

Krakow

A self-guided walking tour of the buildings, churches, and monuments of Krakow's historic Old Town



1. St. Florian's Church is located on the Northern side of Krakow's Old Town and was the first stop on the Royal Route. It was built to honor St Florian, a general in the Roman Army, who found christianity a beautiful religion. It was originally built in Romanesque style, but it has changed through the years several times. Today, it has features of Romanesque, Gothic and Baroque styles but the facade is very Baroque.

4. The Jadwiga and Jagello Monument is the representation of the most important marriage in Polish history. Queen Jadwiga and King Jagiello are important because Jagiello was the king of Lithuania and Jadwiga was the king of Poland (it's complicated) and their marriage in 1386, united Poland and Lithuania. Not only is the monument important because of the marriage that it represents, but it also celebrates 500 years of bringing christianity to Lithuania.

7. Students Fountain is very important to Krakow. The statue was based on the figure of a prophet in the altar of St. Mary's Cathedral made by a German sculptor Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz in Polish). The statue was made in 1958 and was designed by Jan Budzillo. The statue is located on plac Mariacki, which is located next to St. Mary's Cathedral. The water of the fountain is said to represent the student's tears.

10. The Town Hall Tower is a very important building in the Krakow Rynek. Only the tower remains from what used to be a large building housing Krakow's town hall. The town hall tower is 70 meters (230 feet) tall and leans 55 cm (21 inches) because of some strong winds in a storm in 1703. The town hall tower is a gothic structure and it is built out of stone and brick. The town hall tower has been around since the early fifteenth century but has been renovated.

13. St. Andrew's Church was built by Palatine Sieciech between 1079 and 1098. Saint Andrew was an apostle of Jesus and the church was built to honor him. It was built as a Fortified church and used as a defense for the people of Krakow to hide when the city was under attack. The exterior of the church is Romanesque style, but the interior has beautiful Baroque features.

16. Wawel Cathedral is one of the most important cathedrals in all of Krakow. Wawel Cathedral doesn't only hold the remains of some of the most important people in Polish history or the country's most religious art, it also holds the remains of the Wawel dragon (more on this later). This building was first built in 1364 and almost every king and queen were crowned there. All of the most important royalty were also entombed in the cathedral.

2. The Grunwald Monument The Grunwald Monument is a symbol of the Battle of Grunwald, representing one of the greatest victories in Polish history. The Battle of Grunwald took place in 1410, between the Polish-Lithuanian army and the Forces of the Teutonic Knights. The monument features many famous figures, like King Jagiello and Ulrich von Jungingen, who were the leaders for both sides of this important battle.

5. St. Florian's Gate and City Walls are two of the last three of Krakow's outer defensive buildings that have not been destroyed. These structures were built to defend Krakow from enemies and they have been here for over 500 years. Now, they are tourist attractions visited by thousands of people every day.

8. The Adam Mickiewicz Monument was built in honor of the famous Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz. The statue was designed by Teodor Rygier and is located in Krakow's Main Square. Although the statue is an important part of Krakow today, Adam Mickiewicz never actually visited Krakow until after his death when his body was brought to the Wawel Cathedral.

11. St. Aldabert's Church also known as kosciol sw. Wojciecha in Polish, is the oldest church in Krakow, and the one of the oldest churches in Europe. St. Adalbert's church began as a small wooden chapel when it was built in the 11th century, and has been rebuilt 7 times since then. This church is home to a small museum where you can learn a lot about its history. It is also one of the best places to listen to live classical music in Krakow.

14. The Katyn Cross might not seem important when you pass by, but it means a lot to Polish people. The Katyn Cross was built in memory of people who died in the Katyn massacre during World War II. This memorial has been on Plac Studzinskiego since 1990, which was 50 years after the Katyn massacre.

17. Wawel Castle was once the home to all kings and queens of Poland, and now is one of the most visited places in Krakow. Wawel castle features a few different styles of architecture, has several towers and decorative features, and holds many mysteries and legends. Wawel also has a large courtyard and beautiful gardens within its grounds.

3. The Barbakan was built in 1498 to defend the main gate of Krakow, Brama Floriańska. It was connected to the gate by a walled passage and a drawbridge. It was very well protected with three meter thick walls, seven turrets and a 30 meter wide moat. It also had 130 loopholes in three rows, the lower used by artillery, while the upper were used by archers and riflemen. At the time it was built, it was a very modern structure. Now it houses an historical museum. The Barbakan is one of three such structures in Europe and is considered to be the best preserved.

6. St. Mary's Church is the second most important church in Krakow, after the Wawel Cathedral. The gothic masterpiece was consecrated in 1320 in the Krakow Rynek, on the site of an earlier Romanesque style church. The church was later recreated as a gothic style church, which you see now. St. Mary's church is a popular tourist attraction because of its location in Krakow's Main Square and because it is home to the famous bugle call, hejnal, played at the beginning of every hour.

9. The Sukiennice also known as Krakow's Cloth Hall, has been a trading hall since the 13th century. At first, the Sukiennice was just a bunch of stone market stalls, but in the 14 century, King Kazimierz the Great approved to have it made into a market building. The term Sukiennice refers to the trade of textiles and fabric, which is why it is also called Krakow's Cloth Hall. Today, the Sukiennice is one of the the biggest tourist attractions in Krakow's city center.

12. St. Peter and Paul's Church is a very magnificent Jesuit church located on Grodzka Street. It was completed in the early 17th century with a beautiful marble facade and a gate featuring fascinating statues of the 12 apostles. It has a large dome and beautiful baroque features on the facade and the entire interior.

15. The Tadeuz Kosciuszko Monument represents Tadeusz Kosciuszko riding a horse into battle. Tadeusz Kosciuszko was a great hero in the fight for freedom in Poland and in the American Revolution. Throughout his life, he fought on two continents for his belief in freedom for all. The monument is located just outside the Wawel Cathedral.

18. The Wawel Dragon Statue is one of the most popular statues in Krakow. The is statue located between Wawel Hill and the Wisla river. This Statue represents one of the most famous legends, "The Legend of the Wawel Dragon, or "Legenda o Smoku Wawelskim" in Polish.