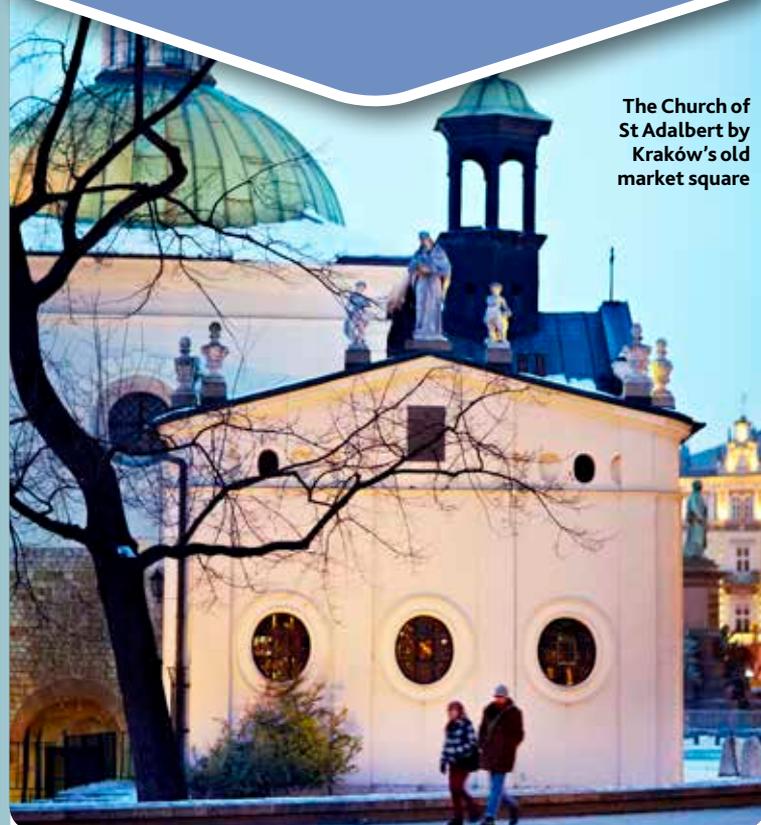


# Culture in Kraków



The Church of St Adalbert by Kraków's old market square

*If you believe the legends, Poland's second city was founded on the defeat of a dragon, and a mythical atmosphere does indeed permeate its attractive streets and squares. Use this guide to get to grips with its culture.*

## 👁️ SIGHTS

### **Basilica of St Francis** ([franciszkańska.pl](http://franciszkańska.pl); Plac Wszystkich Świętych 5)

Duck into the dark basilica on a sunny day to admire the artistry of Stanisław Wyspiański, who designed the fantastic Art Nouveau stained-glass windows. The multicoloured deity in the chancel above the organ loft is a masterpiece. From the transept you can also enter the Gothic cloister of the Franciscan monastery to admire fragments of 15th-century frescoes.

### **Bunkier Sztuki** ([bunkier.art.pl](http://bunkier.art.pl); Plac Szczepański)

Most of Kraków's art scene focuses on the 19th and 20th centuries or earlier, but Bunkier Sztuki – literally 'art bunker' – houses three floors of inventive

contemporary works by young Polish artists and established international names. There's everything from photography and paintings, to multimedia works.

### **Collegium Maius** ([maius.uj.edu.pl](http://maius.uj.edu.pl); ul Jagiellońska 15)

The Collegium Maius, built as part of the Kraków Academy, is the oldest surviving university building in Poland and one of the best examples of 15th-century Gothic architecture in the city. It has a magnificent arcaded courtyard and historic interiors.

### **Galicia Jewish Museum** ([galiciajewishmuseum.org](http://galiciajewishmuseum.org); ul Dajwór 18)

This museum commemorates Jewish victims of the Holocaust and celebrates the Jewish culture and history of the former region

of Galicia. It has an impressive photographic exhibition depicting modern-day remnants of southeastern Poland's once-thriving Jewish community, called Traces of Memory, along with video testimony of survivors and regularly changing temporary exhibits. The museum also leads guided tours of Jewish sites in the Kazimierz quarter; call or email for details.

