

Silesia



Occupying the whole of southwestern Poland, Silesia, or Śląsk (pronounced shlonsk) in Polish, can claim both the most tumultuous history and the most distinct identity of all the country's regions. The area was defined long before the modern-day Polish state, and parts now fall within the borders of Germany and the Czech Republic. Most of Polish Silesia is comprised of the *voivodeships* (provinces) of Upper Silesia (Górny Śląsk), whose major city is industrial Katowice, and Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk), the capital of which is picturesque Wrocław. The names refer to altitude rather than geographical location.

The culture of Silesia is not the result of continuous development, but rather the last vestiges of a stronger regional tradition largely obliterated by forced population shifts after WWII. Silesia had a German majority throughout much of its history, and memories of those communities and their mass 'repatriation' still linger. Wrocław is a historical gem and well worth a visit. But the real draw is the Sudetes Mountains, a strip of natural beauty and idyllic resort towns stretching along the Czech border, and a boon to hikers, bikers and spa fans alike.

The rich history of the region underpins its charm, with architecture ranging from medieval fortresses to Baroque cathedrals. Importantly, this is the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp complex, a grim memorial that has been listed as a Unesco World Heritage site (1979) and is compulsory viewing. Silesia may afford plenty of opportunities for fun and relaxation, but it also takes a glimpse at the dark side to appreciate the significance of this once-turbulent corner of Europe.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Getting out and about on the lively streets of **Wrocław** (p325) after dark
- Eyeballing cranium after cranium at the macabre **Chapel of Skulls** (p343) near Kudowa-Zdrój
- Visiting the tranquil and phenomenally constructed **Church of Peace** (p329) in Świdnica
- Ogling the frescoed ceiling and opulent Baroque decoration in the Princes' Hall at the **Cistercian monastery** (p327) at Lubiąż
- Hiking along the red trail linking Mt Szrenica with Mt Śnieżka in **Karkonosze National Park** (p336)
- Observing a moment's silence at the harrowing but must-see Nazi extermination camp at **Auschwitz-Birkenau** (p357) in Oświęcim
- Reliving the past at the wonderful **skansen** (p363) near Opole
- Splashing about on a hot day in the artificial lake at **Nysa** (p351)



■ POPULATION: 7.5 MILLION

■ AREA: 45,000 SQ KM

WROCLAW

pop 638,000

Everyone loves Wrocław (*vrots-wahf*) and it's easy to see why. A more manageable Kraków, with all the cultural attributes and entertainment, the capital of Lower Silesia has a character all its own.

Having absorbed Bohemian, Austrian and Prussian influences, the city has a unique architectural and cultural make-up, best seen in its magnificent market square. Wrocław's location on the Odra River, with its 12 islands, 130 bridges and riverside parks, is idyllic, and the beautifully preserved ecclesiastical district is a treat for lovers of Gothic architecture. Fans of Wrocław are in good company. Pablo Picasso said he found the postwar reconstruction of the city a powerful inspiration on a visit in 1948, and the British historians Norman Davies and Roger Moorhouse used Wrocław as the model for their highly readable *Microcosm: A Portrait of a Central European City* (2003).

But Wrocław is not just a pretty face. It is Poland's fourth-largest city and the major industrial, commercial and educational centre for the region; virtually everything in southwestern Poland starts, finishes or is taking place in Wrocław. At the same time it is a lively cultural centre, with several theatres, some major festivals, rampant nightlife and a large student community.

HISTORY

Wrocław was originally founded on Cathedral Island (Ostrów Tumski). The first recorded Polish ruler, Duke Mieszko I, brought the town, together with most of Silesia, into the Polish state. It must have been a fair-sized settlement by the turn of the first millennium, as it was chosen, along with Kraków and Kołobrzeg, as one of the Piast Poland's three bishoprics.

During the period of division in the 12th and 13th centuries, Wrocław was the capital of one of the principalities of the Silesian Piasts. Like most settlements in southern Poland, Wrocław was burned down by the Tatars. The town centre was then moved to the river's left bank.

Wrocław continued to grow under Bohemian administration (1335–1526), reaching perhaps the height of its prosperity in the 15th century and maintaining trade

and cultural links with the Polish Crown. This speedy development led to the construction of new fortifications at the beginning of the 16th century, and the remains of the Fosa Miejska (City Moat) show where they were once positioned.

The Habsburgs, who ruled the city for the next two centuries, were less tolerant of the Polish and Czech communities, and things got even worse for the Slavic populations after 1741, when Wrocław fell to Prussia. For the next two centuries the city was increasingly Germanised and became known as Breslau.

As one of the major eastern outposts of the Reich, Breslau was given a key defensive role in the last stages of WWII, converting the whole city into a fortified compound. Besieged by the Red Army in February 1945, the Nazis defended their last bastion, Fortress Breslau, until May, executing anyone who refused to fight. During the battle, 75% of the city was razed to the ground.

Of the prewar population of more than 600,000, an estimated 30% died, mostly as a result of the fighting and the botched evacuation that preceded it. The handful of Germans who remained were expelled to Germany, and the ruined city was resettled with people from Poland's prewar eastern regions, mostly from Lviv (Lwów in Polish), which had been ceded to the Soviet Union.

The difficult reconstruction of Wrocław continued well into the 1980s, when the city surpassed its prewar population level for the first time.

ORIENTATION

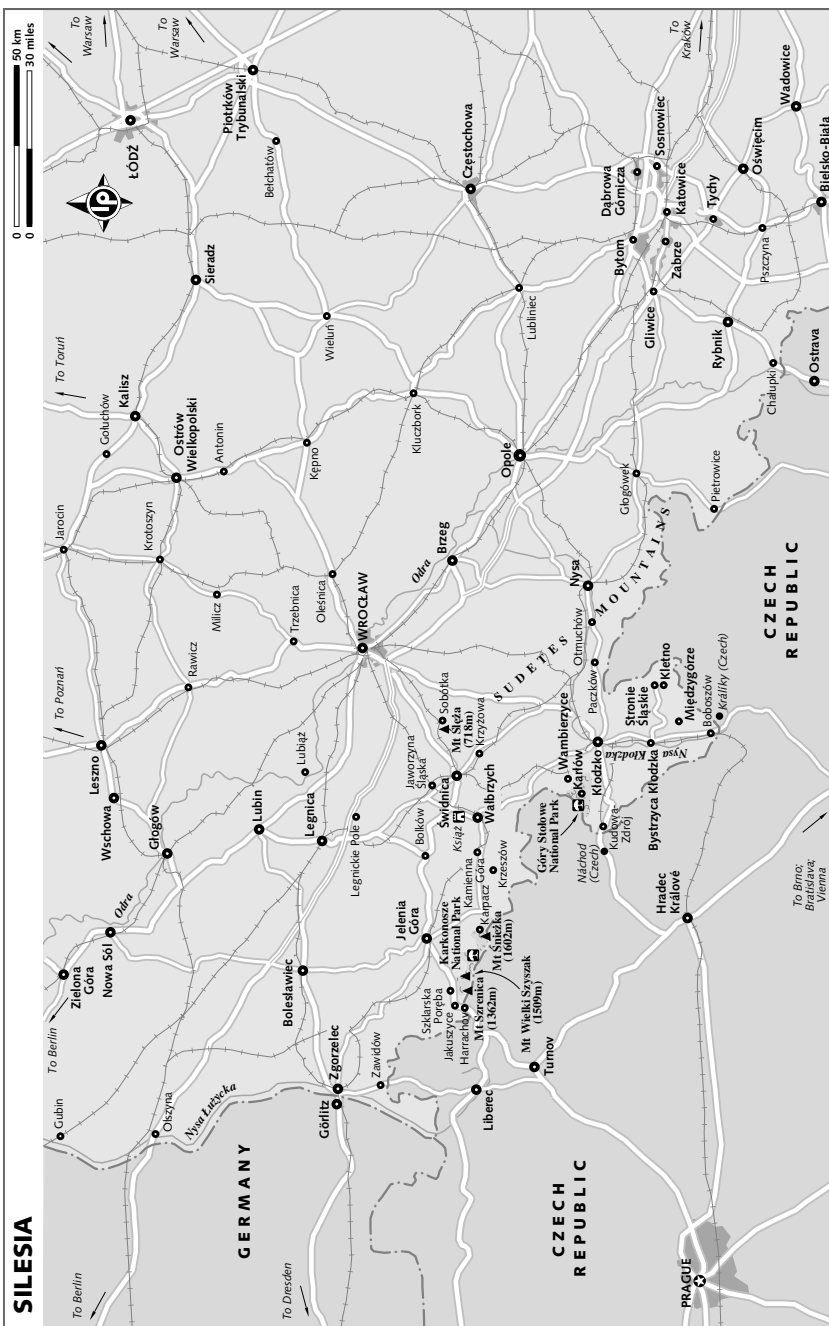
The roughly oval-shaped Old Town is about 800m north of the neo-Moorish train station on ul Pilsudskiego. The bus station is just behind the train station, on ul Sucha. Almost all major sights and most forms of accommodation are within easy walking distance of the central area.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

EMPIK Rynek (☎ 071 343 4016; www.empik.com; Rynek 50; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat, noon–9pm Sun); Plac Kościuszki (☎ 071 344 8862; Plac Kościuszki 21/23; ☎ 10am–8pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun) Best for newspapers and magazines.

PolAnglo (www.polanglo.pl in Polish) Rynek (☎ 071 341 7960; Rynek 7); ul Kuźnica (☎ 071 341 9760; ul Kuźnica 49a)



Świat Podróżnika (☎ 071 346 0071; ul Wita Stwosza 19/20; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Maps and guidebooks.

