



MAŁOPOLSKA

Living castles





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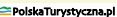
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MAŁOPOLSKA

Living Castles



Wawel Hill, photo by R. Korzeniowski

Castles, ruins of medieval fortresses and aristocratic residences from the era of Renaissance and Baroque can be found at every turn in Małopolska. Built on high hills and visible from afar, they constitute one of the most characteristic features of the region's landscape. The greatest attraction is of course the Wawel Royal Castle in Kraków. Together with the Cathedral Basilica of SS. Stanislaus and Vaclav, they create a unique historic built heritage complex.

Also widely known are the Jurassic castles, referred to as Eagles' Nests on account of their location on top of rocky peaks. Most of them were built at the order of King Casimir the Great along the historic border between Małopolska and Silesia, creating a fortified route protecting the kingdom's borders. Most castles on the Trail of the Eagles' Nests fell into ruin (such as the Rabsztyn or Ojców Castles), but there are some that have been fully preserved (e.g. the marvellous Renaissance residence in Pieskowa Skala), or reconstructed (e.g. as the enchanting knights' fortress in Korzkiew). One cannot fail to mention bishops' castles (such as Lipowiec Castle) or knights' residences (e.g. Tęczyn Castle). Many castles can also be found in the Carpathian Mountains among the mountain ridges of the Beskid Mountains or on the foothills. The most beautiful and most famous are the two castles situated in the Pieniny Mountains at Czorsztyn Lake: Dunajec Castle in Niedzica and Wronin Castle in Czorsztyn. While exploring the Carpathian Foothills, you can also visit the wonderful palazzo in fortezza (Italian for a fortress palace), that is the Nowy Wiśnicz Castle, a beautiful late Gothic castle in Dębno, or the castle in Wieliczka, historically affiliated with the famous Wieliczka Salt Mine. It is also worth visiting the Renaissance residences in Niepolomice and Sucha Beskidzka, which merit the name of the Small Wawel.



Wawel Castle courtyard, photo by M. Zareba
The Wawel Heads and the Sigismund Bell, photo by M. Zareba

Kraków and its Surroundings

Kraków: The Wawel Royal Castle

It is one of Central Europe's most famous historic buildings, and one of the two largest and most important castles in Poland. The courtyard of the Royal Castle, which impresses with the grandeur and at the same time with the lightness of its slender arcades, as well as the Sigismund's Chapel of the Wawel Cathedral were erected in the 16th century by Italian architects, brought from Tuscany by King Sigismund I the Old. Thanks to the architect and stonemason Bartolomeo Berrecci of Florence, and to the earlier working masters, such as Eberhard Rosemberger, Francesco Fiorentino, Sebastian Tauerbach and Hans Snycerz, both the chapel and the castle's arcaded cloisters became the unrivalled, yet repeatedly copied, models of Renaissance architecture on the Polish lands.

The Royal Castle and the Wawel Cathedral are perched on a limestone hill overlooking a bend of the Vistula River.



Fortified by nature, the place was subsequently developed and surrounded by powerful fortifications. The pre-Romanesque Rotunda of SS. Felix and Adauktus is the evidence of its ancient history. For a few centuries, the Wawel Castle was the seat of rulers from the Piast and Jagiellon dynasties, as well as the first elective kings. Although King Sigismund III Vasa moved to Warsaw together with his court at the end of the 16th century, the importance of Wawel had not diminished. The Wawel Cathedral remained the site of coronation ceremonies and burials of most of the subsequent Polish Kings.

Before entering Wawel, visitors pass mighty fortifications surrounding the hill, which were erected by the Austrians in the 19th century. However, even older walls with the towers have also been preserved, e.g. the Thieves' Tower, Sandomierz Tower and Senator's Tower. From the arcaded courtyard, you can enter the magnificent chambers to admire, among other things, the famous Flemish tapestries and the ceiling decorated with the Wawel Heads. The castle adjoins a Gothic cathedral surrounded by a corona of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque chapels. The most beautiful among them is the aforementioned Sigismund's Chapel. The cathedral and the underground crypts hold the tombs not only of Polish kings, but also of national poets and heroes, such as Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Tadeusz Kościuszko and Józef Piłsudski. Visitors can climb one of the cathedral towers in order to have a closer look at the famous Sigismund Bell, which is rung only on very significant national occasions.



Wawel Royal Castle Museum, Wawel 5, ☎ +48 12 4225155, @zamek@wawel.org.pl, ▲ www.wawel.krakow.pl

Wawel Cathedral, information centre: ☎ +48 12 4299516, ▲ www.katedra-wawelska.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List: Main Market Square of Kraków Old Town with the Sukiennice Cloth Hall, the Town Hall Tower and St. Mary's Church, as well as the **Kazimierz** district with the former Jewish quarter featuring many Jewish historic monuments. **Nowa Huta**, i.e. the industrial district of Kraków, with the characteristic architecture of socialist realism, as well as the historic Cistercian Abbey and the charming small wooden Church of St. Bartholomew situated in Kraków-Mogila.



The castle in Niepołomice, photo by J. Podlecki

Niepołomice: The Royal Castle

Hunting was one of the favourite pastimes of many Polish monarchs. King Casimir the Great, the last Polish ruler of the Piast dynasty, ordered to build his Gothic residence near the Niepołomice Forest.

Today, on the site of the Gothic Niepołomice Royal Castle, you can admire a beautiful Renaissance building. This edifice, erected on a square plan, was built during the reign of King Sigismund II Augustus. Naturally, the design of the Niepołomice residence was based on the architecture of Wawel. You enter the castle through a still-existing Renaissance portal, while the courtyard is surrounded by two storeys of arcaded cloisters.