### **Kościuszko Mound** ([kopiciekosciuszki.pl](http://kopiciekosciuszki.pl); al Waszyngtona 1)

A huge mound, dedicated to the Polish (and American) military hero Tadeusz Kościuszko, was erected between 1820 and 1823, soon after the great man's death. It stands 34m high, and soil from the Polish and American battlefields where Kościuszko fought was placed here. The views over the city are spectacular. The memorial is in the suburb of Zwierzyniec, just under two miles west of the Old Town.

### **Museum of Pharmacy** ([muzeumfarmacji.pl](http://muzeumfarmacji.pl); ul Floriańska 25)

While the name doesn't make it sound that exciting, the Jagiellonian University Medical School's museum is one of the largest exhibitions of its kind in Europe. Accommodated in a beautiful historic townhouse, it features a 22,000-piece collection, which includes antique laboratory equipment, rare pharmaceutical instruments, heaps of glassware, stoneware, mortars, jars, barrels, medical books and documents.

### **Rynek Underground** ([podziemiarynku.com](http://podziemiarynku.com); Rynek Główny 1)

Beneath the market square, this fascinating attraction consists of an underground route through medieval market stalls and other long-forgotten chambers. The 'Middle Ages meets 21st century' experience is enhanced by holograms and audiovisual wizardry. Buy tickets at an office on the western side of the Cloth Hall (Sukiennice 21).

### **Schindler's Factory** ([mhk.pl](http://mhk.pl); ul Lipowa 4)

This impressive interactive museum covers the German

occupation of Kraków in WWII. It's housed in the former enamel factory of Oskar Schindler, the Nazi industrialist who famously saved the lives of more than a thousand members of his Jewish labour force in the Holocaust.

### **St Mary's Basilica** ([mariacki.com](http://mariacki.com); Plac Mariacki 5, Rynek Główny)

Often known simply as St Mary's, this striking brick church is dominated by two towers of different heights. Tour the exquisite interior, with its remarkable carved wooden altarpiece and, in summer, climb the tower for excellent views. There's an hourly hejnał (bugle call) from the taller tower.