Internet Access

Intermax (☎ 071 794 0573; ul Psie Budy 10/11; per hr 4zt; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Internet Netvigator ul Igielna (☎ 071 344 5962; ul Igielna 14; per 15/30/60min 1/2/3zt; ☎ 9am-midnight); ul Kuźnica (☎ 071 343 7069; ul Kuźnica 11/13; ☎ 9am-10pm)

W Sercu Miasta (☎ 071 342 4675; Przejście Żelaznicze 4, Rynek-Ratusz; per 10/30/60min 1/3/4zt, per 3hr 10zt; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun)

Internet Resources

City of Wrocław (www.wroclaw.pl) Informative official site direct from city hall.

Wrocław Life (www.wroclaw-life.com) Interactive information portal on every aspect of life and tourism in Wrocław.

Laundry

Foka (☎ 071 355 0176; ul Żubrza 18; ☎ 6am-10pm Mon-Fri, 6am-2pm Sat)

Money

Bank Pekao (ul Oławska 2; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

Post

Main post office (ul Piłsudskiego 12; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

Post office (Rynek 28; ☎ 6.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Telephone

MOBILE PHONES

Orange (☎ 071 344 7166; www.orange.pl; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 19-23; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat)

Plus GSM (☎ 071 343 4910; www.plusgsm.pl; ul Szewska 74; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Tourist Information

Lower Silesia Cultural Information Centre (☎ 071 342 2291; www.okis.pl; Rynek-Ratusz 24; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 071 344 3111; www.itwroclaw.pl; Rynek 14; ☎ 9am-9pm Apr-Oct, 10am-8pm Nov-Mar)

Travel Agencies

Almatur (☎ 071 343 4135; www.almatur.pl; ul Kościuski 34)

Orbis Travel (☎ 071 344 4408; www.orbis.pl; Rynek 29; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

PTTK office (☎ 071 343 8331; www.pttk.pl; 1st fl Rynek-Ratusz 11/12; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

SIGHTS Old Town

Wrocław's extensive Old Town is so full of historic buildings that you could wander round for weeks and still feel like you hadn't seen everything.

RYNEK

Wrocław's market square is Poland's second biggest after the one in Kraków. The central **town hall** complex is so large that it incorporates three internal streets. The main structure took almost two centuries (1327-1504) to complete, and work on the 66m-high tower and decoration continued for another century.

The eastern façade reflects the stages of the town hall's development, split into three distinct elements. The segment to the right, with its austere early-Gothic features, is the oldest, while the delicate carving in the section to the left shows elements of the early Renaissance style. Prisoners' sentences were once read aloud from the little loggia. The central section dates from the 16th century and is topped by an ornamented triangular roof adorned with pinnacles. The astronomical clock, made of larch wood and showing the time and phases of the moon, was built in 1580.

The southern façade, dating from the early 16th century, is the most elaborate, with three projections, a pair of ornate bay windows and carved stone figures. The cellar on this side holds a popular pub-restaurant called Piwnica Świdnicka.

The western elevation is the most austere, apart from the early-Baroque portal (1615) leading to the **City Dwellers' Art Museum** (Muzeum Sztuki Mieszkańskiej; ☎ 071 347 1693; www.mmw.pl; Sukiennice 14/15, Rynek-Ratusz; adult/concession 10/5zt; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun). The museum's Gothic interiors are every bit as magnificent as the building's exterior, particularly the **Great Hall** (Sala Wielka) on the 1st floor, with carved decorations from the second half of the 15th century. Adjoining it is the **Princes' Room** (Sala Książęca), which was built as a chapel in the mid-14th century. The historic rooms house several exhibitions, including the **Wrocław Treasury** (Wrocławski Skarb) of gold and silverware from the 16th to 19th centuries.



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AROUND THE RYNEK

The Rynek was laid out in the 1240s and lined with timber houses, which were later replaced with brick structures. They gradually changed over the centuries, adopting the architectural style of the day. The north and south sides were completely destroyed during WWII but have since been rebuilt; they offer an appealing amalgam of architectural styles from Gothic to Art Nouveau. Check out the new wavelike glass fountain on the western side of the square.

Set in the northwestern corner of the Rynek are two charming houses called **Hansel and Gretel** (Jaś i Małgosia; ul Odrzańska 39/40), linked by a Baroque archway from 1728, which once led to the church cemetery. (The inscription in Latin reads 'Death is the gateway to life.') To the west of Hansel is a tiny bronze of a gnome taking a nap on his secret treasure; it's one of 15 such statues in the city.

Just north of Hansel and Gretel is the monumental brick **Church of St Elizabeth** (Kościół Św Elżbiety; ul Św Elżbiety 1/2), with its 83m-high tower (☎ 071 343 7204; admission 5zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-5pm Nov-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Nov-Mar). You can climb the narrow stairwell with 250-plus steps to the top for a great view of Wrocław. This Gothic church went up in flames in 1976 in suspicious circumstances, and many of the furnishings, including the organ, were lost.

RACŁAWICE PANORAMA

Wrocław's pride and joy is the **Raclawice Panorama** (Panorama Raclawicka; ☎ 071 344 2344; www.panoramaaclawicka.pl; ul Purkyniego 11; adult/concession 20/15zł; ☎ 9am-5pm daily mid-Apr-Aug, 9am-5pm Tue-Sun Sep & Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-mid-Apr). Housed in a cylindrical building in a park southwest of the National Museum, it's a cyclorama, a giant canvas painting measuring 15m by

A 360-DEGREE VIEW OF HISTORY

Filip Tarczewski is a steward and guide at Wrocław's most visited sight, the Raclawice Panorama (opposite), a huge cyclorama depicting an 18th-century battle with the Russians.

Why do Poles come to see the panorama? It awakens something in our national spirit. It's about victory. The Polish people were under Russian subjugation then and later. They like to see our soldiers getting back at the Russians.

Foreigners? Are they interested? Until recently most of our foreign guests were English and German. Now with so many Koreans working [at the LG Electronics factory] nearby, we're getting a lot of them. Koreans like the fighting scenes.

Hmm...English. Any problems with overenthusiastic stags? Not necessarily English. But some drunken people have tried to climb over the barrier. Maybe they think the panorama is real and they want to take part!

Do you like the panorama? Yes, and I like my job. I come from a very patriotic family. Every time I look at the picture I see something new.

On my perfect day, find me... Having coffee with friends at Pożegnanie z Afryką (p324). I also like to visit the Church of St Adalbert (p320). It's a very special place for the people of Wrocław and miracles happen here. Blessed Czesław prayed for Wrocław during the Mongol invasion and the church survived. And only Czesław's chapel remained standing after the war.

When I'm away I miss... The women of Wrocław. The women of Poland are the best in the world and the women of Wrocław the best in Poland.

114m and wrapped around the internal walls of the rotunda. It is viewed from an elevated central balcony. Three-dimensional items (tree trunks, plants, weapons, roads), special lighting and sound effects bring it to life.

The picture depicts the battle of Raclawice (a village 40km northeast of Kraków), fought on 4 April 1794 between the Polish insurrectionist army of regulars and peasants led by Tadeusz Kościuszko and Russian troops under General Alexander Tormasov. One of the last attempts to defend Poland's independence, the battle was won by the Poles, but it was all for naught: months later the nationwide insurrection was crushed by the tsarist army and the Third Partition put into effect. Poland ceased to exist as a nation until WWI, yet the battle lived on in Polish hearts and minds as the most glorious engagement of the rebellion.

A century after the battle, a group of patriots in Lviv (then the Polish city of Lwów) commissioned the panorama. The two main artists, Jan Styka and Wojciech Kossak, were helped by seven other painters who did the background scenes and details. They completed the monumental canvas in just over

nine months, using 750kg of paint. The picture was on display until 1944, when a bomb damaged the canvas.

After the war the painting was sent to Wrocław, but since it depicted a defeat of the Russians, Poland's official friend and liberator, the communist authorities were reluctant to put it on display. The pavilion built for the panorama in 1967 sat empty until 1985, when the canvas was shown for the first time in more than four decades.

Visits are by 30-minute guided tours, which depart every half-hour. You move around the balcony to inspect each scene in turn while a handheld audioguide provides recorded commentary. The **Small Rotunda** (Mała Rotunda), behind the ticket office, features a model of the battlefield and the uniforms of forces engaged in the battle. A panorama ticket allows entry to the National Museum on the same day.

NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WROCLAW

The **National Museum** (Muzeum Narodowe w Wrocławiu; ☎ 071 372 5150; www.mnwr.art.pl; Plac Powstańców Warszawy 5; adult/concession 15/10zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed, Fri & Sun, 9am-4pm Thu, 10am-6pm Sat) is a

treasure-trove of fine art on three floors, with extensive permanent collections and a stunning skylit atrium. It's a lot to take in, but the café on the 1st floor is good for alleviating museum fatigue.

The Silesian art collection is a highlight of the museum. Medieval stone sculpture is displayed on the ground floor; exhibits include the Romanesque tympanum from the portal of the Church of St Mary Magdalene (right), depicting the Dormition (or Assumption) of the Virgin Mary, and 14th-century sarcophagi from the Church of SS Vincent and James (below). The medieval wooden sculpture on the 1st floor features some powerful Gothic triptychs and statues of saints. There are also collections of Silesian paintings, ceramics, silverware and furnishings from the 16th to 19th centuries.

The 2nd floor holds Polish art, mainly paintings, from the 17th century to the present. The collection covers most of Poland's big names, including Jacek Malczewski, Stanisław Wyspiański, Witkacy (Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz) and Jan Matejko; be prepared for moody portraits and massive battle scenes. Among the modern painters, Władysław Hasiór, Eugeniusz Stankiewicz-Get and Tadeusz Makowski are names to look out for, especially for their humorous takes on war and religion.