The castle is presently home to the Niepołomice Museum containing hunting trophies, the study of Włodzimierz Puchalski and an exhibition in the castle's chapel. The other part of the building is an elegant hotel and conference centre. Many entertainment and cultural events are organized in the castle's hospitable walls, such as the European Ballad Festival and the Niepołomice Festival.



Niepołomice Museum, ul. Zamkowa 2, ☎ +48 12 261 9851,
▲ www.muzeum.niepolomice.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

Niepołomice, where you can visit the Gothic Church of Ten Thousand Martyrs situated at the market square and founded by King Casimir the Great, as well as the unique Małopolska Sound and Word Centre with the Phonography Museum located in the vicinity of the castle.

The Niepołomice Forest, an extensive forest complex with numerous tourist trails.



The castle in Pieskowa Skała, photo by M. Mikulski

Pieskowa Skała: The Fortified Castle

The most wonderful view of the Pieskowa Skała Castle stretches from the Prądnik Valley. In the foreground, you can see a limestone outlier known as the Mace of Hercules.

The fortified building was erected at the order of King Casimir the Great already in the 14th century. It gained its Renaissance character more than 200 years later thanks to its then-owners, the Szafraniec family. They followed the verified example of Wawel. Architects brought from Italy erected the arcaded courtyard, while the clock tower was crowned with a helmet similar to the helmets ornamenting the towers of the Royal Castle. Next to the castle, the Italian masters erected an architectonic gem: the arcaded loggia. Later, they designed an Italian garden located on the terrace above the precipice. Today, the castle houses a museum presenting style changes in European art and Poland's largest gallery of English painting. The castle is also a perfect spot for the Renaissance Festival organized here every June.



The Pieskowa Skała Castle, ☎ +48 12 389 60 04,
▲ www.pieskowaskala.eu; The castle is closed to the public until 2016.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

The Baroque Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Salomea dating from 1642 and established on the remains of a Romanesque church is situated in the village of Grodzisko, about half way between Pieskowa Skała and Ojców, on a hill above the Prądnik Valley.



The castle in Ojców, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Ojców: Ruins of the Gothic Fortress

Legend has it that the name “Ojców” [the father’s] originated with King Casimir the Great. The castle, built at his order, was supposed to be named “Father by the Rock”, referring to the events from the life of his father, Władysław Łokietek, who was said to have hidden in the Prądnik Valley during his fights for Kraków with the Czech king.

There is a grain of truth in the legend: the construction of the stone castle on the site of a former fortified settlement was indeed ordered by King Casimir the Great. It was one of the most important fortresses on Polish Jura Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. The starosta of Ojców resided here, and the castle was inhabited until the end of the 18th century (the last Polish king Stanisław August Poniatowski was a guest here as late as in 1787), but the building fell into ruin following the partition of Poland. Fragments of walls and of one of the towers have survived until today, as did the gate tower that houses a small museum chamber.



The Ojców Castle, ☎ +48 12 389 20 05, ▲ www.ojcowski-parknarodowy.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

Łokietek Cave, where, according to the legend, the future Polish ruler hid from the army of Czech King Wenceslaus II Premyslid of Bohemia. Open to visitors from April to November; www.ojcowskiparknarodowy.pl/main/grota_lokietka.html

Ojców National Park



The fortress in Korzkiew, photo by M. Poręba

Korzkiew: The Knights’ Fortress

Until recently, all that rose above the hill overlooking the scenic Korzkiew Valley were the ruins of the walls, gates and a residential home of the former medieval knights’ castle. Today, a genuine stone fortress stands here, reverently reconstructed on the basis of ancient drawings and panoramas.

The fortress was erected in the 14th century by Jan of Syromkla. The Gothic castle was extended in the 16th century in the Renaissance style. In the following centuries, it belonged to the Jordan Family who used it as a hunting residence.

Deserted in the late 18th century, it started to fall into ruin. Today, the reconstructed castle houses a stylish hotel. Medieval tournaments and court dance shows are regularly organized on the courtyard, while theatrical performances and open-air concerts are held on the meadow by the castle.



Korzkiew Castle Hotel, ☎ +48 12 419 55 90, ▲ www.donimirski.com

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

The early Baroque Church of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist dating from 1623 with a defensive character, perched on the opposite slope of the valley.

Ojców National Park, the smallest Polish national park, famous for its unique limestone rocks, and referred to as the Polish Jurassic Park.

Chapel On the Water located on the Wooden Architecture Trail, built on stilts over the waters of the Prądnik River.



Rabsztyn Castle, photo by arch MOK Olkusz Pazurek Nature Reserve, photo by J. Sypieri

Rabsztyn: Ruins of the Gothic Castle

The white limestone crags on a hill near Olkusz, surrounded by fields and woods, are the favourite spot of ravens. This seems to be confirmed by the name of the nearby ruins of the Rabsztyn Castle. The name comes from German and means "The Raven Rock".

The castle's history is a mystery. The wooden fortifications of the Toporczyk Family are believed to have existed here already in the first half of the 13th century. Rabsztyn was made famous by Cosack Rittmeister Gabriel Holubek, the commander of the castle's defence in 1587. In the vicinity of the castle, his soldiers, together with the coal miners from Olkusz, defeated the troops that were marching towards Kraków to support Archduke Maximilian I of Habsburg, who besieged the capital of the kingdom. A major expansion in the Renaissance style was conducted in the early 17th century. Unfortunately, the Swedish invasion of 1657 left the fortress devastated. Work aiming at the preservation of the ruins has been carried out in recent years. A wooden bridge was constructed over the moat and the reconstructed gate tower now houses a small museum exhibition, as well as fragments of the upper castle walls and tower. Every year at the beginning of July, a medieval tournament is held at the foot of the castle.



