

Architectural Gems

Surprisingly, Poland is still a terra incognita even for many Western art historians. In fact, it is an intriguing destination with architectural wonders spanning ten centuries, from Romanesque to post-war communist planned cities and beyond.

The tour focuses on two cities with the richest cultural heritage in Poland: Cracow, Wrocław and their surrounding regions. In the countryside situated between these two cities we'll visit a highly ornate timber church laid out like a theater, a baronial residence, a wooden radio tower that played a strange propaganda role during WW2 and Communism, and one of the largest monastic structures in Europe.

This tour is a signature project of Dennis McEvoy, art historian and author of best-selling Michelin Guide to Poland. Dennis has been cooperating with StayPoland since 2008 and belongs among our top-ranked tour leaders.

Duration: 7 days

Availability: every day

Departures from: Krakow

Price per person

PRICING

No. of people

PRICE

INCLUDED IN PRICE

- Superior accommodation & breakfasts at centrally located 4* hotels in Kraków (3 nights) and Wrocław (3 nights)
- Private transportation depending on your group size
- Your personal guide for all the tour duration
- Four three-course dinners (days 1, 3, 4, 6)
- Local guidance and entrance to: St Mary's Basilica, Wawel Cathedral, Remuh Synagogue, Nowa Huta, Kościuszki Mound, Tychy Brewery, Gliwice Radio Station, Wrocław Cathedral, Aula Leopoldina, Centennial Hall, Church of Peace in Świdnica, Łubiąż Monastery, Pszczyna Castle
- Our service
- All taxes

ITINERARY

Day 1: Krakow

Arrival in Krakow. *Evening:* Time to meet with your group leader/guide and for a welcome dinner in the heart of the medieval old town of Krakow. Stroll around the Main Square. **Kraków** was entered on the first ever UNESCO list for good reasons: it has an almost ideal city plan preserved from the 13C that boasts the largest medieval town square in Europe. The city center is filled with spectacular architecture, from Romanesque to 19th-century eclecticism. In addition, the communists attempted to build a socialist "utopian" city in the 1950s just a few miles outside of Kraków, so modern architecture also tells the story of Poland's more recent, turbulent past. Kraków is also a vibrant university town that boasts some of the most atmospheric cafes in Europe and best restaurants in Poland.

Day 2: Krakow

Morning: After breakfast, a walking tour of the old town, including the Old City walls, the Słowacki Theater, St. Mary's Church, Market Square and Cloth Hall. Gothic university courtyard and the Baroque university church of St. Anne. Break for lunch on own. *Afternoon:* A visit to the Franciscan church with Art Nouveau stained windows by Wyspiański. Walk to the Wawel hill with its Gothic Cathedral, the burial site of Polish kings, and the Renaissance castle courtyard. *Evening:* Free time.

Day 3: Kazimierz and Nowa Huta

Morning: After breakfast, a tour of **Kazimierz**, the former Jewish neighborhood, including the one continually active synagogue in Krakow, the Remuh Synagogue plus its cemetery. Then the monumental gothic Corpus Christi church. Lunch on own and free time. *Afternoon:* drive to **Nowa Huta**, a neighborhood of Krakow, to visit the center of the Socialist utopian city built from scratch in the 1950s. Enormous steel works and a Renaissance inspired ideal town plan co-exist in what was an experiment in urban and social engineering. We will visit the first church built in this "atheist" experiment that resulted from protests of the local Catholic community in the 1960s against the Communist regime. We will finish with a climb up the legendary Wanda pagan burial mound (approx. 7th century). *Evening:* dinner at restaurant in Kraków.

Day 4: Tychy and Gliwice

Morning: free time. *Afternoon:* 11am departure. Drive to Wroclaw. On the way stop at **Tyskie Brewery** for a tour of the historic brewery and a sampling of their beer. Afterwards a visit of the **Gliwice** Radio tower where the Germans staged an attack on Aug. 31, 1939 to justify their invasion of Poland the next day. *Evening:* Arrival in Wroclaw. After settling into your hotel, walk around Wroclaw's old town square and dinner at a local restaurant

Day 5: Wroclaw

Morning: Walking tour of Wrocław, including Cathedral Island, the Baroque university, and the market square. Lunch break on own. *Afternoon:* Continuation of tour of Wrocław, including the Centennial Hall, a UNESCO listed structure from 1913 that innovatively used reinforced concrete to create what was then the largest dome in the world. *Evening:* free time in Wrocław. **Wrocław** is less familiar to visitors to Poland, partly because the city was known for centuries by its German name, Breslau. Today the city is the capital of Silesia, a region rich in architectural heritage due to the various German, Polish, and Czech influences.

The city boasts spectacular Gothic churches, a splendid Baroque university, a wonderful town hall and an animated town square filled with beer gardens. And there's also the amazing, UNESCO listed Centennial Hall, a pioneering work of modern design. Like Kraków, Wrocław is an educational center that attracts students and artists from all over Poland, and is beginning to attract inquisitive travelers as well.

Day 6: Swidnica and Lubiaz

Morning drive to the small town of **Świdnica** to see the amazing UNESCO-listed church of peace, a Baroque wooden Protestant church from the 17th century. Lunch in Świdnica. Then drive to the massive Cistercian monastery in **Lubiąż**, the second larger religious structure in Europe. Return to Wrocław and dinner in Wrocław.

Day 7: Pszczyna Palace

Morning, free time for last minute shopping, then departure from Wrocław. Return drive to Krakow, along the way we'll stop in **Pszczyna** to visit the elegant former baronial residence of the von Pless family. This is one of the few historic residences in Poland to have a preserved pre-WWII interior. To bid farewell we will sample some local wines at a vineyard picturesquely located on the slopes of the Vistula River valley in the outskirts of Krakow. Return to Kraków and end of tour.