UNIVERSITY QUARTER

This area occupies the northernmost part of the Old Town, between the riverfront and ul Uniwersytecka. Walking west from the National Museum, the first important historic building you see is the Gothic **Church of SS Vincent and James** (Kościół Św Wincentego i Św Jakuba; Plac Biskupa Nankiera 15a), originally a Romanesque basilica founded in the early 13th century. The largest church in the city, it's now used by the Uniat (Eastern Rite Catholic) faithful.

The Baroque-Rococo **Church of the Holy Name of Jesus** (Kościół Najświętszego Imienia Jezus; Plac Uniwersytecki), the university church and arguably the city's most beautiful, was built in the 1690s on the site of the former Piast castle. Its spacious interior, crammed with ornate fittings and adorned with fine illusionist frescoes of the life of Jesus on its vaulting, is quite spectacular.

The monumental building adjoining the church is the main edifice of the **University of Wrocław** (Uniwersytet Wrocławski; Plac Uniwersytecki 1), built between 1728 and 1742. Enter through

the grand blue and gold Rococo gate at the western end and go up to the 1st floor to see the **Aula Leopoldinum** (☎ 071 375 2245; Plac Uniwersytecki; adult/concession 4.50/2.50zł; ☎ 10am-3.15pm Thu-Tue). Embellished with elaborate stucco work, sculptures, paintings and a trompe l'œil ceiling fresco, it's the city's best Baroque interior. The more modest **Oratorium Marianum**, on the ground floor, is included in the admission fee. Classical music concerts are occasionally held here. You can climb the **Mathematical Tower** (Wieża Matematyczna; adult/concession 4.50/2.5zł), topped with a sphere and decorated with allegorical figures.

OTHER SIGHTS

One block east of the Rynek is the **Church of St Mary Magdalene** (Kościół Św Marii Magdaleny; ul Szewska 10), a mighty Gothic brick building constructed during the city's heyday in the 14th century. Its showpiece is a copy of a Romanesque portal from around 1280 on the south wall, which originally adorned the Benedictine Abbey in Olbin, but was moved here in 1546 after the abbey was demolished. The original tympanum is on display in Wrocław's National Museum. You can climb the 72m-high **tower** (☎ 071 344 1904; adult/concession 4/3zł; ☎ 10am-8pm Apr-Oct) and cross the so-called **Penance Footbridge** (Mostek Pokutnik).

A 16th-century former Bernardine church and monastery contains the **Museum of Architecture** (Muzeum Architektury; ☎ 071 344 8278; www.ma.wroc.pl; ul Bernardyńska 5; adult/concession 7/5zł, free Wed; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sun). The collection features stone sculptures and stained-glass windows from various historic buildings of the region. The oldest exhibit, a Romanesque tympanum on the ground floor, dates from 1165. The museum also has a 12th-century Jewish tombstone, a 1:500 scale model of Wrocław (1740) and a delightful cloister garden.

The church to the west of the museum and opposite the Galeria Dominikańska shopping centre is the single-nave Gothic **Church of St Adalbert** (Kościół Św Wojciecha; Plac Dominikański 2). The highlight here is the 18th-century Baroque chapel adjoining the southern transept, with its Rococo alabaster sarcophagus of the Blessed Czesław, founder of the original monastery here. Wrocławians are devoted to this chapel as it remained unscathed during WWII while the rest of the church was almost demolished.

Cathedral & Sand Islands

The erstwhile Cathedral Island (Ostrów Tumski) – it was connected to the mainland in the 19th century – was the cradle of Wrocław. It was here that the Ślężanie, a tribe of West Slavs who gave their name to the region, constructed their stronghold in the 7th or 8th century. After the town was incorporated into the Polish state and a bishopric established in 1000, Wrocław's first church was built here. Over time a number of churches, monasteries and other religious buildings were constructed, giving a distinctive, markedly ecclesiastical character to the district.

The centrepiece is the mammoth, twin-towered **Cathedral of St John the Baptist** (Katedra Św Jana Chrzciciela; Plac Katedralny 18). This three-aisled Gothic basilica was built between 1244 and 1590. Seriously damaged during WWII – shrapnel scarring is still visible on the exterior walls – it was reconstructed in its previous Gothic form, complete with dragon guttering. The high altar boasts a gold and silver triptych from 1522 attributed to the school of Veit Stoss, and the western portico is a medieval gem. For once you don't need strong legs to climb the 91m-high **tower** (☎ 071 322 2574; adult/concession 4/3zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) as there is a lift.

In contrast to the enormous cathedral, the **Church of St Giles** (Kościół Św Idziego; Plac Św Idziego) is barely a cupboard. Built between 1218 and 1230, this is the oldest surviving church in Wrocław, and has an original Romanesque portal.

A few steps east of St Giles is the **Wrocław Archdiocesan Museum** (Muzeum Archidiecezji Wrocławskiej; ☎ 071 327 1178; Plac Katedralny 16; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 9am-3pm Tue-Sun), with a large collection of sacred art.

If you've had enough of bricks and mortar – sacred or otherwise – Cathedral Island also contains the city's **Botanical Gardens** (Ogród Botaniczny; ☎ 071 322 5957; ul Sienkiewicza 23; adult/concession 7/5zł; ☎ 8am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-6pm Nov-Mar), a charming patch of greenery with palm houses.

To the west is Sand Island (Wyspa Piasek), a real island in the Odra connected to Cathedral Island by the Cathedral Bridge (Most Tumski) and to the Old Town by the Sand Bridge (Most Piaskowy). The main monument here is the **Church of Our Lady on the Sand** (Kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny na Piasku), a lofty 14th-century building that dominates this tiny

islet. Almost all the fittings were destroyed during WWII and the half-dozen old triptychs you see inside have been collected from other Silesian churches. The wonderful Romanesque tympanum in the south aisle is the only remnant of the original 12th-century church that once stood here. There's a mechanised *szopka* (Nativity scene) in the first chapel to the right; make a small donation when one of the assistants turns it on.

West & South of the Old Town

Just outside the ring road encircling the Old Town, the squat brick **Arsenal** (Arsenał), with two towers and an enormous courtyard, is the most significant remnant of the 15th-century fortifications. It now houses the **Military Museum** (Muzeum Militariów; ☎ 071 347 1696; www.mmw.pl; ul Gieszyńskiego 9; adult/concession 7/5zł, free Wed; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), featuring old weapons, uniforms and lots of helmets. This is also the home of the **Archaeological Museum** (Muzeum Archeologiczne; ☎ 071 347 1698), which opens the same hours and charges the same admission fee.

About 750m south of the Arsenal is the partially restored **White Stork Synagogue** (Synagoga Pod Białym Bocianem; ul Włodkowska 7), built in 1829. Another reminder that this city was once home to more than 20,000 Jews is the **ul Łąkowa synagogue memorial**. Formerly a synagogue built in 1872, it was the country's second largest until it was torched on Kristallnacht (9 November 1938). The **Old Jewish Cemetery** (Stary Cmentarz Żydowski; ☎ 071 791 5904; www.mmw.pl; ul Ślężna 37/39; adult/concession 7/5zł; ☎ 8am-6pm), founded in 1856, is about 1.5km south of the train and bus stations. Take tram 9 or 16.

The massive Gothic affair located just south of the Old Town is the Franciscan **Church of SS Stanislaus, Wenceslas and Dorothy** (Kościół Franciszkanów Św Stanisława, Wacława i Doroty; Plac Franciszkański), founded in 1351 to commemorate the meeting between Polish King Kazimierz III Wielki (Casimir III the Great) and his Bohemian counterpart, Charles IV, at which they agreed to leave Silesia in Bohemia's hands. Note the sizable Rococo tomb at the start of the south aisle.

About 500m south of the church on the corner of ul Świdnicka and ul Piłsudskiego is a fascinating sculpture called **Passage** (Przejście), which shows a group of seven bronze pedestrians literally being swallowed into the pavement, only to re-emerge on the other side of the street. It's by Jerzy Kalina and was

unveiled in 2005 to mark the 24th anniversary of the declaration of martial law.

Eastern Suburbs

Wrocław can boast Poland's largest (and supposedly best) zoo (Ogród Zoologiczny; ☎ 071 348 3025; www.zoo.wroclaw.pl in Polish; ul Wróblewskiego 1; adult/concession 10/4zł; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-4pm Nov-Mar), with some 6000 animals representing more than 600 species and spread over 100 hectares. It's 2km to the east; take tram 2 or 10 from Plac Dominikański.

Across the street to the north is the **Centennial Hall** (Hala Stulecia; ☎ 071 347 5113; www.halaludowa.wroc.pl; ul Wystawowa 1; admission 10zł; ☎ 8am-7pm), also called the People's Hall (Hala Ludowa). It's a huge, round, 6000-seat auditorium, built in 1913 and added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 2007. Designed by German architect Max Berg and opened to mark the centenary of Napoleon's defeat by allied European forces in 1813, the hall is topped with a huge dome measuring 65m in diameter – a remarkable achievement in its day. The unusual 96m-high steel **Spire** (Iglica) in front of the entrance was built in 1948 on the occasion of the Exhibition of the Regained Territories.

Behind the hall to the northeast is **Park Szczytnicki**, Wrocław's oldest and largest 'English park' (ie wooded area), encompassing 112 hectares with 400 species of trees. A short walk north along the pergola will bring you to the small **Japanese Garden** (Ogród Japoński; ☎ 0662 169 226; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Oct), while further east is the 16th-century wooden **Church of St John Nepomuk** (Kościół Św Jana Nepomucena; Al Dąska), brought here from the Opole region in 1914.

COURSES

Link Language School (☎ 071 372 5335, 0604 649 554; www.link.szkoła.pl; 2nd fl, Plac Solny 13; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) offers numerous Polish-language courses of varying intensities, from 30zł to 80zł per hour, depending on class size (generally up to six people) and frequency of the lessons.