### **Wawel Royal Castle** ([wawel.krakow.pl](http://wawel.krakow.pl); Wawel 5)

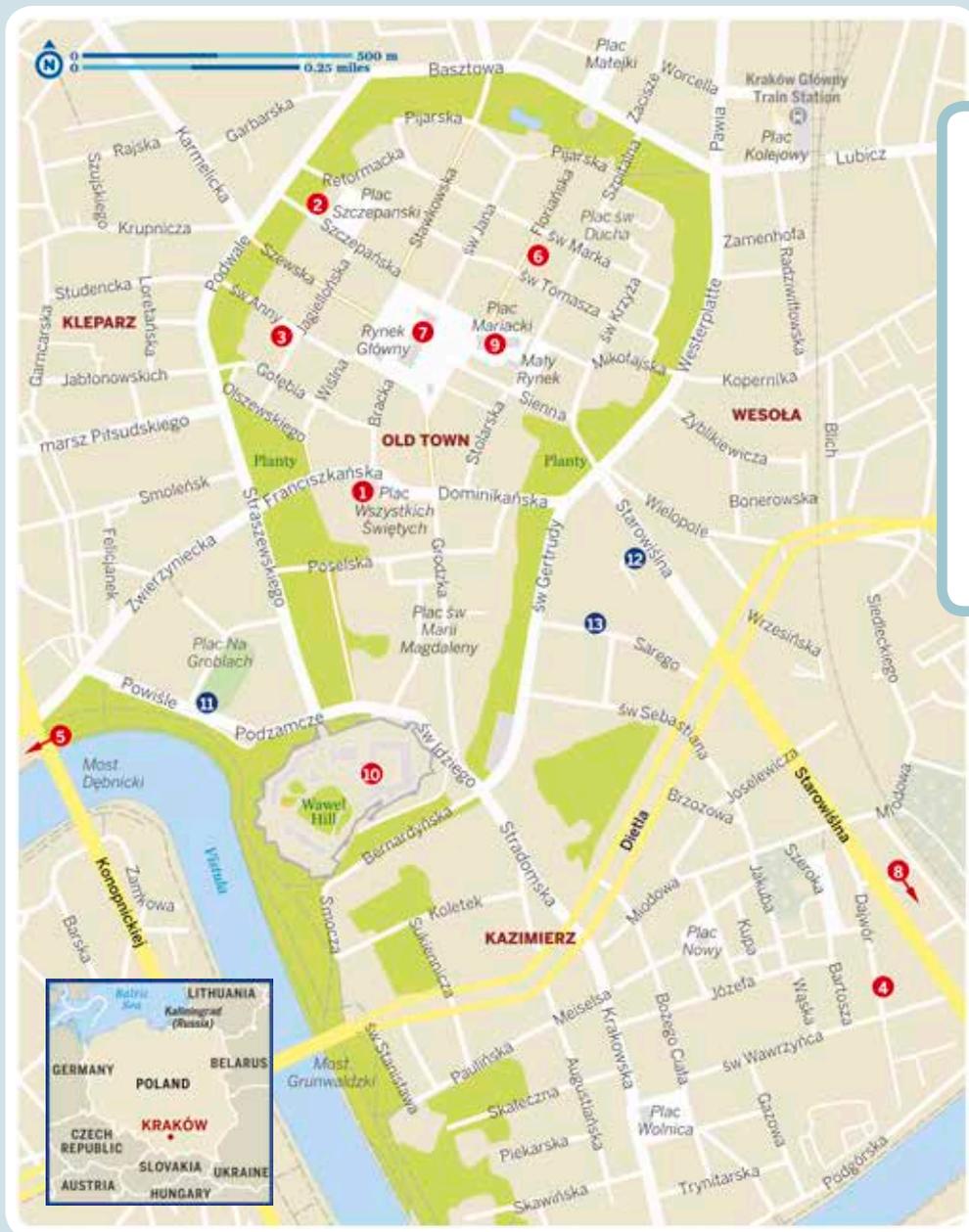
As the political and cultural heart of Poland through the 16th century, Wawel Castle is a symbol of national identity. It's now a museum containing five separate sections: the Crown Treasury & Armoury, State Rooms, Royal Private Apartments (where you can view some magnificent tapestries), Lost Wawel and the Exhibition of Oriental Art.

## Good to know

**Crakow City Tours** offers a range of walking and bus tours, as well as a popular four-hour bike tour. There are full-day coach excursions to the Wieliczka Salt Mine and the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial, too. Note that bus tours depart from a branch office at Plac Matejko 2, just to the north of Florian Gate ([cracowcitytours.pl](http://cracowcitytours.pl)).



## CULTURE IN KRAKÓW



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TOP PICKS

## 🏠 Sleeping

### 🏠 Mundo Hostel

Best for a hostel option ([mundohostel.eu](http://mundohostel.eu); **ul Sarego 10**) An attractive, well-maintained hostel in a quiet courtyard location conveniently between the Old Town and Kazimierz, Mundo offers a friendly welcome. Each room's decor is based on a different country: for example, the Tibet room is decked out with colourful prayer flags. Barbecues take place in summer, and there's a bright, fully equipped kitchen for do-it-yourself meals.

### £ Hotel Pod Wawelem

Best for proximity to landmarks ([hotelpodwawelem.pl](http://hotelpodwawelem.pl); **Plac Na Groblach 22**) This hotel, at the foot of Wawel Castle and overlooking the Vistula river, gets high marks for crisp, up-to-date design and an excellent breakfast buffet. Rooms are generously proportioned and look out onto either the river or the castle. The view from the rooftop café and bar is stunning, too. The hotel has a sauna, and free bikes for guests to borrow.

### ££ Hotel Pugetów

Best for all-out opulence ([donimirski.com/hotel-pugetow](http://donimirski.com/hotel-pugetow); **ul Starowiślna 15a**) A charming historic hotel that stands next to the 19th-century neo-Renaissance palace of the same name. It offers just seven rooms with weighty names (Conrad, Bonaparte) and distinct identities, all lit with atmospheric lamps. You'll get embroidered bathrobes, black-marble baths and a fabulous breakfast room in the basement.

£££



### FURTHER READING

Our *Poland* guide (£15.99) has a section on Kraków. Alternatively, pick up our *Pocket Kraków* guide (£7.99) or eBook version (£5.59).