

THE SEVEN WONDERS OF POLAND



Poland is a land of beautiful mountains and stunning valleys, outstanding lakes and fascinating dunes. It is also a country of unique cultural heritage. In September 2007 the seven wonders of Poland were announced based on a public online survey organized by the major Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita. Tourism-Review.com invites you to admire the beauty of these marvels of human spirit.

1/ Wieliczka Salt Mine

The Wieliczka Salt Mine near Kraków, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was one of the world's oldest operating salt mines. The mine continuously produced salt from the 13th century until 2007. The mine is over 300 km long and thanks to dozens of statues and a chapel carved out of the rock salt it is a popular attraction. Visitors can also find a large chamber with salt walls, an underground lake and exhibits on the history of salt mining there. About 1.2 million people come annually to tour the 3.5 km of the mine passages open to tourists.

2/ The Old Town of Toruń

The city of Toruń with its architectural monuments from the Middle Ages is also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The medieval layout of the city as well as a number of Gothic buildings including the town hall, churches, and burgher houses are well-preserved. The city is also the birthplace of Nicholas Copernicus. The old town hall was built in the 13th century and is one of the most monumental town halls in the Central Europe. The remains of the city fortifications and especially the watchtowers are also a popular tourist attraction.

3/ Malbork Castle

Built by the Teutonic Knights, a German Roman Catholic religious order of crusaders, the Castle in Malbork is the largest castle in the world by area. When it was completed in 1406 Malbork was the world's largest brick Gothic castle. Visitors can tour not only the castle but also its museum, both of which were designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

4/ Wawel Castle and Cathedral in Kraków

The Gothic Wawel Castle, the former seat of Poland's monarchs, was built in the 11th century. However, it consists of a number of structures from different periods which are situated around the central courtyard. During the early 16th century the best local and foreign artists including Italian architects, sculptors, and German decorators were invited to refurbish the castle into a splendid Renaissance palace. The Castle soon became a model of stately residence in Central and Eastern Europe. The Wawel Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral Basilica of St. Stanisław and Vaclav, is a church located on Wawel Hill that was the traditional coronation site of Polish monarchs.

5/ Elbląg Canal, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship

The Elbląg Canal is an 80 km long canal linking hundreds of lakes of northeastern Poland. Built in

the 19th century, it is considered one of the most significant monuments of technology nowadays. As such it was also included in the UNESCO's list of World Heritage. The canal can accommodate small vessels of up to 50 tons displacement. The difference in water levels is overcome by using locks and an ingenious system of inclined planes. Today the canal is used mainly for recreational purposes and tourism.

6/ Zamość, Lublin Voivodeship

Zamość is a beautiful Renaissance town in southeastern Poland. The historical city centre with its unique Renaissance design and architecture is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It was built according to the Italian theory of an 'ideal town' but certain local urban traditions such as arcaded galleries around squares were also incorporated. The city is thus an outstanding example of an innovative approach to town planning.

7/ Kraków Market Square and Old Town

The center of Kraków is dominated by the most important market square of the Old Town called Rynek Główny in Polish. It was founded in the 13th century and with its 40,000 square meters it is the largest medieval town square in Europe. The square is surrounded by historical townhouses, palaces and churches but the most popular attraction and the city's icon is the Cloth Hall or Sukiennice, once a major centre of international trade.

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