TOURS

Wrocław Tours (☎ 071 727 1534, 0602 115 349; www.wroclawtours.pl; Plac Solny 14/14a) has a three-hour guided bus and walking tour of Wrocław (adult/concession 100/50zł) in English departing at 9.30am on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. It also offers a five-hour tour to Świdnica (p329) and Książ (p332) at 1.30pm on Tuesday and Saturday (adult/concession 150/75zł).

In the warmer months a boat called **Gucio** (☎ 0609 200 867; ☎ 11am-7pm) has 40-minute cruises (8zł) on the Odra departing hourly from the southern end of Sand Island. Hour-long sailings (15zł) depart at 8pm and 9pm on Friday and Saturday.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Wrocław hosts some exciting events.

Musica Polonica Nova (www.musicapolonica.nova.pl in Polish) Contemporary music festival held biannually (2008, 2010, 2012 etc) in February.

Jazz on the Odra (www.jnofestival.pl in Polish) One of Poland's foremost jazz festivals, held in April.

Wrocław Nonstop (www.wroclawnonstop.pl) Five-day open-air pop and rock music festival held in June.

Arsenal Nights (www.wieczory-arsenale.pl) Chamber music festival at the Arsenal in June/July.

Wratislavia Cantans (www.wratislaviacantans.pl) Wrocław's top international music and fine-arts festival, now in its 4th decade, is held for a week in June and a week in September annually.

SLEEPING Budget

In addition to the places listed here, the Hotel Tumski (opposite) also offers dormitory accommodation.

MDK Kopernik Hostel (☎ 071 343 8857; mdkko.pernik@wp.pl; ul Kółkajaja 20; dm 19-28zł, d 60zł; ☎) Not far from the train station, this is a basic, recently renovated official hostel with 59 beds, located in a grand mustard-coloured building. Some dorms are huge and beds (five to seven) are packed close together. Prices are cheaper after the first night.

Bursa Nauzycielska (☎ 071 344 3781; www.dodn.wroclaw.pl/bursa; ul Kotlarska 42; s/d/tr/q 65/110/110/120zł; ☎) Wrocław's most central teachers' dorm is basic but clean, with shared bathrooms. There's a lot of brown in the colour scheme, but the rooms are quite cosy and it's ideally located just one block northeast of the Rynek.

ourpick Stranger Hostel (☎ 071 344 1206; www.thestrangerhostel.com; 2nd fl, ul Kółkajaja 16; dm 45-60zł, tw 120zł; ☎) A tatty old staircase in a vintage building just opposite the train station leads to Wrocław's best budget accommodation. Dorms (four to 10 beds) are set in six renovated apartment rooms with ornate lamps and wooden floors. Bathrooms are sparkling, and guests have free access to a kitchen and washing machine. There's a DVD projector with big screen for rainy days. There's also an apartment available in the same building.

Cinnamon Hostel (☎ 071 344 5858; www.cinnamon.hostel.com; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 67; dm 45-60zł, d 135zł; ☎) Right on the ring road and within spitting distance of pedestrian ul Świdnicka, this charming and upbeat place run by a Polish/English couple has nine large rooms (two to 10 beds) named for spices and herbs – basil, sesame, chilly (sic) – a bright kitchen and a common room with flat-screen PC. Doubles have their own toilet and shower.

Hotel Savoy (☎ 071 344 3071; www.savoy.wroc.pl; Plac Kościuszki 19; s 100-170zł, d 120-150zł, tr 150-180zł, ste 160-200zł) It may not look like much, but the 27-room Savoy is one of your best shots at a bargain. Pot plants, half-decent furniture and little balconies liven up the best rooms. Reception is up the steps on the 1st floor. Cheapest prices are at the weekend.

Hotel Podróżnik (☎ /fax 071 373 2845; ul Sucha 1; s/d/tr/q 98/146/186/228zł; ☎) Staying at the bus station isn't just a last resort for tired travellers: this skylit establishment has 23 bright, clean and comfortable rooms worthy of a night or two. Student discounts of 20% are available.

Midrange

Nathan's Villa Hostel (☎ 071 344 1095; www.nathans.villa.com; ul Świdnicka 13; dm 45-60zł, s & d 150-190zł; ☎) Sister to Kraków's most established hostel, this 96-bed place 150m south of the Rynek just had to be a success when it opened in 2006. Along with the expected free laundry and flat-screen TVs, expect your bunk to have its own locker and reading lamp. A full 20 bathrooms over three floors reduce waiting time for a shower.

Hotel Europejski (☎ 071 343 1071; www.odratourist.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 88; s 139-199zł, d 169-209zł; ☎) In the same stable as the Hotel Polonia, this 31-room hotel is handy for the train and bus stations, but don't expect the Ritz at these prices. The pricier 'renovated' rooms are large and comfortable, though the décor is rather tired.

Hotel Polonia (☎ 071 343 1021; www.odratourist.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 66; s 159-209zł, d 189-229zł; ☎) There's little spectacular about this 145-room place, but it's close to the stations, and weekend and summer promotions (singles/doubles from 109/159zł) make it decent value. Room prices depend on size and quality of decoration.

Hotel Zaulek (☎ 071 341 0046; www.hotel.uni.wroc.pl; ul Garbary 11; s 203-240zł, d 245-320zł; ☎) Run by the university, this is a very personal guest-house at the upper end of the scale, accommodating just 18 visitors in a dozen homely

rooms. The 1pm checkout is a boon for heavy sleepers, and weekend prices are a snip.

Hotel Europeum (☎ 071 371 4500; www.europeum.pl; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 27a; s/d 240/275zł; ☎) Prices might just edge the motel-like Europeum out of the comfortable mid-range bracket, but it's more attractive at the weekend when the 20 singles/doubles drop to 220/255zł.

Art Hotel (☎ 071 787 7100; www.arthotel.pl; ul Kiełbaśnicza 20; s 250-400zł, d 270-440zł, ste 300-520zł; ☎) A bit frayed but all the more attractive for that, the Art features 78 rooms with tastefully restrained décor, quality fittings and gleaming bathrooms. Within the arched brick cellar is a top-notch restaurant, and there's a fitness room for working off any extra weight gained therein.

Top End

Dwór Polski (☎ 071 372 3415; www.dworpolski.wroclaw.pl; ul Kiełbaśnicza 2; s/d/ste 265/325/470zł; ☎) You couldn't ask for more character than this: a restored 16th-century house, complete with 28 idiosyncratic rooms, some original dark-wood fittings and fixtures, and a popular restaurant (enter from Rynek 5). The atmospheric internal courtyard is a plus, as are the weekend rates – 20% off the standard ones.

Hotel Patio (☎ 071 375 0400; www.hotelpatio.pl; ul Kiełbaśnicza 24; s 300-330zł, d 330-360zł, ste from 395zł; ☎) The 49-room Patio offers pleasant lodgings a short hop from the main square, within two buildings linked by a covered sunlit courtyard. Rooms are clean and light, sometimes small but with reasonably high ceilings. At weekends singles/doubles/suites are priced from 240/260/290zł.

Hotel Tumski (☎ 071 322 6099; www.hotel-tumski.com.pl; Wyspa Słodowa 10; s 250-270zł, d 350zł, ste 480zł; ☎) Located on one of the islets in the Odra and within easy walking distance of both the Old Town and Cathedral Island, this neat 57-room hotel has a nice riverside setting and is set back from a busy road. Rates at the weekend drop to as low as 210/300/440zł for singles/doubles/suites. For the more budget-conscious, part of the hotel is an official HI hostel, with some three dozen dorm beds costing 23zł to 68zł per person.

EATING

Delikatesy U Roberta (ul Odrzańska 11/12; ☎ 24hr) This grocery and sundries shop is open round the clock.

STP (☎ 071 344 5449; www.szybkotaniopysznie.pl; ul Kuźnica 10; mains from 2.40zł; ☎ 10am-9pm) Short for 'Szybko, Tanio, Pysznie', the name says it all: 'Fast, Cheap, Delicious'. This is one of those cafeteria-style eateries that sells food by weight – 2.40zł for 100g – and it's surprisingly good.

Bar Vegetariański Vega (☎ 071 344 3934; Sukiennice 1/2, Rynek-Ratusz; mains 3.60-5.40zł; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) This is a cheap cafeteria on two floors in the centre of the Rynek, offering vegetarian dishes in a light green space. There's a good choice of soups and crepes.

Amalfi (☎ 071 343 6784; ul Więzienna 21; mains 9.50-25.50zł; ☎ 12.30pm-midnight) This pizzeria with a wood-burning stove and sunny disposition is just north of the Rynek. It's a good choice for a simple, low-cost meal.

Mexico Bar (☎ 071 346 0292; www.mexicobar.com; ul Rzeźnicza 34; mains 12.50-38zł; ☎ noon-11pm Sun-Thu, noon-midnight Fri & Sat) This is a compact, warmly lit restaurant featuring sombreros and backlit masks on the walls and all the Mexican favourites. There's a small bar to lean on while waiting for a table.

Pekin (☎ 071 787 8784; ul Kotlarska 24/1a; mains 15-25zł; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-11pm Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) OK, Chinese but *kuchnia sichuańska* (Sichuan cuisine)? Uh-uh. Still, it's one of Wrocław's very few Chinese eateries and relatively authentic.

Mercado (☎ 071 344 4040; ul Więzienna 30; mains 18-65zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun) This offspring of the prodigious Sphinx chain has a more rustic feel to it, with rough-hewn walls and handmade ceramics. The menu's a familiar mix of Middle Eastern and Italian platters, plus a smattering of Greek, Syrian and Asian efforts.

Darea (☎ 071 343 5301; ul Kuźnica 43/45; mains 25-100zł; ☎ 11am-10pm) With management at the LG Electronics factory in Kobierzyce (south of Wrocław) top-heavy with Koreans, it was inevitable that they'd demand their own place for authentic Korean dishes like *bibimbab* and *bulgogi*. You won't find better Korean anywhere in Poland.

