederation, the castle was destroyed by the Russian army as a stronghold of the Confederates. Everything that survived were the three walls of donżon, traces of the surrounding walls and remains of the vaulted rainwater tank in the courtyard. Unfortunately, the Gothic chapel was utterly obliterated. The castle is now a protected ruin.

The castle’s ruins can be visited anytime free of charge, even at night, when the tower is illuminated.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Zakliczyn with the cozy market square, where you can admire old provincial buildings, a classical 19th century town hall and an 18th century Baroque church. A 17th century Franciscan monastery and church tower over the edge of the town.
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