The Rabsztyn Castle, ▲ www.mok.olkusz.pl

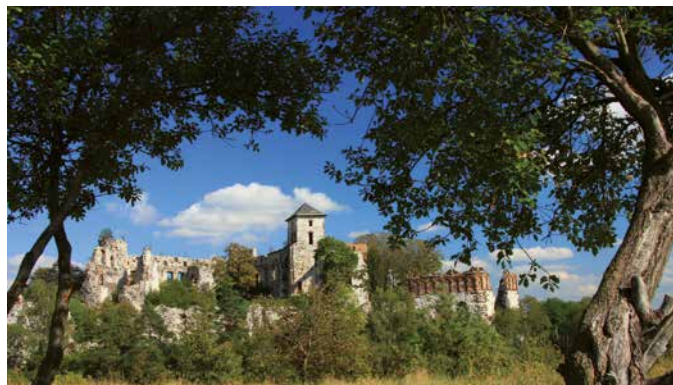
OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

Olkusz, the old centre of silver and lead mining, with the market square in the Old Town, and the nearby splendid Gothic Basilica of St. Andrew. The church features, among other things, the organs from the early 17th century, considered to be one of the oldest organs in Europe preserved in the original condition.

Pazurek Reserve with beautiful limestone outliers hidden among the beech forests.

The Błędów Desert, the only such area in Poland, and an attractive site for hiking trips.

At the foot of the castle, you can visit "**Kocjan Hut**" or a reconstructed wooden house from the mid-nineteenth century.



Tęczyn Castle, photo by arch UMWM

Rudno: Tęczyn Castle

The huge ruins of Tęczyn Castle in Rudno are located on a volcano. There is no need to panic though, as the volcano is not active.

The construction of the fortress began in the middle of the 14th century. The surrounding walls with towers created an oval plan, while the entrance led through a tremendous, square-shaped gate tower. This tower, topped by a hip roof, is the best-preserved part of the castle. Around 1570, the medieval fortress was transformed into a Renaissance residence with arcaded cloisters in the courtyard and walls featuring decorative attics. At the beginning of the 17th century, the castle's fortifications were extended and formed a powerful fortress with an impressive barbican that survives until today. The result was one of the biggest castles in Małopolska, and the biggest one in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland. After the Tęczyński family, the castle was owned by the Opaliński family, and then by the Lubomirski family, who reconstructed Tęczyn after the damage done during the Swedish invasion. After the fire of 1768, the abandoned castle fell into ruin. The castle remnants preservation work has been carried out in the recent years and therefore, at present the castle is not open to the public. It can only be admired from the outside.



Ruins of Tęczyn Castle, ▲ www.ratujtenczyn.org.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

The Krzeszowice Forests stretching at the foot of the Tęczyn Castle hill are a perfect place for walking, hiking or bicycle trips. The Dulowska Forest growing on the entire western part of the Krzeszowice Rift Basin which is also known as Dulowska Basin.



Bydlin castle, photo by J. Sypień

Bydlin: Ruins of the Knights' Castle

Bydlin knight's castle was built in the fourteenth century and was part of the defense system on the border between Małopolska and Silesia. The first mentions of the castle in Bydlin date back to 1398. The castle was small and consisted of a residential building with three floors, the defensive wall and gate tower in the north-eastern part of the castle. The castle owners were the knights Pelka and Niemierz. Later on, according to legend, the castle belonged to an illegitimate son of King Casimir the Great. At the end of the fifteenth century, the stronghold was owned by the family Brzezicki, then Szczepanowski and Boner. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Boner family converted the castle to the church. During the era of the Reformation, the then-owner Jan Firlej converted the church to Arian church. His son, Mikołaj, donated the building to the Catholic Church and named it the Holy Cross. The church was destroyed by fire Swedish invasion and was abandoned in the late eighteenth century when it fell into disrepair. The castle hill still has preserved trenches - a reminder of the battle that was fought here in 1914 by Marshall Piłsudski legions.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Krzywopłoty is the site of battle of the Polish Legions (then part of the army of Austrian Empire) against Russian troops on 17-18 November 1918.



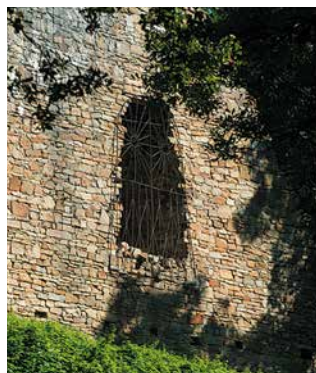
Ruins of the castle in Lanckorona, photo by R. Korzeniowski

▼ A detail of the Lanckorona castle ruins, photo by R. Korzeniowski

Lanckorona: Ruins of the Royal Castle

High above the town of Lanckorona at the top of Lanckorońska Mount (545 above sea level) rise the ruins of the once magnificent Royal Castle. The castle was erected in the 14th century by King Casimir the Great, most likely on the site of the wooden settlement dating from the 14th century. The castle was expanded in the subsequent centuries and became a mighty fortress. The Lanckorona Starosty and the castle was for centuries owned by the powerful aristocratic families. Expanded after the Swedish Invasion and reinforced by the French engineers in 1770, it was the most significant fortress of the Bar Confederation forces. After a long siege, the fortress was conquered two years later by the Austrian army. The building, destroyed during the war, fell entirely into ruin in the 19th century.