Sankt Petersburg (☎ 071 341 8084; www.sanktpetersburg.pl; ul Igielna 14/15; mains 29-85zł; ☎ noon-late) If you thought Russia's culinary traditions were limited to stroganoff and blinis, then this slightly formal restaurant will be a revelation. Meat, fish and game prop up the high-powered menu, along with the requisite *kaviar* (65zł).

our pick Restauracja Jadka (☎ 071 343 6461; www.jadka.pl; ul Rzeźnicza 24/25; mains 38-81zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Behind what is arguably the best restaurant in town is Magda Gessler, the country's top female chef. Expect impeccable modern versions of Polish classics and silver-service table settings (candles, crystal, linen) in delightful Gothic surroundings. The set lunch available Monday to Saturday is a snip at 35zł.

Restauracja Vincent (☎ 071 341 0520; www.vincent.wroclaw.pl; ul Ruska 39; mains 40-68zł; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, 1-10pm Sun) Situated in a historic building with a café, cellar restaurant and main dining room, quirky but charming Vincent has lovely interiors and unusual offerings. Anything from shashlik to seafood risotto can pop up on the menu, and there's live accordion music from time to time.

The Rynek is lined with restaurants on every side, but not all of them offer the highest quality for the highest złoty. If you're intent on being in the thick of things, choose one of the following – they're tried and tested.

Karczma Lwowska (☎ 071 343 9887; www.lwowska.com.pl; Rynek 4; mains 21-40zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Meaty Polish standards in a space with a rustic rural look.

La Scala (☎ 071 372 5394; Rynek 38; mains 32-68zł; ☎ 10am-midnight) Offers authentic Italian food at relatively high prices; go for pizza (13.50zł to 19zł) or pasta (16zł to 32zł).

Maru Restauracja (☎ 071 343 2678; www.maru.pl; Rynek 16/17; mains 20-50zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Toned down but tasty hybrid Korean and Japanese dishes, including sushi (9zł to 25zł).

DRINKING Cafés

Café Artzat (☎ 071 373 3766; ul Malarska 30; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-2am Fri & Sat) This low-key café just north of the landmark Church of St Elizabeth is one of the best places in town to recharge the batteries over coffee or tea and a good book.

Pożegnanie z Afryką (☎ 071 341 7732; ul Kielbaśnicza 24; ☎ 9.30am-10pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-11pm Fri & Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) An independent chain of fair-trade coffeehouses in Poland, 'Out of Africa' blows its big-business rivals out of the (hot) water with a superb selection of imported beans and lovely 'front parlour' décor.

Café Uni (☎ 071 375 2838; Plac Uniwersytecki 11; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat) As the name suggests, this is student central, a traffic-cone's throw from the main university buildings. Semi-slick décor – red leather

chairs, glass bricks, neon, fake palms – and noncheesy music set it apart.

Czekoladziarnia (☎ 071 797 5716; ul Więzienna 30; ☎ noon-8.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun) This little place sells its own shop-made chocolate in both solid and liquid (5zł to 8zł) forms.

Kawiarnia Pod Słodką Borówką (☎ 071 343 6856; Rynek 45; ☎ 9am-10pm) If you're after a heart-starter, try the *kawa* (coffee) and cakes here. It serves great apple strudel (9.90zł) and there's a curious collection of old hats on the wall.

Pubs & Bars

PracOFFnia (☎ 0603 585 496; ul Więzienna 6; ☎ 3pm-2am) Housed in what was a prison in the Middle Ages, below a well-concealed courtyard, this eclectic place crammed with old cameras and projectors is Wrocław's most interesting boozier.

La Luz (☎ 0661 927 476; www.laluz.pl; ul Kraińskiego 14; ☎ noon-2am Tue-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat-Mon) This American-owned wine bar and pub is housed in a 13th-century guard tower and is a superb retreat from the hubbub of the Rynek.

Kalogródek (☎ 0501 778 346; ul Kuźnica 29b; ☎ 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 10am-2am Fri & Sat) Hidden behind some rough-looking wooden hoardings, the big, stepped terrace here is like a playground for students. Darts and cheap beer (the local brew Piast) make sure it's generally heaving, even when the weather's uncooperative.

Paparazzi (☎ 071 341 0485; www.paparazzi.com.pl; ul Rzeźnicza 32/33; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri, 4pm-2am Sat, 4pm-1am Sun) Paparazzi are sprouting up throughout Poland but this particularly spacious branch is a cut above the rest, with its designer décor, huge rectangular bar and incomparable cocktails.

Spiz (☎ 071 344 7225; www.spiz.pl; Rynek-Ratusz 2; ☎ 10am-midnight Sun & Mon, 10am-2am Tue-Thu, 10am-3am Fri & Sat) Poland's first microbrewery bar-restaurant is buried in a basement under the town hall, with harassed staff scurrying around the copper vats to serve the voracious clientele.

ENTERTAINMENT

Wrocław is an important cultural and night-life centre, and there's a lot of stuff going on all year round. The monthly freebies *Aktivist* (www.aktivist.pl) and *Moveout* (www.moveout.pl) have listings in Polish; you can pick up copy of the bimonthly English-language *The Visitor* (www.the

visitor.pl) from the tourist office. For a more detailed rundown of clubs, bars and the like, seek out the reliably forthright *Wrocław in Your Pocket* (www.inyourpocket.com; 5zł) or consult the excellent Wrocław Life (www.wroclaw-life.com) website.

Theatre

Wrocław is internationally known for its avant-garde Laboratory Theatre (Teatr Laboratorium), created by radical director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-99). Founded in 1990 in the theatre's former home, the **Grotowski Institute** (☎ 071 344 5320; www.grotowski-institute.art.pl; Rynek-Ratusz 27) has a complete archive and several documentaries on the Laboratory Theatre and invites various experimental groups, often from abroad, to give performances in its small theatre. Enter from Przejście Żelaznicze.

Polish Theatre (Teatr Polski; ☎ 071 316 0777; www.teatrpolski.wroclaw.pl in Polish; ul Zapolskiej 3; ☎ box office 11am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Housed in a modern glass and concrete building, the Polish Theatre is the major mainstream venue in town, staging classic Polish and foreign plays.

Wrocław Pantomime Theatre (Wrocławski Teatr Pantomimy; ☎ 071 337 2103; www.pantomima.wroclaw.pl in Polish; Al Dębowa 16) Created by impresario Henryk Tomaszewski, this is Wrocław's principal ambassador for contemporary theatre. Tickets are generally available from the box office at the Polish Theatre (above).

Wrocław Contemporary Theatre (Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny; ☎ 071 358 8940; www.wteatrw.pl in Polish; ul Rzeźnicza 12; ☎ box office noon-7pm Mon-Fri) Near the centre of town, Teatr Współczesny tends more towards contemporary productions from modern Polish and international playwrights.

Opera & Classical Music

Philharmonic Hall (Filharmonia; ☎ 071 342 2001; www.filharmonia.wroclaw.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 19; ☎ box office 11am-6pm Mon-Fri) If you are interested in hearing the Wrocław Philharmonic, Friday and Saturday evenings are your best bets.

Wrocław Opera (Opera Wrocławska; ☎ 071 344 5779; www.opera.wroclaw.pl; ul Świdnicka 35; ☎ box office 10am-6pm Mon, 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) This venerable and recently restored music theatre is the traditional venue for opera and ballet performances.

Jazz

Jazz Club Rura (☎ 071 799 0907; www.jazzklubrura.art.pl; ul Łazienna 4; ☎ 1pm-2am Mon-Wed, 1pm-4am Thu-Sat,

4pm-2am Sun) Finally plugging Wrocław into the Western jazz craze, this bright modern space has live gigs of different flavours most nights.

Clubs

There are two areas to head for if you fancy a night on the town: the Rynek, where cheese predominates; and Pasaż Niepolda, just off ul Ruska west of the Old Town, which offers a bit more variety. Entry charges vary (up to 20zł) depending on the night, the time you arrive, your gender and anything else the promoters can think of.

Bezenność (☎ 071 792 8048; ul Ruska 51; 🕒 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, 6pm-4am Fri & Sat) With its alternative/rock/dance line-up and distressed décor, 'Insomnia' attracts a high-end clientele and is probably the best club in town currently.

Klub Radio Bar (☎ 071 372 5013; www.radio-bar.pl; Rynek 48; 🕒 9pm-3am) Loud, proud and oh-so-central, the Radio Bar is an essential stop for first-timers and anyone aiming to dig the scene.

PRL (☎ 071 342 5526; www.prl.wroc.pl; Rynek-Ratusz 10; 🕒 noon-4am) The dictatorship of the proletariat is alive and well in this tongue-in-cheek venue inspired by communist nostalgia. Disco lights play over a bust of Lenin, propaganda posters line the walls and red-menace memorabilia is scattered through the maze of rooms. Descend to the basement – beneath the portraits of Stalin and Mao – if you'd like to hit the dance floor.

Jazzda (☎ 071 346 0825; www.jazzda.pl; Rynek 60; 🕒 9am-3am Mon-Sat, 10.30am-2am Sun) Looking for a John Travolta kind of evening? This central café-club with a lit-up, multicoloured dance floor and strobe lights will fit the bill.

Novocaina (☎ 071 343 6915; www.novocaina.com; Rynek 16; 🕒 10.30am-2am) Another Rynek café-restaurant that dons its party duds late in the evening, this neo-Gothic wet dream with plasma screens and intimate nooks and crannies attracts a fashion-conscious crowd.

Metropolis (☎ 071 794 5162; www.metropolis.wroc.pl; ul Ruska 51; 🕒 9pm-3am) This humungous place has two dance floors, one on the ground floor with dance and techno, and a piano bar in the cellar. It's something of a meat market.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Wrocław Copernicus Airport (☎ 071 358 1100; www.airport.wroclaw.pl) is in Strachowice, 13km west

of the city centre. There are currently direct connections with Warsaw (up to seven times daily) as well as Dublin (daily), Frankfurt am Main (daily), London Gatwick and London Stansted (each daily), Munich (twice daily) and Rome (four times weekly).

