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CREATING EXPERIENCES **in POLAND**

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Photo: Canva

## The Untold Story

# Wrocław: city of bridges and dwarves

**Any newcomer, who visits Wrocław for the first time, clashes with its German character present in many places. There is nothing strange about it – the city, situated on the Oder, has passed from hand to hand for over a thousand years of its history. It was ruled by Poles, Czechs and Germans. And it was the latter that had a huge impact on how Wrocław looks today, because from the mid-18th century until the end of World War II, it remained in the sphere of German influence.**

Today, Wrocław is one of the most beautiful, interesting and fast-growing Polish cities. However, shortly after World War II, its future did not seem rosy. It was turned into a fortress city in 1944 and suffered a lot during the fighting in the first half of 1945. It is estimated that

about 65 percent of the urban tissue was destroyed and more than 100 000 people lost their lives.

After the liberation, looters prowled the city, and the Soviet troops on the way home not only stole the most valuable things, but also set fire to and blew up

entire districts. Flooding Polish residents – the vast majority of them were repatriates from the east – did not feel any bond with the city, and no one was sure whether the city would remain Polish or whether it would become German again as a result of the post-war establish-

ment of borders. Orphaned and stripped of all that is valuable, Wrocław quickly gained the name of “the capital of the Polish Wild West”.

### European capital of culture

71 years after the end of World War II Wrocław celebrated its revival as the European Capital of Culture. Of the turmoil of war and what followed immediately, only a memory remained. The city has been rebuilt on every level – architectural, historic, cultural, social and economic. It has become the most important point on the map of Lower Silesia, attracting companies, investments and – thanks to excellent universities – crowds of young people.

Wrocław today is a thoroughly European city that has a lot to offer to tourists. Called “the Polish Venice” it captivates tourists with over a hundred bridges and footbridges, numerous rivers, canals and islands. Its multiculturalism and complicated history can be seen at every step in architecture – Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Art Nouveau, Modernism, the

national style of the Third Reich, socialist realism and postmodernism coexist peacefully, though not always stylishly. The rich cultural offer attracts not only residents, but also people from all over Poland and abroad. Wrocław is a city friendly to all newcomers, regardless of their motivations.

### How to get to Wrocław?

As one of the largest Polish cities, Wrocław is perfectly connected with the rest of Poland and neighboring countries. The airport handles domestic and international flights, and the trains of local, national and international carriers stop at the Wrocław Główny station.

The city is also favored by a good network of express roads – the A4 motorway, which is part of the European E40 route, crossing the south of Poland from west to east, the S8 expressway, thanks to which the travel time to the capital has been shortened to about 3.5 hours, the S5 connecting Wrocław with Poznań and finally the S3 running from Lower Silesia to Western Pomerania are all within 10-20 minutes drive

So there are many ways to get to the city, but if you plan on seeing more than the city center, it's best to rent a car. Our nearest branch is in Cracow – the journey from Lesser Poland to Lower Silesia will take just over 3 hours using the A4 motorway.