In 1999, the Lanckorona castle ruins were listed in the UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites as an example of mannerist gardens in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska.



OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The charming, slanting **market square in Lanckorona** with its arcaded wooden architecture. The Mannerist Architectural and Park Landscape Complex and Pilgrimage Park in **Kalwaria Zebrzydowska**, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.



The castle in Oświęcim, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Oświęcim: The Castle by the Soła River

Right next to the Old Town in Oświęcim, on a steep slope above the waters of the Soła River rises an impressive tower, a remnant of the fortified medieval residence of Oświęcim knights. It is a symbol of the town's long history.

Nothing remains from the original knights' castle apart from the massive, square-shaped, 13th-century brick tower. The tower is the tallest preserved Gothic wall in southern Poland (40m). The remaining part of the complex was claimed in the fire of 1503. The castle edifices were rebuilt several times and hosted eminent figures, such as: Elżbieta Rakuszanka (the future wife of King Casimir IV Jagiellon), Czech King Ladislaus Jagiellon or Bona Sforza d'Aragona (the future wife of King Sigimund I the Old). Currently, the main building of the castle houses the Castle Museum in Oświęcim, and the visitors can admire a beautiful panorama of the town and its vicinity from the castle tower.



Oświęcim Castle Museum, ul. Zamkowa 1, ☎+48 33 842 4427, ▲museum-zamek.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ▼

Oświęcim with the historic monuments of the Old Town that are worth seeing (the only preserved synagogue, a Gothic parish church, the market square with 19th-century tenement buildings, and the Salesian church and monastery), as well as the Auschwitz Birkenau Memorial Site and Museum inscribed on the List of UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites.



Lipowiec Castle, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Wygiełzów: Lipowiec Castle

West of Kraków, above the road towards Libiąż, a high, forested hill can be seen from a large distance. A huge, white stone tower protrudes from its top and resembles a limestone crag.

Although only the tower can be seen from afar, hidden among the trees are the walls of a magnificent bishops' castle dating from the 13th century. At that time, Kraków bishops erected a fortress, which remained in their hands until the partitions of Poland. Although the building has been in ruin since the early 19th century, the walls have been protected and adapted for visitors. A new staircase leads to the tower itself. You can also walk around the empty, partially demolished interiors, as well as a small exhibition in reconstructed rooms on the first floor of the castle. It features old pictures and graphics of the castle and a small collection of various items found in the ruins.



Lipowiec Castle, ul. Podzamcze 1, Wygiełzów, ☎+48 32 613 4062, 696 729 109 ▲www.zamek-lipowiec.republika.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ▼

Vistula Ethnography Park in Wygiełzów covers over 5 hectares and features 25 wooden historic buildings, representing mainly the architectural style of Western Cracovians.

The Starzeński Palace in Plaza Today's appearance of the palace is due to a thorough reconstruction design by Zygmunt for Count Adam Starzeński Hende and completed between 1900 and 1901. The palace is surrounded by a park. The Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in Plaza is a well-preserved example of ancient rural stone church from the sixteenth century. The church boasts three historic altars. The church area is surrounded by old trees.



The Saltworks Castle, photo by R. Korzeniowski

Wieliczka: The Saltworks Castle

The Wieliczka Castle is the only place in the world where you can see so many salt shakers in one place! The collection consists of about 400 glass, wood, silver and, above all, porcelain salt shakers.

The Royal Castle, referred to as the Saltworks Castle, is located in the very centre of Wieliczka. These fortified buildings were home to the Wieliczka Salt Mine administration already in the 13th century. The "House amidst the Saltworks" was also established in this period. It presently houses archaeological exhibitions (in the castle's cellar) and historical exhibitions, as well as the already mentioned exhibition of salt shakers. You can also visit the elegant Gothic hall, called the Magistrate Chamber, with the vault supported by a single pillar. The Castle was extended and incorporated into the municipal fortification system of Wieliczka in the middle of the 14th century. The so-called Northern Castle was also built in this period, but it is not open to visitors. Whereas, the Middle Castle was built in the 19th century, and now houses the Królewska (Royal) Restaurant. In 2013 the Castle was inscribed on the List of UNESCO World Cultural and Natural Heritage Sites

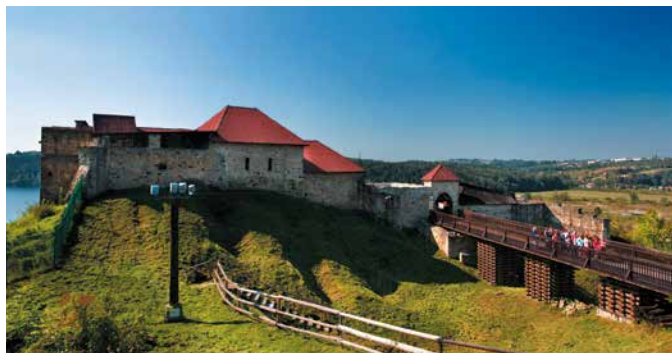


Kraków Saltworks Museum in Wieliczka, ul. Zamkowa 8, ☎ +48 12 278 3266, ▲ www.muzeum.wieliczka.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

The Salt Mine in Wieliczka is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and it consists of kilometres of marvellous underground corridors, chambers and beautiful chapels with museum exhibitions.

The Church of St. Sebastian in Wieliczka is located on the Wooden Architecture Trail.