LOT (☎ 0801 703 703; ul Piłsudskiego 36) has an office near the train station.

Bus

The most useful buses are those to Trzebnica (6.50zł, 40 minutes), Sobótka (5.50zł, one hour), Świdnica (5zł, 1½ hours), Lubiąż (9zł, 1½ hours) and Nysa (12zł to 16zł, two hours), none of which is served by direct train. From Wrocław you can also reach Warsaw (46zł to 50zł, five to 6½ hours), Poznań (35zł, 2½ hours), Częstochowa (28zł, three hours) and Białystok (62zł, seven hours), but the train is usually more convenient. Note that some regional buses arriving from the north terminate at Wrocław Nadodrze train station on Cathedral Island instead of at the main bus station.

There are a number of international bus routes (go to window 3) to places including Prague (from 110zł, 4½ hours, daily) and plenty of cities in Western Europe.

Train

Fast trains to Katowice (36zł, 2¼ hours) depart every two hours or so and pass via Opole (22zł, 1½ hours) on their way. Most continue to Kraków (34zł, 4½ hours). There are at least half a dozen fast trains plus three express trains to Warsaw (50zł, five to 6½ hours); some call at Łódź (42zł, 3¾ to 4½ hours) en route. Wrocław also has regular train links with Poznań (34zł, two to 2½ hours, roughly hourly), Wałbrzych (13zł, two hours, every two hours), Jelenia Góra (18.50zł to 31zł, 3½ hours, up to 15 daily), Legnica (11zł, 1½ hours, roughly hourly) and Kłodzko (15.50zł, 1¾ hours, every two hours).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The airport can be reached on bus 406 from the main train station (3zł, 30 minutes, every 20 to 40 minutes). A taxi to the airport will cost just under 40zł.

Bicycle

Both the **tourist office** (☎ 071 344 3111; Rynek 14; per hr/day 10/50zł; 🕒 9am-9pm Apr-Oct, 10am-8pm

Nov-Mar) and **W Sercu Miasta** (☎ 071 342 4675; Przejście Żelaznicze 4, Rynek-Ratusz; per hr/day/24hr/week 6.50/28/32/145zł; 🕒 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) rent bicycles.

Car & Motorcycle

Micar (☎ 071 325 1949; www.micar.pl; ul Kamińskiego 12) has Fiat Seicentos with unlimited kilometres from 80zł and Ford Fiestas from 130zł.

Public Transport

Wrocław has an efficient network of trams and buses covering the city centre and suburbs. Journeys within the centre cost 2.50zł; longer trips 3zł. Night buses (numbered over 200) and fast services cost 5zł. Useful routes include trams 8 and 9, which link the bus and train stations, Cathedral Island and the Botanical Gardens.

Taxi

Should you need a taxi, these are some of the better-known companies:

Mini Radio Taxi (☎ 96 26, 071 322 4800)

Nova Radio Taxi (☎ 96 86)

Super Taxi (☎ 96 63)

AROUND WROCLAW

TRZEBNICA

pop 12,300

A small town 25km north of Wrocław, Trzebnica (tsheb-nee-tsah) is noted for its former Cistercian abbey (*opactwo cysterskie*). It's an impressive site and a pleasant half-day trip from Wrocław.

The Cistercian order was brought to Poland in 1140 and established its first monastery in Jędrzejów, from where it expanded rapidly, counting some 40 abbeys throughout the country within a century. Trzebnica (Trebnitz in German) was the site of the first Cistercian convent in Poland, founded in 1202 by Henryk I Brodaty (Henry I the Bearded), the duke of Lower Silesia, at the request of his wife, Princess Jadwiga (Hedwig). After the hirsute duke's death in 1238, the pious Jadwiga entered the abbey and lived an ascetic life till her death in 1243; just 24 years later, she was canonised as St Hedwig of Andechs (Św Jadwiga Śląska). She is the patron saint of Silesia, and the abbey church where she and Henryk were buried is now a pilgrimage site, particularly on her feast day, 16 October.

Sights

The **abbey church** (☎ 071 312 1118; ul Jana Pawła II 3) is thought to be one of the first brick buildings erected in Poland. Though it was rebuilt in the 18th century, the structure has preserved much of its original Romanesque shape and, importantly, still boasts two **portals** from that time. The one next to the main entrance, partly hidden behind the Baroque tower added in the 1780s, is particularly fine; on the tympanum, which dates from the 1220s, you can still make out King David on his throne playing the harp to Queen Bathsheba and her lady-in-waiting.

The church's showpiece is **St Hedwig's Chapel** (Kaplica Św Jadwigi), to the right of the chancel. It was built soon after the canonisation of the princess, and the graceful, ribbed Gothic vaulting has been preserved unchanged. Its central feature is the saint's Gothic sarcophagus, an elaborate work in black marble and alabaster created in stages between 1680 and 1750. To the left of the tomb is the entrance to the three-nave crypt, the oldest part of the church.

The rest of the chapel is full of gilded and marbled altars; in the nave are 18 scenes from Jadwiga's life. The beautiful black organ is striking against the white walls and pastel colours of the ornamentation.

Getting There & Away

Buses to Wrocław (6.50zł, 40 minutes) run once or twice an hour, depending on the time of day. There are extra services and hourly private minibuses to Wrocław Nadodrze, north of the Old Town on Cathedral Island.

LUBIĄŻ

pop 2300

The small village of Lubiąż (*loo-byonsh*), 52km northwest of Wrocław, boasts a gigantic **Cistercian monastery** (*klasztór cysterskie*), one of Europe's largest monastic complexes. Founded in 1163, the modest original abbey was gradually extended as the order grew. After the Thirty Years' War the monastery entered a period of prosperity, and it was then that the magnificent Baroque complex here was built. Construction took almost a century, finishing in 1739. It has a 223m-wide façade and 365 rooms. A team of distinguished artists, including the painters Michael Willmann and Franz Heigel, were commissioned for the monumental project.

In 1810 the Cistercians were expelled from Lubiąż (Leubus in German) by the king of

Prussia and the abbey shut down. The buildings were subsequently occupied, used and abused by a bizarre range of tenants: at various times the complex was a horse stud, a mental hospital, an arsenal, a Nazi military plant (during WWII), a Soviet army hospital (1945–48) and finally a storehouse for the state book publisher.

In 1991 a Polish-German foundation began to restore the abbey. A few rooms, including the **summer refectory** (*refektarz lelnie*; 1706), have been renovated and are open to the public as a **museum** (☎ 071 389 7166; www.fundacja lubiaz.org.pl in Polish; adult/concession 10/6zł; ☹ 9am–6pm Apr–Sep, 10am–3pm Oct–Apr). The showpiece is the huge **Princes' Hall** (Sala Książęca), with its 15m-high frescoed ceiling and opulent Baroque decoration from the 1730s. The statues of the arts and virtues and the Atlas supporting the enormous balcony are impressive, but we're smitten by the figures in the four corners representing Europe, Africa, Asia and America.

The work on some other rooms is in progress; at the time of writing the phenomenally decorated **library** (*biblioteka*) above the refectory was a forest of support beams as its frescoes were being restored. The mighty **Church of the Blessed Virgin** (Kościół Najświętszej Marii Panny) and adjoining chapel will probably take longer. As yet they have no decoration apart from some surviving portals and fragments of frescoes. The crypt beneath the church, which cannot be visited, holds 98 mummified bodies, including that of Willmann himself.

There is only one daily bus to Lubiąż at 4.20pm from Legnica (5zł, 45 minutes), and two from Wrocław (9zł, 1½ hours) at 8.10am and 4.40pm.

SOBÓTKA & MT ŚLĘZA

pop 6800

Some 34km southwest of Wrocław, the solitary forested cone of Mt Ślęza rises to 718m above the surrounding open plain. Mt Ślęza was one of the holy places of an ancient pagan tribe that set up cult sites in the area from at least the 5th century BC till the 11th century AD, when Christianity put a halt to it. The summit was circled by a stone wall marking off the sanctuary where rituals were held, and the remains of these ramparts survive to this day. Mysterious votive statues were carved crudely out of granite,

and several of them are scattered over the mountain's slopes. The Ślęza Massif is surrounded by the 15,640-hectare **Ślęza Landscape Park** (Ślęzański Park Krajobrazowy).

At the northern foot of the mountain is the small town of Sobótka, the starting point for a hike to the top. The town's irregularly shaped Rynek is dominated by the massive **Church of St James** (Kościół Św Jakuba), originally Romanesque but repeatedly remodelled over the years. Note the Romanesque stone figure of a lion incorporated into the front wall. Nearby, to the northwest on Plac Wolności, is the Baroque'd 13th-century pink and white **Church of St Anne** (Sanktuarium Św Anny). Beside it is a pagan stone statue known as the Mushroom (Grzyb) and another Romanesque lion.

About 200m south of the Rynek is the small **Ślęza Museum** (Muzeum Ślęzańskie; ☎ 071 316 2622; www.sleza.sobotka.net in Polish; ul Św Jakuba 18; adult/concession 2/1zł; ☹ 9am–4pm Wed–Sun, last Tue of month), recognisable by its fine Renaissance doorway from 1568. The museum displays some of the finds of archaeological excavations in the region.

Proceed south along the same street for another 300m and take ul Garncarska to the right (west), heading uphill. After crossing the main road, turn left and take the red route up to **Mt Ślęza**, a hike that should take you about two hours. You'll find two more statues called the Bear (Miś) and the Fish (Ryba) on the way, plus a tall TV mast and a 19th-century church at the top.