### What to see?

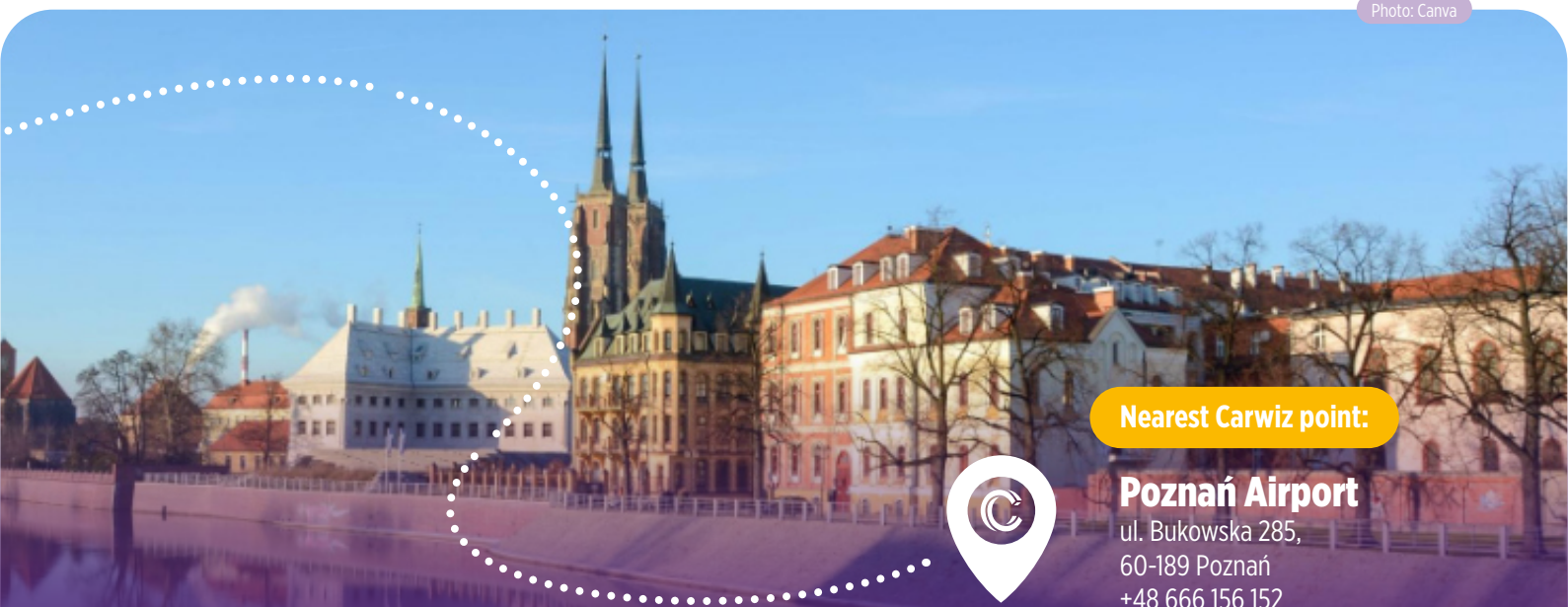
Wrocław is one of those cities that have something for everyone. In one short text we will not fit all the attractions of the Lower Silesian capital, so we offer you 5 subjective must-see attractions during your visit to the Lower Silesian capital.

### The Market Square

A must-see spot on the map of all tours. The Wrocław Market Square is one of the largest medieval markets in Europe. Its boundaries were marked out in the 13th century - along with the adjacent Pl. Solny (Salt Plaza) and Nowy Targ it was the main place for trading.

There are as many as 11 streets leading to the Market Square, and the square itself

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has nearly 40,000 sqm. In the middle of it you will find the gothic Old Town Hall, which today houses a museum; in turn, the city authorities are based in the New Town Hall.

The founders of the colorful tenement houses surrounding the square were wealthy Wrocław townspeople – thanks to them, Kamienica pod Gryfami or Kamienica pod Elektorami were built among others. In their cellars and on the ground floors you will encounter famous Wrocław pubs and restaurants, including one of the oldest in Poland, namely Piwnica Świdnicka founded in 1273.



Photo: Canva

## Ostrów Tumski

Ostrów Tumski is one of the oldest parts of Wrocław – it is here that you will find the most beautiful religious buildings of the city: the 13th-century Gothic cathedral of John the Baptist, the Church of St. Cross or the Church of St. Martin. There is also a beautiful botanical garden of the University of Wrocław, where many specimens of flora from around the world have been collected.

Until the nineteenth century, this area was an island, but after filling one of the arms of the Odra River, it became part of the mainland. Also, until the 19th century, Ostrów Tumski was purely religious in character. Today, the sacred is intertwined with the profane, but time still flows a bit slower here than in other parts of the city, and the gas lanterns are lit by a lighter.

## Wrocław bridges

In a city with over 130 bridges, choosing the few most beautiful and interesting

ones is extremely difficult. Nevertheless, in our list, we will mention the three most characteristic ones.

The Tumski Bridge connects Ostrów Tumski described above with the Sand Island and is undoubtedly the favorite place of all lovers – it is here that they leave padlocks as a sign of their eternal love for each other. As it connected the secular part of the city with the church part, there are statues of St. John the Baptist and St. Jadwiga. The current steel bridge was built in 1889, previously there were drawbridges here.

The characteristic red balustrades can be found on the Sand Bridge. It is the oldest iron bridge in Wrocław, opened in 1861. The Piaskowy Bridge connects the northern and central parts of the city. Its name comes from the Sand Island.

The last bridge that must be mentioned is the Grunwaldzki Bridge. Built at the beginning of the 20th century from Strzegom granite and Karkonosze granite, it changed its name very often – initially it was the Imperial Bridge, then the

Liberty Bridge, and finally it became the Grunwald Bridge for longer. At the time of construction, it was one of the most modern crossings, using the technology of steel tapes supporting the span. Today, after numerous renovations, the Grunwaldzki Bridge has regained its former glory.