Ruins of the castle in Dobczyce, photo by J. Gorlach

Dobczyce: Ruins of the Royal Castle

The ruins of the royal castle can be found on a hill towering over Dobczyce Lake. Unlike many other strongholds, the castle was not destroyed by fire or during a war, but was instead demolished by treasure hunters! A pot full of coins was accidentally discovered there in the middle of the 18th century. A nanny, trying to entertain the starosta's child, hit a key against the wall. Damage to wall plaster revealed a secret hiding place. News of the discovery electrified the inhabitants of the castle and the town, and soon, as the result of the discovery, only the foundations of the building remained intact.

According to legend, the castle dates back to the time of Dobek, warrior of King Mieszko I of Poland, who was said to have built a castle by the Raba River. In the course of time, the town of Dobczyce developed in the castle's vicinity. Nonetheless, the fortress was most likely built in the first half of the 13th century, and was reconstructed in the Renaissance style in the 16th century.

Today, the castle is partially reconstructed and its interiors house a small museum managed by the local branch of PTTK (Polish Tourist and Sightseeing Society).



Dobczyce Castle Museum, PTTK Office ☎ +48 12 271 1176 or 505 451 570, museum in the castle ☎ +48 518 825 830, ▲ www.zamek.dobczyce.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

Heritage Park in Dobczyce is located on the slope right in front of the castle and comprises a few charming old wooden buildings, e.g. the grand tavern.



The castle in Sucha Beskidzka, UMMW photo archive

Sucha Beskidzka: The Castle

Few castles in Poland deserve the name of “the Small Wawel” as much as the aristocratic residence in Sucha Beskidzka. The arcaded cloisters of two out of three wings of the castle yard stand out with their lightness and elegance worthy of a royal residence.

The castle in Sucha was built by Kasper Castiglione, who took the Polish surname Suski after the name of his residence. The goldsmith from Florence built a Renaissance manor in the years 1554-80, which today is part of the southern wing. Thanks to the subsequent owners (the Komorowski family), the manor was transformed into an impressive residence with an arcaded courtyard in the early 17th century. Despite numerous subsequent reconstructions, the Suski Castle retained its beautiful Renaissance appearance. Some rooms are open to visitors, as they are home to the Municipal Museum. In addition, the castle houses a cultural centre and a hotel with a restaurant.



Sucha Beskidzka Municipal Museum, ul. Zamkowa 1, ☎ +48 33 874 2605, ▲ www.muzeum.sucha-beskidzka.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS 🏰

Rzym (Rome) Tavern in **Sucha Beskidzka** was erected in the second half of the 18th century as a wooden building on the Sucha market square. Although it is a unique historic building, it is still open to visitors, presently as a traditional restaurant.



The castle in Nowy Wiśnicz, photo by M. Zaręba

Tarnów Surroundings

Nowy Wiśnicz: The Magnate Castle

The walls of this magnificent residence of the Kmita and Lubomirski families are visible from afar. During the invasion in 1655, Swedish troops conquered the castle and took almost 150 carriages of spoils with them! It is quite uncanny that out of concern for the castle, its crew surrendered without a fight, although it consisted of 600 heavily armed mercenary soldiers, who had at their disposal 80 cannons on modern bastions and stocks of food and ammunition to last them for 3 years!

The history of the castle dates back to the 14th century, while its great Renaissance expansion took place in the middle of the 16th century at the initiative of Piotr Kmita, a supporter of Queen Bona. The characteristic wide roof on the tower, on which Queen Bona allegedly rode a donkey (!), was then built. In the middle of the 17th century, Stanisław Lubomirski surrounded the building with bastion fortifications, creating a type of residence called *palazzo in fortezza*.

The renovated castle is open to the public and it now houses a branch of the Wiśnicz Land Museum. On display are interesting scale models of Małopolska's most famous castles, among other things.



The Nowy Wiśnicz Castle, ul. Zamkowa 13, ☎ 14 612 8341, ▲ www.zamekwisnicz.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS 🏰

Nowy Wiśnicz with a 17th-century bastion fortress located on the hill near the castle. The former Carmelite Monastery, it is now used as a prison.
The wooden Koryznówka Manor House, a museum of Jan Matejko. The site is located on the Wooden Architecture Trail.

Dębno: The Defensive Residence



The castle in Dębno, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Hundreds of knights in shining armour convene at the enchanting castle in Dębno every September to compete for the "Golden Plait of Tarłówna". The event is accompanied by stunt shows and ancient cannon salvos, as well as court dance performances and displays of juggling skills. The International Knights' Tournament in Dębno has

been organised for a dozen or so years and is one of the biggest events of its kind in Poland.

However, it is worth visiting the castle in Dębno not only during the tournament. This late-Gothic knights' residence was built in the years 1470–1480 and founded by Kraków Castellan Jakub Dębiński. The brick walls, richly decorated with stone ornaments (window frames, beautiful bay window trusses and impressive portals), create four wings surrounding a small internal courtyard. Step inside to see an interesting exposition of historic furniture, paintings, weapons, etc.

i Dębno Castle Museum, Branch of the Regional Museum in Tarnów, Dębno 189, ☎+48 14 665 8035, ▲ www.muzeum.tarnow.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The Church of St. Margaret in Dębno, erected in the years 1470–1504, also founded by Jakub Dębiński, is a precious historic building from the late Gothic period.

