

Panorama of Poland

PROGRAM

Day 1 Warsaw

After arrival, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the heart of the city. The afternoon is free. Meet your guide and the rest of the group in the hotel lobby at 6:00 pm.. Drive along the beautifully renovated Royal Route with its historical monuments and residences. Stop at the Castle Square for a short walk through the Old Town. Next, a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Your meal will include traditional Polish dishes and famous Polish vodka, "Zubrowka". Overnight in Warsaw. (D)

Day 2, Warsaw

This morning, we introduce you to the highlights of Warsaw. A half-day sightseeing tour includes the Old Town, beautifully rebuilt after World War II, with the impressive Royal Castle, seat of the kings of Poland. Here, the May 3rd Constitution was proclaimed in 1791, the second oldest constitution in the world, after the USA constitution. You will admire some of its 300 rooms and visit the Canaletto Room with 23 of his paintings, the Throne Room, the magnificent Knight's Hall with six large paintings by Marcello Bacciarelli, the Marble Room with its 22 portraits of Polish kings and the largest and most impressive of the castle's chambers, the Ballroom. After lunch served at a local restaurant in the Old Town, we continue our tour with a drive to the area of the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. En route, you will see the building of the National Opera House and the Town Hall. During your tour of Warsaw, we will invite you to the famous Warsaw chocolate factory "Wedel", to taste the delicious hot chocolate at the "Wedel Old Fashioned Shop". In the evening, you will take an unforgettable musical journey through the world famous compositions of Poland's famous composer, Frederic Chopin, at a piano recital. A glass of sparkling wine will be served during the intermission. Overnight in Warsaw. (B, L)

Day 3, Warsaw – Czestochowa – Auschwitz - Krakow

En-route to Krakow, Poland's unique, medieval, open-air museum, we will make a stop in Czestochowa to visit the Jasna Gora Monastery and the Black Madonna Shrine with its icon that is associated with alleged miracles. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant. Before we reach Krakow, we will drive to Auschwitz to visit the Martyrdom Museum of the former Nazi concentration camp, the infamous factory of death. Overnight in Krakow. (B, L)

Day 4, Krakow

The morning sightseeing tour will start with the Royal Wawel Castle, home to three dynasties of Poland's monarchs. Its stately halls and exquisite chambers are filled with priceless art, valuable period furniture and rare ancient objects. The collection of monumental 16th century tapestries is unmatched. You will also visit the Wawel Cathedral, the place of the cult of St. Stanislaw and St. Jadwiga, 14th century Queen of Poland. Its 18 chapels are true architectural masterpieces. The giant bell, Zygmunt, from 1520, ranks with the world's largest. This is the site where Polish kings were crowned and buried. Following is a short break for coffee and pastries at the famous Krakow cafeteria. Drive to Old Town with its restored Main Square surrounded with magnificent houses and

palaces. Here, we will visit St. Mary's Basilica, originally built in the early 13th century, to see the magnificent wooden altar by Wit Stwosz. The Renaissance Cloth Hall, originally built before 1349, is the focal point of the Market Square. The afternoon is at leisure. Tonight's dinner will be served at a restaurant in the Old Town.

Overnight in Krakow. (B, D)

Day 5, Krakow – Wieliczka – Zakopane

After breakfast, we drive to Zakopane, beautifully situated at the foot of the Tatra Mountains, in the valley between Gubalowka Hill and Mount Giewont. Zakopane is the most popular resort in Poland. En-route, we stop in Wieliczka to visit the Royal Salt Mine, an unforgettable tourist attraction with underground chambers, grottoes and chapels carved in salt rock. After lunch at a local restaurant in Wieliczka, we continue on to Zakopane.

Zakopane is Poland's most popular resort and one of the most beautiful places. Once, a small mountain village, it became a fashionable winter resort for artists since the beginning of the 20th century. Overnight in Zakopane(B, L)

Day 6, Zakopane

After breakfast, a sightseeing tour of Zakopane. The city's wooden Highlander architecture blends with the natural landscape. This style is imitated in other parts of Poland is known as Zakopianski Style. You will visit the

Jaszczurowka Chapel, a great example of wooden architecture in Zakopane. Later, we drive to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima at Krzeptowki built by the people of Zakopane in appreciation to the Lady of Fatima for saving the Pope John Paul II's life after an assassination attempt. Admire the breathtaking views of the Tatras from the top of Gubalowka Hill, and shop for souvenirs, arts and crafts of the Highlanders (Gorale) in the local shops. After lunch, you will have a free time. Tonight's dinner will be served at a typical Highlanders' inn with a folkloric dance show. Overnight in Zakopane. (B, D)

Day 7, Zakopane – Wadowice - Wroclaw

Today we depart for the historic city of Wroclaw located in western Poland. Wroclaw, also known as "Venice of the North", is one of the oldest cities in Poland with a beautiful location along the Odra River. En-route, we will visit a small town of Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II. We will see the house where he was born and grew up. In the Basilica of Wadowice, where Karol Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, was baptized, you can view the special plaque that commemorates this fact, as well as a stone font where the Pope prayed during his first pilgrimage to Poland in 1979. After lunch at a local restaurant, we will continue on to Wroclaw. Today, Wroclaw, with its array of beautiful buildings and monuments, including the magnificent Gothic Town Hall structure, is recognized as a gem of urban Gothic-Renaissance architecture in Poland, and elsewhere.