## Centennial Hall

Among all the buildings in Wrocław, the spectacular and sports the Centennial Hall is one of the most characteristic and evoking extreme emotions. For some, a beautiful emanation of Wrocław's modernism (the author of the text belongs to this group), for others, a concrete monster reminiscent of the city's German past.

The Centennial Hall was built in the years 1911-1913 according to the plans of Max Berg. It commemorated the 100th anniversary of Emperor Frederick William III calling upon the Prussian people his proclamation "To My People" and the subsequent victory over Napoleon's ar-



Photo: Akrapetsky

my at Leipzig. It was intended to be an exhibition facility where Centennial Exhibition was to be located.

What distinguishes the Centennial Hall from other buildings of this type is the use of reinforced concrete on an unprecedented scale. Max Berg designed it with functionality in mind rather than appearance and yet it is beautiful (at least to some eyes). Thanks to this, a unique and original building was created, which in 2006 was entered on the UNESCO world heritage list.

The exhibition concept is completed by the Four Domes Pavilion, Pergola and Japanese Garden, which you can read more about below.

### The Japanese Garden in Szczytnicki Park

The Wrocław Japanese Garden is, according to many, the most beautiful part of Szczytnicki Park. Arranged by masters from the Far East, it was the only exotic part of the Horticultural Exhibition in 1913.

In the years 1995-1997 the garden was

renovated based on the design of prof. Ikui Nishikawa; unfortunately, just two months after opening, during the flood of the century, it went underwater for three weeks. This made another renovation necessary.

Today, the Japanese Garden is one of many people's favourite places for walks and photo wedding photo shoots. The richness of the Far Eastern vegetation and the unique atmosphere of this place leads to unhurried contemplation.

Photo: Canva



### Wrocław dwarves

Our text about Wrocław would be incomplete if we did not mention the local dwarves, which you will meet in various – sometimes very surprising – places in the city.

Legend has it that the dwarves have their Underground World in Wrocław, and in there their kingdom lies. One can enter it through a mouse hole. However, no one knows which mouse hole it is. Since the inhabitants of Wrocław cannot visit the dwarves in their country, they invite them to their world during the Dwarfs Festival in September. The gnomes celebrate their friendship with people then.

There are many theories of where the dwarves came from and we don't want to bore you, so instead of quoting them, we will simply invite you to carefully observe the streets of Wrocław in search of the smallest inhabitants of the city.



Photo: Canva

## City break West: Poznań

Poznań can be reached by the A2 route from Łódź and Warsaw. From Gdansk via Bydgoszcz you can get to the capital of Wielkopolska via the A1 and S5. In addition, there is an airport in Poznań, which offers a range of connections with Spain, Italy, Greece, Finland, Jordan, Turkey and even Thailand.

**Poznań Old Market Square** is one of the largest in Poland after the Market Square in Krakow and Wroclaw. Not only is it vibrant, it's also a perfect meeting place thanks to the numerous cafes, pubs and restaurants that are located within its borders.

On the Market Square you will find the city's famous Town Hall. It was built in the Renaissance style and houses the Museum of the History of Poznań.

In Poznań there is also the **Imperial Castle**. Its history begins in 1905, when it was built for the German Emperor William II. After World War I, the castle housed the University of Poznań. Interestingly, in the 1930s graduates of this school did an amazing thing. They broke the code of the German cipher machine Enigma. Today the building hosts Centrum Kultury Zamek, where concerts, plays, exhibitions, film screenings etc. are held. All these attractions are free of charge.

Where is **Malta**? In Poznań! It's a recreational area, which is used for active recreation. You can come here to walk, jog, ride a bike and go kayaking or wakeboarding. And that's not all! For fans of winter activities this place offers a ski slope, toboggan run, pontoon ride. And lovers of thrills attracted by an adventure park and a rollercoaster.



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Photo: Canva

## City break East: Lublin

Lublin is a city located in the eastern part of the country, very well connected with other Polish cities. The S17 express-way leads to the city from Warsaw. From Rzeszów and Białystok, there is the road no. 19. There is also an airport in Lublin, which has connections with the Netherlands, Ireland, Norway, Great Britain, Croatia and Bulgaria.