Tarnów: Ruins of the Tarnowski Family Castle on st. Martin Hill

The ruins of the once magnificent Castle are located south of the town, on the slope of hill towering over the vicinity. The first fortified building was erected here in the years 1329–31 and founded by Kraków Castellan Spycimir Leliwita. Gradually expanded by his descendants from the Tarnowski family, the castle became a splendid Renaissance residence of the famous Hetman Jan Tarnowski in the first half of the 17th century. It consisted of the upper and lower castles, both surrounded by bastion fortifications. The residence was taken over by the Ostrogski family in the same century, but the castle was in a deteriorated condition already in the 17th century and

it was abandoned at the beginning of the following century, and soon afterwards, partially demolished, it fell into ruin. Only the outlines of the walls of the upper castle and the brick defense building called the arsenal have survived until now from the once magnificent stronghold. A wonderful panorama of Tarnów and its vicinity can be admired from the ruins.

i Ruins of the Tarnowski Family Castle are located in the southern outskirts of Tarnów, near the village of Tarnowiec. Open 24 hours, admission free.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The wooden Church of St. Martin in Zawada, erected in the 15th century, is located on the Wooden Architecture Trail.

Czchów: Castle Ruins and the Defensive Tower

A magnificent oval tower rises from the top of Baszta Hill above the charming town and the picturesque Dunajec Valley. A wide view of the valley, the river, the dam and Czchowskie Lake stretches from its top.

This cylindrical tower with impressive several-metre-thick walls was built in the late 13th century to control an important trade route along the Dunajec River. In the following century, a small castle, the Czchów starosta office, was erected near the tower. However, the building was deserted in the 17th century and quickly fell into ruin. Only the oldest part of it, i.e. the aforementioned tower, has survived until today. The recent years have brought the reconstruction of a fragment of the walls and a small guard's house, which presently features a small archaeological exhibition, and a scale model of the complete castle.



Ruins of the castle in Czchów, photo by S. Gacek

i Tower in Czchów, www.moksir.czchow.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Czchów with the market square and the adjacent streets featuring 18th-century houses with picturesque arcades, supported by wooden pillars. The Gothic parish church still boasts fragments of the former 13th-century Romanesque church, as well as the remnants of the polychrome dating from the 14th and 15th centuries.



Tropsztyn Castle, photo by S. Gacek

Wytrzyszczka: Tropsztyn Castle

An austere stone tower and walls of Tropsztyn Castle in Wytrzyszczka rise just above the road and the water surface of Czchowskie Lake. Only from a close-up, you can see that it is an almost new building, erected in recent years on the ruins of the original castle.

The first stronghold was built here at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries and founded by Knight Zbrośław or his son, Gniewomir, the heirs from the village of Tropie. The castle was later rebuilt several times, but at the beginning of the 17th century it was abandoned and as a result, it fell into ruin. Legend has it that this was the location, in the tunnels and dungeons under Tropsztyn, where the Inca treasure, first brought to the Castle in Niedzica, was hidden in the 18th century.

The castle is open to visitors only during the summertime. Open to the public are: the tower, the dungeons and the chambers, and the visit is complemented by a screening of a documentary about the hunters searching for the legendary Inca treasure.



Tropsztyn Castle in Wytrzyszczka, www.polar.pl/tropsztyn

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

A Romanesque Church in Tropie from the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries with interiors featuring Romanesque paintings, among other things. The church is perched on a hill on the other side of the lake (you can use a ferry), where Saint Hermits Świerad and Benedict lived in a stone cave at the beginning of the 11th century.



Ruins of the castle in Melsztyn, photo by S. Gacek

Melsztyn: Ruins of the Knights' Castle

The tremendous square tower looming over the crowns of the trees high above the Dunajec Valley is the best-preserved remnant of the Castle in Melsztyn near Zakliczyn. The ruins can be accessed by climbing a steep path or by driving uphill from the other side.

Kraków Castellan Spycimir Leliwita began the construction of the fortress after 1347. His descendants took the surname Melsztyński after the name of the building. The fortress occupied a long and narrow hilltop, entirely encircled by the defensive wall. The most significant element of the construction was the square tower called donjon. It was the last, yet also the strongest point of the fortress's defence system. In 1771, during the Bar Confederation fights, the Russian army destroyed the castle as a stronghold of the Confederates. At present, the castle is a protected ruin.



Ruins of the Castle can be visited anytime free of charge, even at night, when the tower is illuminated.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ¶

Zakliczyn with the cosy market square and admirable old provincial buildings, a classical 19th-century town hall and an 18th-century Baroque church. A 17th-century Franciscan monastery and church tower over the edge of the town.



Fortified Manor in Szymbark, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Nowy Sącz Surroundings

Szymbark: The Fortified Manor

There is a unique historic building you won't find anywhere else in the country, situated in the Ropa Valley, at the foot of the Low Beskids. Unlike other typical Polish gentry residences, the fortified manor in Szymbark bears more resemblance to a plethora of similar buildings from the territory of Slovakia and Czech Republic.

The Renaissance defensive building with four tower-like corner annexes is crowned with a high attic. The walls feature at places the remnants of the sgraffito decoration on the walls. The manor was built as the residence of the Gładysz family of the Gryf coat of arms in the first half of the 16th century. The manor owes its present appearance to the reconstruction from around 1590, although the building was destroyed several times afterwards, e.g. by Hungarian Prince Rakoczy during the Swedish Invasion in 1657 and during World War II.

After a few-year-long works, the modern Kasztel (Manor) Conference-Exhibition Centre was opened in the renovated manor in 2013. Temporary exhibitions are now held in the historic interiors.