Coming down, you can take the steeper but faster (1¼ hours) yellow route directly to the PTTK hostel, about 800m west of your starting point. There's a **viewing tower** (wieża; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☹ 10am–4pm Sat & Sun) about halfway down, and on the road back into town you'll pass another stone statue, called the Monk (Mnich) but resembling an urn to our untrained eyes.

Sleeping & Eating

Dom Turysty Pod Wieżą (☎ 071 316 2857; ul Armii Krajowej 13; without/with bathroom s 40/60zł, d 60/80zł; ☹ ☒) The PTTK hostel, at the foot of Mt Ślęza 1.5km from the Rynek, is very simple but pleasant enough, and also has a restaurant (open 9am to 9pm). The yellow mountain trail starts here.

Zajazd Pod Misiem (☎ 0664 273 015; www.podmisiem.emeteor.pl; ul Mickiewicza 7/9; s/d/ste 60/100/140zł)

The 'Inn Under the Bear', southeast of the Rynek, is crying out for a revamp but it's as central a spot as you'll find.

Restauracja Pod Jeleniem (☎ 071 390 3237; Rynek 8; mains 4–18.50zł; ☹ 9am–7pm) This homely, very welcoming eatery on the northeast side of the Rynek serves traditional Polish fare but keeps bankers' hours. Plan a late lunch.

Getting There & Away

Sobótka is easily accessible by bus from Wrocław (5.50zł, one hour, twice hourly) and Świdnica (5zł, 40 minutes, up to 14 daily). Buses drop you in the town centre just north of the Church of St Anne.

THE SUDETES MOUNTAINS

The Sudetes Mountains are the northernmost part of the Sudetenland, a part of the world familiar to anyone who has studied WWII history. They run for more than 250km along the Czech–Polish border, and the highest part of this old and eroded chain of mountains is the Karkonosze, reaching 1602m at Mt Śnieżka. Though what are called the Sudetes in English, Sudety in Polish and Sudeten in German don't offer much alpine scenery, they are amazingly varied and heavily covered in forests, with spectacular geological formations such as those at the Góry Stołowe (p344) to break the monotony.

To the north, the Sudetes gradually decline into a belt of gently rolling foothills known as the Sudetes Foothills (Przedgórze Sudeckie). This area is more densely populated, and many of the towns and villages in the region still boast some of their centuries-old timber buildings. Combining visits to these historic settlements with hikes into the mountains and the surrounding countryside is the best way to explore the region.

ŚWIDNICA

pop 59,800

One of the wealthiest towns in Silesia in the Middle Ages, Świdnica (shfeed-*nee*-tsah) was founded in the 12th century. In 1290 it became the capital of the Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor, one of myriad Silesian Piast principalities but among the most powerful,

thanks to its two gifted rulers: Bolko I, who founded it, and his grandson Bolko II, who extended it significantly.

The capital itself was a flourishing commercial centre, well known for its beer, which ended up on the tables of Kraków, Prague and Buda. Until the Thirteen Years' War (1454–66) it was one of the largest Polish towns, with 6000 inhabitants. By 1648, however, the population had dropped to 200, and Świdnica has never managed to become a city, remaining way behind its former rival, Wrocław.

Świdnica (Schweidnitz in German) escaped major damage in WWII and has kept some important historic buildings. It's an agreeable place for a stopover and a convenient springboard for the castle at Książ (p332).

Information

Bank Pekao (Rynek 30)

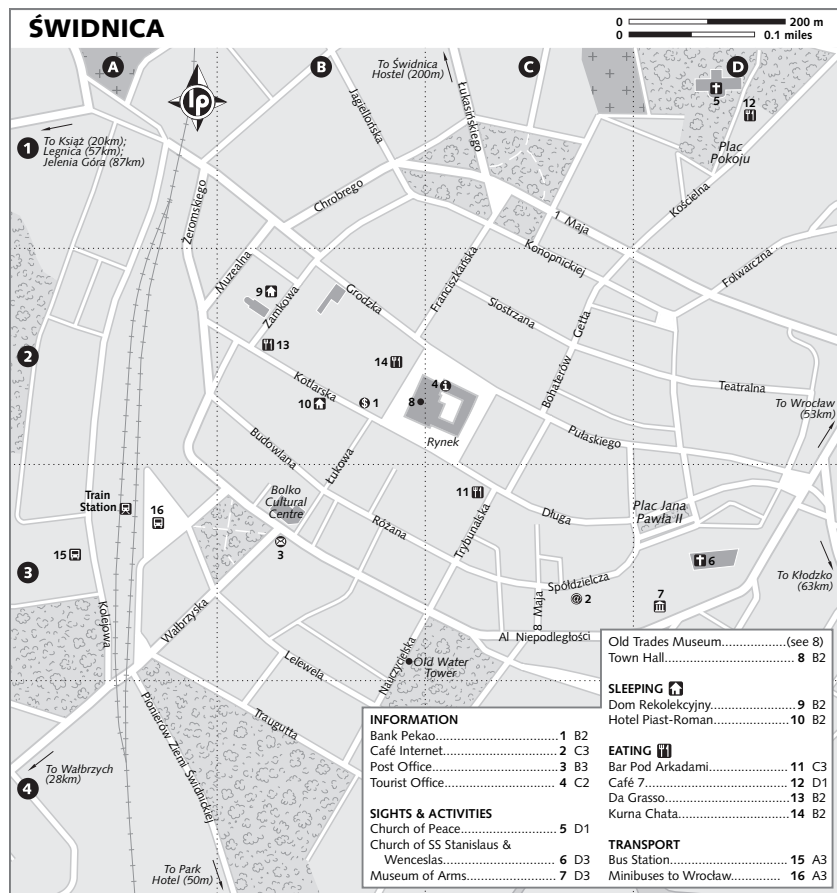
Café Internet (☎ 074 852 0463; ul Spółdzielcza 14; per hr 3zł; ☹ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat, noon–8pm Sun) Internet access.

Post office (Al Niepodległości; ☹ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 8am–1pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 074 852 0290; www.um.swidnica.pl; ul Wewnętrzna 2, Rynek-Ratusz; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–4pm Sat, 9am–2pm 1st Sun of month May–Sep, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–4pm 1st & 2nd Sat of month Oct–Apr)

Sights

The timbered **Church of Peace** (Kościół Pokoju; ☎ 074 852 2814; www.kosciolpokoju.pl in Polish; Plac Pokoju 6; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☹ 9am–1pm & 3–5pm Mon–Sat, 3–5pm Sun Apr–Oct, by reservation Nov–Mar) was erected between 1656 and 1657 in just 10 months. The builders were not trying to set any records; the so-called Peace of Westphalia of 1648 allowed the Protestants of Silesia to build a total of three churches as long as they went up in less than a year, had no belfry and used only clay, sand and wood as building materials. The churches at Świdnica and at Jawor, 18km south of Legnica, still stand, though the one at Głogów burned down in 1758. The Świdnica church is a shingled structure laid out in the form of a cross and contains not a single nail. The Baroque decoration, with paintings covering the walls and coffered ceiling, has been preserved intact. Along the walls, two storeys of galleries and several small balconies were installed, allowing some 3500 seated worshippers and 4000 standees. The church was added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 2001.



The Old Town's **Rynek** has everything, from Baroque to postwar architecture, the cumulative effect of rebuilding after successive fires and the damage caused by Austrian, Prussian and Napoleonic sieges. Most of the façades have been thoroughly revamped over recent years, though beyond the main market square you'll see a fair amount of decay.

The bright yellow **town hall** dates from the 1710s, and looks a bit squat without its tower, which collapsed in 1967. It contains the **Old Trades Museum** (Muzeum Dawnego Kupiectwa; ☎ 074 852 1291; Rynek 37; adult/concession 3.50/2.50zł, free Fri; ☞ 10am-3pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun), with reconstructions of an old tavern – Świdnica was always famous for its beer – pharmacy and shop, and a collection of historic scales and

balances. A bugle call sounds from the town-hall tower at 10am, noon, 2pm and 4pm but, alas, this is not the live *hejnał* of Kraków (see the boxed text, p183) but a recording.

The parish **Church of SS Stanislaus and Wencelas** (Kościół Św Stanisława i Wacława; ☎ 074 852 2729; Plac Jana Pawła II 1), east of the Rynek, is a massive Gothic stone building whose façade is adorned with four elegant 15th-century doorways and an 18m-high window (the stained glass is not original). The tower, completed in 1565, is 103m high, making it Poland's tallest historic church tower after that of the basilica in Częstochowa (106m). The spacious interior has the familiar Gothic structure and ornate Baroque decoration and furnishings. The original church was accidentally burned down in

1532 by the town's *burmistrz* (mayor) Franz Glogisch, who fled Świdnica pursued by angry townsfolk who beat him to death in Nysa.

The **Museum of Arms** (Muzeum Broni; ☎ 074 852 5234, 0606 458 908; Al Niepodległości 21; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☞ 11am-2pm Tue-Sun), practically a fortified compound in itself, displays arms, artillery and weapons from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Sleeping

Dom Rekolekcyjny (☎ 074 853 5260; ul Muzealna 1, enter from ul Zamkowa; s/d/tr 49/79/99zł, apt 140zł; ☎ ☒ ☑) Conveniently positioned just one block west of the Rynek, this facility run by the Pentecostal Church is excellent value and nowhere near as monastic as you might expect. Breakfast not included.

Świdnica Hostel (☎ 074 852 2645; www.ssm.swidnica.pl; ul Kanonierska 3; dm 22zł, s/d 70/100zł; ☎ ☒ ☑) This friendly 90-bed hostel, 700m north of the Rynek, offers above-average HI-type accommodation in dorm rooms with three to five beds, as well as private rooms with bathroom.