Overnight in Wroclaw. (B, L)

Day 8, Wroclaw – Churches of Peace - Poznan

After breakfast, we visit Churches of Peace in Swidnica and Jawor, the largest timber-framed religious buildings in Europe and a symbol of religious tolerance from the 17th century. After the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the Protestants in Silesia were allowed by the Habsburg Roman Catholic emperor to build three churches. Restrictions were that they had to be constructed outside the city walls, made of wood or clay and built in less than a year.

The architect responsible for all three was Albrecht von Sabisch. The churches had to be big enough to be a true place of refuge for the Protestant population. He designed wooden buildings that had never been seen before in

complexity and size. Back to Wroclaw, to take a train to Poznan. Overnight in Poznan (B)

Day 9, Poznan –Torun

Today morning visit of Poznan, one of the oldest Polish cities. The first settlement here can be traced back to the early 9th century. The first ruler of Poland, Mieszko I who, through the act of his own baptism in 966, put his country in the cultural sphere of Western Christianity, founded his church right here. In the 15th century, it took on a Gothic shape. The most interesting part of the city is its Old Town with the famous Renaissance Town Hall, now housing the Historic Museum. In the middle of the attic, above the clock, you can watch two metal goats butting their horns 12 times every day at noon. After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue on to Torun.

Overnight in Torun. (B, L)

Day 10, Torun – Gdansk

In the morning, we will enjoy the highlights of Torun. The city is the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus, and it is considered one of the most magnificent historic cities of Poland. Its Old Town is included on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list for its impressive 13th century Town Hall, superb churches and historic streets preserving Torun's past glory. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant in Torun. In the afternoon, we drive to Gdansk. Upon arrival, we will take a brief walk through the Old Town. Overnight in Gdansk. (B, L)

Day 11, Gdansk – Gdynia – Sopot – Gdansk

Today, we start the tour of Gdansk at the Upland Gate, a fragment of the city's former fortifications and one of its main gates. Just behind it, we pass by a baked brick construction consisting of the Prison Tower and the Torture House, relics of the 15th century Gothic defensive walls. The Golden Gate, situated next to the Prison Tower, opens onto Long Market, a magnificent street with late Renaissance and Baroque grand houses and palaces. It is here that the richest burghers of Gdansk once lived. The Artus Court was the site of important Hanseatic League meetings. It is considered the most beautiful court among all of Europe's Hanseatic cities. Just behind it is the tower of St. Mary's Basilica, a part of the most precious and largest red brick Gothic church in Gdansk. On our way back, we pass by Mariacka Street with its gabled terraced houses and elegant boutiques. Now we drive to Gdynia, the youngest in the tri-city complex. After lunch, at a local restaurant, we continue our drive to Sopot, the famous and fashionable seaside resort. Here, you can see the oldest and the longest wooden pier in Europe. On our way back to Gdansk, a stop at Oliwa Cathedral to enjoy its monumental 18th century organ and listen to a Baroque music concert. The rest of the day is free for shopping for Baltic arts and crafts, and of course, unique amber jewellery which, in itself, is a major tourist attraction Overnight in Gdansk. (B, L)

Day 12, Gdansk – Malbork – Olsztyn

After breakfast, we drive to Olsztyn. En route, we stop at the 14th century Teutonic Knights Castle in Malbork. It is the largest brick castle in Europe and one of Poland's greatest tourist attractions. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, we continue on to Olsztyn, a town located in a region of lakes and forests. The most attractive part of the city is its old town, encircled by a ring of fortified walls. In the evening, take part in an open-air picnic with a folkloric entertainment in Gietrzwałd. Overnight in Olsztyn. (B, L, D)

Day 13, Olsztyn – Olsztynek – Lowicz - Warsaw

After breakfast, we return to Warsaw. En-route, we visit the Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek, the site of the

Museum of Folk Architecture, one of the oldest open-air museums in Europe. The Museum contains many interesting examples of folk architecture including houses, barns, windmills and other traditional buildings. Other attractions of the Ethnographic Park are the interiors of old houses, the Evangelical church, a smithy, a pottery stand, a Dutch windmill as well as various temporary displays representing items of traditional craftsmanship and modern folk art. The main objective of the Museum is to preserve the legacy of the past for future generations and to encourage the study of the rich cultural and spiritual values of days gone by. As we continue our drive to Warsaw, we stop in Lowicz, a typical Mazovian town famous for folk art, colorful costumes and beautiful paper cut-outs. You will be invited to a dinner hosted by a local family whose charming cottage is located at the foot of the former Lowicz Castle. You will be welcomed in a typical Polish way, "with bread & salt", as an old saying goes. You will have an opportunity to talk and ask questions about their day-to-day life, and you will have a dessert in their beautiful garden. Overnight in Warsaw. (B, D)

Day 14, Friday, Warsaw

After breakfast, we transfer you to the airport for the return flight home. (B)