Kasztel Conference-Exhibition Centre in Szymbark, Szymbark ☎ +48 18 351 31 14, ▲ www.gorlice.art.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS 🏰

Pogórzeńska Village Heritage Park with 17 different wooden buildings from the local area gathered in a single location; you can also visit a small exhibition devoted to old gentry residences, set up in a neighbouring bourgeois manor house from 1919, which was transported to Szymbark from Gorlice.



The manor of the Karwacjan Family, photo by J. Mysiński



The Orthodox church in Owczary, UMW photo archive

Gorlice – Manor of the Karwacjan Family

During a visit to Gorlice, you can visit the Manor of the Karwacjan Family, which slightly resembles the fortified manor in Szymbark. This bourgeois family from Kraków had their origins in France or Italy. The first building, a kind of fortified residential tower, was most likely built in the early 15th century. The present building still features the remnants of the old structure in its walls. Rebuilt several times, the tower was burnt down during the First World War, in the 1915 Battle of Gorlice, and almost completely demolished after the war. Its reconstruction was completed in 1992, and today the manor houses one of the branches of the museum in Gorlice, i.e. the art gallery with a permanent exhibition and regularly organized temporary exhibitions, and a historical display devoted to the history of the town and region.

Karwacjan Manor Art. Gallery, Manors of the Karwacjan and Gładysz Families Museum in Gorlice, Wróblewskiego 10a, ☎ +48 18 3535618, ▲ www.gorlice.art.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS 🏰

The wooden Church of SS. Philip and Jacob in Sękowa, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, situated merely 4 km away from the centre of Gorlice at the Sękówka River.

The Greek-Catholic Orthodox Church of Bogarodzica (the Mother of God) in Owczary dating from the middle of the 17th century, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, is one of the oldest and most beautiful wooden "Lemko" style Orthodox churches in Poland.



Dunajec Castle, UWWM photo archive

Niedzica: Dunajec Castle

Dunajec Castle in Niedzica is one of the most marvellous medieval strongholds in Poland. It is famous for the 1946 discovery of a secret hiding place, containing a document “written” in talking knots, i.e. the quipu, which had once been used in the Indian Inca Empire in Peru! Allegedly, this document contained information about the location of the hidden Inca gold treasure. The quipu was most likely brought to Niedzica by Sebastian – one of the castle’s owners from the Berzeviczy family, who travelled around Peru in the late 18th century.

Some chambers house a small museum, and visitors can access the viewing terraces of the middle and upper castles. They offer a view of almost the entire Czorsztyn Lake, together with the picturesque ruins of the castle in Czorsztyn on the opposite shore, as well as the steep and rocky slopes of the Pieniny Mountains.



Museum of the Castle Complex in Niedzica, ☎ +48 18 2629489, ▲ www.zamek-w-niedzicy.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ▼

The Dunajec River Gorge in the Pieniny Mountains is best admired during a rafting trip with the experienced mountain raftsmen, who adroitly slip their wooden rafts between the boulders and precipitous, rocky cliffs of the Three Crowns Massif, or Sokolica. The rafting trail begins in Sromowce Wyżne-Kąty and winds up in either Szczawnica or Krościenko.



Ruins of the castle in Nowy Sącz, photo by M. Zareba

Nowy Sącz: Ruins of the Royal Castle

On the edge of the Nowy Sącz old town, at the confluence of the Dunajec and the Kamienica Rivers, stretches a park featuring a fragment of the wall, a tower and the remnants of other buildings visible among the trees. These are the ruins of the former Nowy Sącz Castle.

The castle erected by King Casimir the Great in the years 1350-60, on the site of the former manor dating back to the times when Nowy Sącz received the town charter. In 1385 a royal assembly was held at the castle, with Queen Hedwig, King Wladislaw II Jagiello and Vytautas the Grand Duke, as well as Sigismund of Luxemburg and his wife, Mary. The Gothic stronghold was rebuilt in the Renaissance style by the starostas of Nowy Sącz at the beginning of the 17th century. The building had 40 chambers and was crowned with attics. Unfortunately, the fires of the 18th century and the flood of 1813 turned the castle into ruin. In the inter-war period, the reconstructed building became a museum. During World War II, the German occupiers stored their ammunition here, and the castle was blown up together with it in 1945. A fragment of the wall and the Kowalska Tower crowned with a Renaissance attic were reconstructed after the war. The foundations of the ruined castle can be seen nearby.



Ruins of the castle can be seen from the outside without limitations.

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS ▼

*Nowy Sącz is perfect for a walk around the Old Town stretching right next to the location of the former castle. You can admire a plethora of historic tenement buildings and churches, or visit the interesting District Museum. The **Sądecki Ethnographic Park** located at the edge of the town is the largest heritage park in Małopolska. Adjacent to it is a Galicia Small Town, erected on a scale of 1:1.*



Castle in Czorsztyn, UMWM photo archive

Czorsztyn – Ruins of the Royal Castle

When Polish troops fought Bohdan Chmielnicki's Cossack army in the far Ukraine in 1651, the border fortress in Czorsztyn was attacked and conquered by Kostka Napierski. This troublemaker paid by a Cossack hetman was supposed to cause havoc and distract the attention of some Polish forces. Eventually, Czorsztyn was conquered by troops sent by the Bishop of Kraków, and Napierski was captured and sentenced to a horrible death by impaling.

The history of Kostka Napierski's rebellion is the most famous event in the long history of Wronin Fort, and later the Czorsztyn Castle. The stone fortress was built in the 14th century on the site of the former strongholds. It guarded the border with Hungary and a customs agency operating here. Today, the castle has a form of a permanent ruin, while some of the reconstructed rooms house a small historic-archaeological exhibition.



