

Weekend in Warsaw



Sigismund's Column outside the Royal Castle

Poland's capital is a mash-up of restored Gothic architecture, communist concrete, modern glass and steel. Use these tips to ensure you glean the most you can from Warsaw in two to three days.

📍 SIGHTS Chopin Museum

(chopin.museum.pl; ul Okólnik 1)
A high-tech museum within the Baroque Ostrogski Palace shows the work of Poland's most famous composer. Take your time across four floors of displays, stopping by the listening booths where you can browse Chopin's oeuvre to your heart's content. Limited visitation is allowed each hour; book your visit in advance.

Łazienki Park

(lazienki-krolewskie.pl; ul Agrykola 1)
Pronounced wah-zhen-kee, this park is a beautiful place of manicured greens and wild patches. Its popularity extends to families, peacocks and fans of classical music, who come for the all fresco Chopin concerts on Sunday afternoons.

Museum of the History of Polish Jews

(polin.pl; ul Anielewicza 6)
This exceptional museum's permanent exhibition opened in late 2014. Impressive multimedia exhibits document 1,000 years of Jewish history in Poland, from accounts of the earliest Jewish traders in the region through waves of mass migration, progress and pogroms.

Neon Museum

(neonmuzeum.org; ul Mińska 25)
Situated within the cool Soho Factory complex of old industrial buildings housing designers and artists, this museum is devoted to the preservation of the iconic neon signs of the communist era. The collection is arrayed within a historic factory, with many large pieces fully lit. Other exhibits are

dotted around the complex and are illuminated after dark. It's well worth the trek across the river. Alight the tram at the Bliska stop.

Old Town Square

(Rynek Starego Miasta)

At the centre of the partially walled Old Town (Stare Miasto), the Old Town Square is, for those with an eye for historic buildings, the loveliest square in Warsaw. It's lined with tall houses in a fine blend of Renaissance, Baroque, Gothic and Neoclassical elements; aside from the façades at Nos 34 and 36, all were reconstructed after destruction in WWII.

Royal Castle

(zamek-krolewski.pl; Plac Zamkowy 4)

A copy of the original blown up by the Germans in WWII, this building began life as a wooden stronghold of the dukes of Mazovia in the 14th century. Its heyday was the mid-17th century, when it became one of Europe's most splendid royal residences. It then served the Russian tsars and, in 1918, after Poland regained independence, became the residence of the president.

✂ EATING

Charlotte Chleb i Wino

FRENCH £
(bistrocharlotte.pl; al Wyzwolenia 18)

This dazzling bakery and bistro facing Plac Zbawiciela dishes up tantalising pastries at the break of dawn, then transitions to big salads and crusty sandwiches through the lunch and dinner hours, and finally to wine on the terrace in the evening.

Mango

VEGAN £

(mangovegan.pl; ul Bracka 20)
Mango is a stylish all-vegan eatery with a simple interior and pleasant outdoor seating. Excellent menu items range from veggie burgers to mango sticky rice. The 'Mango Plate' (Talerz Mango) of hummus, mango, falafel, eggplant, olives, sweet peppers and harissa paste served with pita bread is top value.

Restauracja Polka

(ul Świętojańska 2)

POLISH £££
Celebrity chef Magda Gessler loves to fit out her restaurants

with folksy floral wallpaper and rustic wooden tables, and this Old Town venue is no exception. The décor accentuates the high-quality versions of traditional Polish food which issue from the kitchen, including blood sausage, pork shanks on cabbage, and crispy duck in honey. Some tables have views of Castle Sq.

📍 DRINKING

Kofi

(ul Mińska 25)

£
If you're weary of the weak filtered coffee of Central Europe, you'll shed a happy tear when you enter this cool café within the sprawling Soho Factory compound in Praga.

Lemon

(ul Sienkiewicza 6)

£
Cool split-level venue down a relatively quiet side street. The lime-green interior and brown couches make a dramatic statement, best countered by an alcoholic beverage.

Same Fusy

(ul Nowomiejska 10)

££
Head downstairs to find the stylish tea room belonging to this multilevel bistro-café. Over a hundred different types of tea are served.

Local knowledge

'Chopin and his Europe'

is a two-week festival of orchestral and chamber music held in August, presenting the works of Chopin and other great European composers (en.chopin.nifc.pl/festival).



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TOP PICKS

Sleeping

Castle Inn

££

Best for unique interior design (castleinn.pl)

All rooms overlook either Castle Sq or St John's Cathedral. Our favourite room is 'Viktor', named after a reclusive street artist.

Hotel Bristol

£££

Best for old-world grandeur (hotelbristolwarsaw.pl)

Established in 1899 and restored to its former glory after a massive renovation, the Bristol is touted as Poland's most luxurious hotel.

Hotel Rialto

££

Best for Art Deco fans (rialto.pl)

Each room is individually decorated in Art Nouveau or Art Deco style with antique furniture, plus power showers, a sauna and a steam room.

Krokodyl

Best for nightlife

(hostelkrokodyl.com)

Just what party spot Praga needs: a decent, private hostel with no lockout and a pleasant setting.

Mamaison Hotel Le Regina

£££

Best for boutique comfort (mamaisonleregina.com)

In a lovely arcaded 18th-century-style palace just a few minutes' walk from the Old Town.

Oki Doki Hostel

£

Best for cheap, cheerful dorms (okidoki.pl)

Arguably Warsaw's most popular hostel. Accommodation is in three- to eight-bed dorms, with a three-bed dorm for women only.



FURTHER READING

Our *Poland* guide (£15.99) has a Warsaw chapter, which can be downloaded separately too (£2.99). Warsaw is also available on our *Guides* app.