**Lublin Castle** is a place full of history – Polish and Lublin history. Today, it houses a branch of the National Museum. However, the castle in Lublin remembers the times of the Tsars, the Nazis and the Soviets. It was usually used as a prison then.

Its history does not end there. In the castle, there is the **Holy Trinity Chapel**, called the pearl of Lublin. It's a world-class monument, as it is decorated with Byzantine-Ruthenian frescoes from the early 15th century.

The Lublin Castle complex also includes the Castle Tower, called the **Donjon**. This monument of Romanesque art was erected in the 13th century, so it is the oldest surviving castle building. For 10 years, it has served as an observation deck from which tourists can admire a panorama of Lublin. The Holy Trinity Chapel and the Donjon Tower are the only original parts of the Castle.

**Lublin's Old Town** has been preserved in exceptionally good condition to this day. As much as 70 percent of its buildings are original. Its entrance is guarded by the Krakowska Gate. This place also provides an ideal view of the town hall, and at 12:00 every day, you can watch the bugler and listen to the city bugle call.



**Nearest Carwiz point: Lublin Downtown**  
ul. Króla Jana III Sobieskiego 1, 21-040 Świdnik  
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Photo: Unsplash / Rafal Danhoffer



Focus on

# Olsztyn: gate to Warmia & Masuria region

Olsztyn is the capital of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship and thriving urban centre in northern Poland. Situated near national road number 7, it is a gateway to Warmia and Mazury. The nearest airport, Olsztyn Mazury Airport, is located about 60 km from the city centre.

## High Gate

This Gothic building is one of the three city gates that once existed. Today a hotel is located inside the High Gate. Archaeological excavations are being carried out in the square in front of the gate and the uncovered remains of the former city fortifications are one of Olsztyn's tourist attractions.

## Old Town Square and Old Town Hall

Compared to the markets in Warsaw or Cracow, Olsztyn's Old Town Square is not

very big, but it still has a great charm of its own. It is a former trading square, which in time became the centre of the city, having been rebuilt after the war. The surrounding tenement houses are buildings reconstructed in Renaissance and Baroque style on the basis of preserved photographs.

While strolling around the small Olsztyn Old Town, it is worth paying attention to two buildings - the seat of the Association of Polish Architects at 14 Kołłątaja Street, with a beautiful 1st floor half-timbered structure, and a brick granary at 13 Piastowska Street.

In the central point is the Old Town Hall - now a library, but once the building housed the magistrate and the courts. The sundials on the facade are impossible to miss.

### **The Warmia Chapter Castle**

This Gothic defensive castle was built in the 14th century and for a long time was the heart of the city. As the seat of the administrator of the Warmia Chapter estate, it was the most magnificent building of its kind in the region. It was from here that Nicolaus Copernicus directed the defence of the city. Copernicus not only worked as an administrator

of the Warmia Chapter, but also developed his passion for astronomy. A memento of this is the astronomical plaque on the wall of the cloister.

In later years, a late Baroque wing was added to the Gothic part. Today the castle is the seat of the Museum of Warmia and Mazury, and visitors can visit the chambers and the courtyard.

It is worth mentioning that in the courtyard there are sculptures of unknown function and origin - the so-called Prussian women, which contrary to their name do not represent women, but male figures.

Photo: Unsplash / Bartosz Żygadlo





## Gastro Poland

# Pierogi: the essence of Polish cuisine

Pierogi is a dish that is essential for traditional Polish cuisine – made of flour (wheat, rye, corn, buckwheat or even rice flour) and eggs based dough wrapped around various fillings with meat, national vegetables and other ingredients.

There are dozen ways to make pierogi: with savory filling (for example with meat, cabbage and mushrooms, or Ruthenian dumplings with characteris-

tic filling – potatoes, onion and quark cheese) or with sweet filling (quark cheese and sugar, with fruits like strawberries, blueberries or apples with cinnamon), small pierogi – uszka (with

cabbage and mushrooms served on Christmas), moon shaped, triangle shaped or pockets, cooked, baked or fried and served hot or cold. Pierogi differ when it comes to serving them, depending on the region of Poland or the world.

It is customary, that according to Poles and foreigners pierogi is a conventional dish of traditional and modern Polish cuisine, despite the fact... that the Chinese ate them first! Today in minor and major cities in Poland you can find very popular restaurants, that serve only pierogi in different forms – pierogarnie. Enjoy your pierogi!



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