Ruins of the Czorsztyn Castle, ▲ www.zamek-w-niedzicy.pl

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Czorsztyn Tourist Settlement lies on the exposed Stylchyn Peninsula that cuts into the waters of Czorsztyn Lake. It features numerous wooden villas and cottages transferred from the flooded villages. The historic buildings house guesthouses and restaurants, as well as a small ethnographic exhibition.



A view of the castle ruins in Ryto, photo by A. Brożonowicz

Ryto: Ruins of the Royal Castle

Traversing the Poprad River Valley, along which for centuries ran the traditional trans-Carpathian trade route, it is worth stopping in Ryto at the foot of the characteristic very steep hill. It rises right above the river with its top crowned by the ruins of the castle. The wooden watchtower settlement at the customs unit at the Poprad River was erected here in the 13th century. The first stone part of the castle, the massive cylindrical tower, was built in the end of the same century. It is the best-preserved part of the castle that was later expanded in the 14th century. The fortified castle in Ryto was destroyed in 1657 by the Transylvanian army led by George II Rákóczi, an ally of the Swedish king, and afterwards the castle fell into ruin. Apart from the tower, only the remnants of the walls of a residential building have been preserved.



Ruins of the castle are accessible without limitations, but require a hike up a steep slope of the hill (about 10-15 minutes from the road in the valley).

OTHER LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

Stary Sącz with its picturesque market square, surrounded by old tenement houses, and the Convent of the Poor Clares of high historic value, founded in the 13th century by St. Kinga.

Beautiful ridges of the **Sadecki Beskid Mountains**, covered with beech forests, are protected by Poprad Landscape Park.

Małopolska Tourist Information System Points



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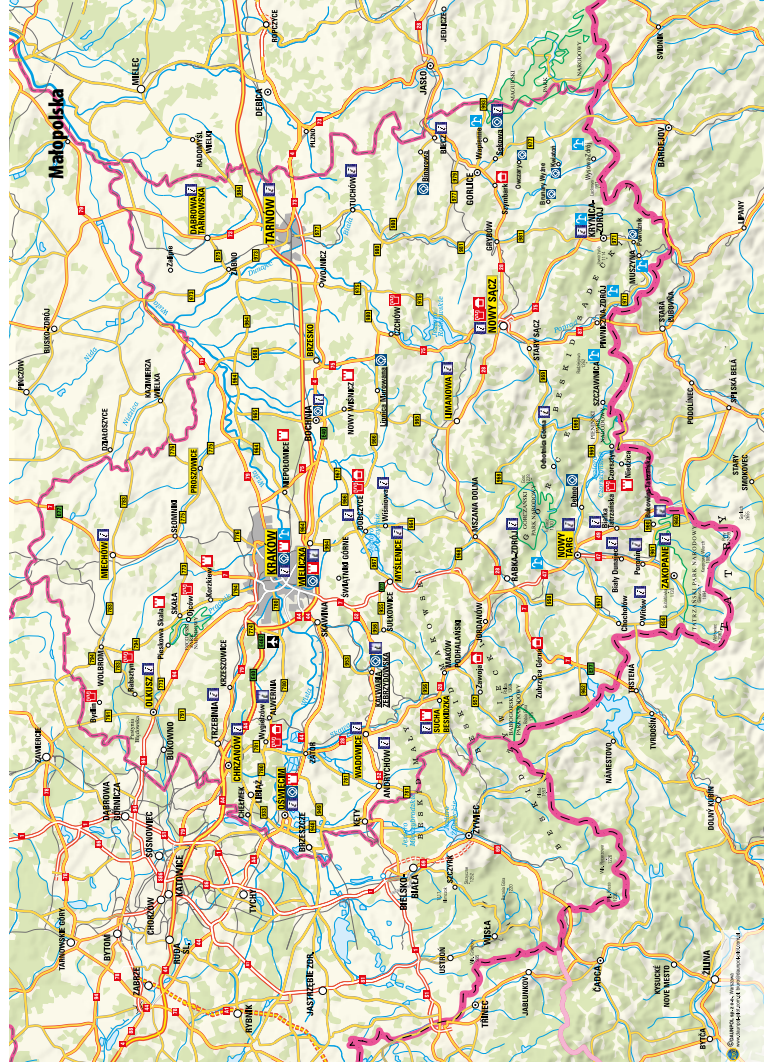
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MAŁOPOLSKA LIVING CASTLES

Capital of the region: Kraków

Major cities: Tarnów, Nowy Sącz, Oświęcim

Surface area: 15,190 km² (about 5% of the surface area of Poland)

Population: 3.35 mil. (about 8% of the population of Poland)

Landscape:

■ the tallest peak – Rysy: 2499 m asl ■ mountains – Tatras, Beskids, Pieniny, Gorce ■ foothills – Carpathian Foothills ■ uplands – Kraków-Częstochowa Upland ■ lowlands – Vistula valley ■ main rivers – Vistula, Dunajec, Poprad, Raba, Skawa, Biała ■ water reservoirs – Czorszyński, Rożnowski, Czchowski, Dobczycki, Klimkówka ■ the highest located, cleanest lakes – Morskie Oko, Czarny Staw, the lakes of the Valley of Five Polish Lakes ■ the largest and deepest cave – Wielka Śnieżna Cave: over 22 km of corridors, 824 m deep

More information on

www.visitmalopolska.pl, www.muzea.malopolska.pl



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