Hotel Piast-Roman (☎ 074 852 1393; www.hotel-piast-roman.pl; ul Kotlarska 11; s/d 120/160zł; ☎ ☒ ☑) The award-winning Piast-Roman, just off the Rynek, isn't quite as swish as the ground-floor restaurant might lead you to believe, but it's a good three-star, the 27 rooms are spic and span and you can't top the location.

Park Hotel (☎ 074 853 7098; www.park-hotel.com.pl; ul Pionierów Ziemi Świdnickiej 20; s/d/tr 120/160/200zł, ste 300-350zł; ☎ ☒ ☑) A modern turreted affair on a lovely leafy street within easy walking distance of the Old Town, the 18-room Park is a slightly smarter alternative to its more central rival and offers some big suites with shower or bath tub. The restaurant stays open relatively late.

Eating

Café 7 (☎ 074 640 6364; Plac Pokoju 7; dishes 3-9zł; ☞ 11am-12.30am) In summer this café is hands-down the most attractive place for a drink or light meal in town, occupying a half-timbered building with a lovely walled garden right by the Church of Peace.

Bar Pod Arkadami (☎ 074 853 4902; ul Trybunalska 2; mains 3.50-8zł; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) This tiny snack bar 'Under the Arcade' is the place to get your lips round some proper *barszcz* (beetroot soup) and a *pasztecik* (hot pastry filled with meat, cheese or cabbage with mushrooms).

Kurna Chata (☎ 074 851 3488; Rynek 35; mains 8-20zł; ☞ 10am-midnight) Tucked away within the Rynek's

main pub, this charming sunken restaurant is modelled on a rustic hut, with old crockery, hefty home cooking and a hanging menu written on sackcloth (the English version comes in a rather pedestrian laminated form).

Da Grasso (☎ 074 851 4065; ul Zamkowa 9; pizza 12-25zł; ☞ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Another pizzeria, you might think, but this place is a slice or two above the usual.

Getting There & Away

The train station is a convenient five-minute walk southwest from the Rynek. The PKS bus station is behind it, but you have to go the long way round via the level crossing to reach it.

Direct train services are to Legnica (10zł, 1½ hours, twice daily); change at Jaworzyna Śląska or Kamieniec Żabkowicki (departures every two hours) for Wrocław (10zł, 1½ hours), Jelenia Góra (21zł, three hours) and other regional destinations.

Hourly buses run to Wrocław (5zł, 1½ hours), while eight buses a day depart for Kłodzko (11zł, 1¾ hours) and the same number for Legnica (12zł, 1½ hours). Private minibuses to Wrocław depart from the front of the train station, as do ones headed for Wałbrzych via Książ (4.50zł, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes).

KRZYŻOWA

pop 500

This village 11km south of Świdnica was once the private estate of the Von Moltke family, whose 19th-century patriarch was the brilliant military strategist Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke (1800-91). More importantly, Krzyżowa (Kreisau in German) and the estate were the nerve centre of the so-called Kreisau Circle (Kreisauer Kreis), the anti-Nazi resistance group led by the field marshal's great-grandnephew, Count Helmuth James von Moltke (1907-45), who was executed for his alleged role in the plot against Hitler in 1944 (see boxed text, p332).

Today the estate's 10 renovated buildings house the **Foundation for European Understanding** (☎ 074 850 0300; www.krzyzowa.org.pl; Krzyżowa 7), a nonprofit organisation dedicated to keeping alive the spiritual heritage of the Kreisau Circle and the humanistic teachings of Count von Moltke and his fellow resistance fighters. The centre has a small but interesting exhibition in the central **Krzyżowa Palace** (Pałac w Krzyżowej; adult/concession 4/2.50zł; ☞ 8am-10pm), and

surrounding it are fields, a river, a lake and ancient groves offering many opportunities for walking and hiking. You can also visit the **House on the Hill** (Domek na Wzgórzu), about 500m to the northeast, from where the circle operated during the war (the conspirators used a small train station near the house to avoid being seen by the German villagers); and **Cemetery Hill** (Wzgórze Cmentarne), containing the graves of the von Moltke family.

The centre contains an **information office** (☎ 8am–10pm) to the northwest of the main entrance. There is a couple of cafés and, just south, a fully fledged **restaurant** (mains 24–54zł; ☎ 10am–10pm). Should you want to spend the night, the 24-room **Hotel Spichlerz** (☎ 074 850 0200; s 120–150zł, d 150–180zł; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) next to the main entrance is surprisingly well equipped and even has a sauna and fitness room.

You can reach Krzyżowa from Świdnica via city bus 12 (3.60zł, 20 minutes, five to eight daily), which will drop you near the main entrance, or by train (3zł, 10 minutes, four daily). The train station is 300m west of the centre.

KSIĄŻ

With its 415 rooms, the **castle** at Książ (pronounced kshonzh) is the largest in Silesia. It was built in the late 13th century by the Silesian Piast Duke Bolko I, acquired by the aristocratic von Hoberg (later Hochberg) family in 1509 and continuously enlarged and remodelled until well into the 20th century. It's thus an amalgam of styles from Romanesque onwards; the central portion, with three massive arcades, is the oldest. The eastern part (to the right) is an 18th-century Baroque addition,

while the western segment was built between 1908 and 1923 in a neo-Renaissance style.

During WWII Hitler planned to use the castle as a shelter and a huge bunker was hewn out of the rock directly beneath the courtyard. The Soviets used it as a barracks until 1949, after which it was pretty much abandoned. Part of the complex has now been restored and turned into a **museum** (☎ 074 664 3834; www.ksiąz.walbrzych.pl; ul Piastów Śląskich 1; adult/concession 10/7zł, with 30min tour 11/9zł, with 60min tour 13/10zł; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun Apr–Oct, 10am–3pm Tue–Sun Nov–Mar).

Approaching the castle from the car park, you will pass under a large, decorative, free-standing **gateway** that now contains a restaurant on its upper floor and offers superb views of the castle, majestically perched on a steep hill amid lush woods.

While you follow a prescribed (and rather convoluted) route and only get to see a dozen or so rooms, the showpiece is **Maximilian Hall**, built in the first half of the 18th century. It's the largest room in the castle and only one completely restored to its original lavish form, including the ceiling (1733) painted with mythological scenes. The identical fireplaces on either side of the room are sublime. Along with the main rooms, including 'themed' salons (Baroque, Chinese, white etc) on the 1st floor, there are all kinds of temporary, rotating and hobby exhibits – from model aeroplanes and porcelain to medieval archery *en costume* in the basement – squirreled away in the many smaller chambers, most with separate admission charges. The corridors often hold displays of historical paintings and photos – look for the castle's last owners, Duke Bolko VI and his wife Daisy

von Pless, who apparently featured in Britain's *Country Life* magazine often in the 1920s.

The dozen terraced **gardens** on the slopes to the left as you approach the castle were laid out gradually as the medieval fortifications were dismantled from the 17th century onwards.

A five-minute walk east of the castle is the **Sudetes Stud Farm** (Sudeckie Stadnina Ogierów; ☎ 074 840 5860; ul Jeździecka 3; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 10am–6pm), once the castle stables. It has horses for hire (per hour 35zł) from Sunday to Tuesday and on Thursday.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Przy Osłej Bramie (☎ 074 664 9270; www.mirjan.pl; ul Piastów Śląskich 1; s 145–160zł, d 210–250zł, ste 215–300zł; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) 'Before the Donkey Gate' has 28 rooms contained in four pretty little stone buildings to the right as you pass under the gateway to the castle. Even better are the two suites in the castle watchtower. For dyed-in-the-wool romantics only.

Hotel Książ (☎ 074 664 3890; www.zamekksiąz.pl; ul Piastów Śląskich 1; s/d/tr 170/260/300zł, ste 360–480zł; P ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This hotel occupies several out-buildings in the castle complex to the left as you walk up the main path, providing varied standards and facilities, though sadly little of the historical character seems to have rubbed off on the 46 rooms. There are also two restaurants and a café on the site.

Getting There & Away

The castle is some 7.5km from Wałbrzych; reach it from there on city bus 8 (2.20zł, 15 minutes), which runs every 30 to 50 minutes. Alternatively, private buses ply the Wałbrzych–Świdnica route (4.50zł, 30 minutes) every 20 minutes or so and will let you off on the main road, a 10-minute walk from the castle.

JELENIA GÓRA

pop 86,100

Set in a beautiful valley surrounded by the Western Sudetes, Jelenia Góra (yeh-lane-yah goo-rah) is a deceptively quiet place with a fair bit of history and important architecture. Founded in 1108 by King Bolesław Krzywousty (Boleslaus the Wry-Mouthed) – legend has it that the witty royal had been following a wounded deer and was so taken by the beauty of the place that he named it 'Deer Mountain' – the border stronghold came under the rule of the powerful Duchy of Świdnica-Jawor. Gold mining in the region

gave way to glass production around the 15th century, but weaving gave the town a solid economic base, and its high-quality linen was exported all over Europe.

Unlike many other towns in Silesia, Jelenia Góra (Hirschzunge in German) survived WWII pretty much unscathed, and it makes a great base for trips into the Karkonosze Mountains.

Information

Amigos (☎ 075 753 2601; ul Długa 4; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–2pm Sat) Travel agency.

Bank Pekao (Plac Wyszyńskiego 35; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri)

Bank Zachodni (Plac Niepodległości 4; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri)

Internet C@fe (☎ 0506 996 365; ul Marii Konopnickiej 3; per hr 3zł; ☎ 10am–10pm Mon–Sat) Internet access.

Main post office (ul Pocztowa 9/10; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat)

Sigmar (☎ 075 752 5304; ul Klonowica 3; per hr 2zł; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) Internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 075 767 6925; www.jeleniagora.pl; ul Grodzka 16; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat, 10am–2pm Sun Jul & Aug only) In the 15th-century Grodzka Tower.

Sights & Activities

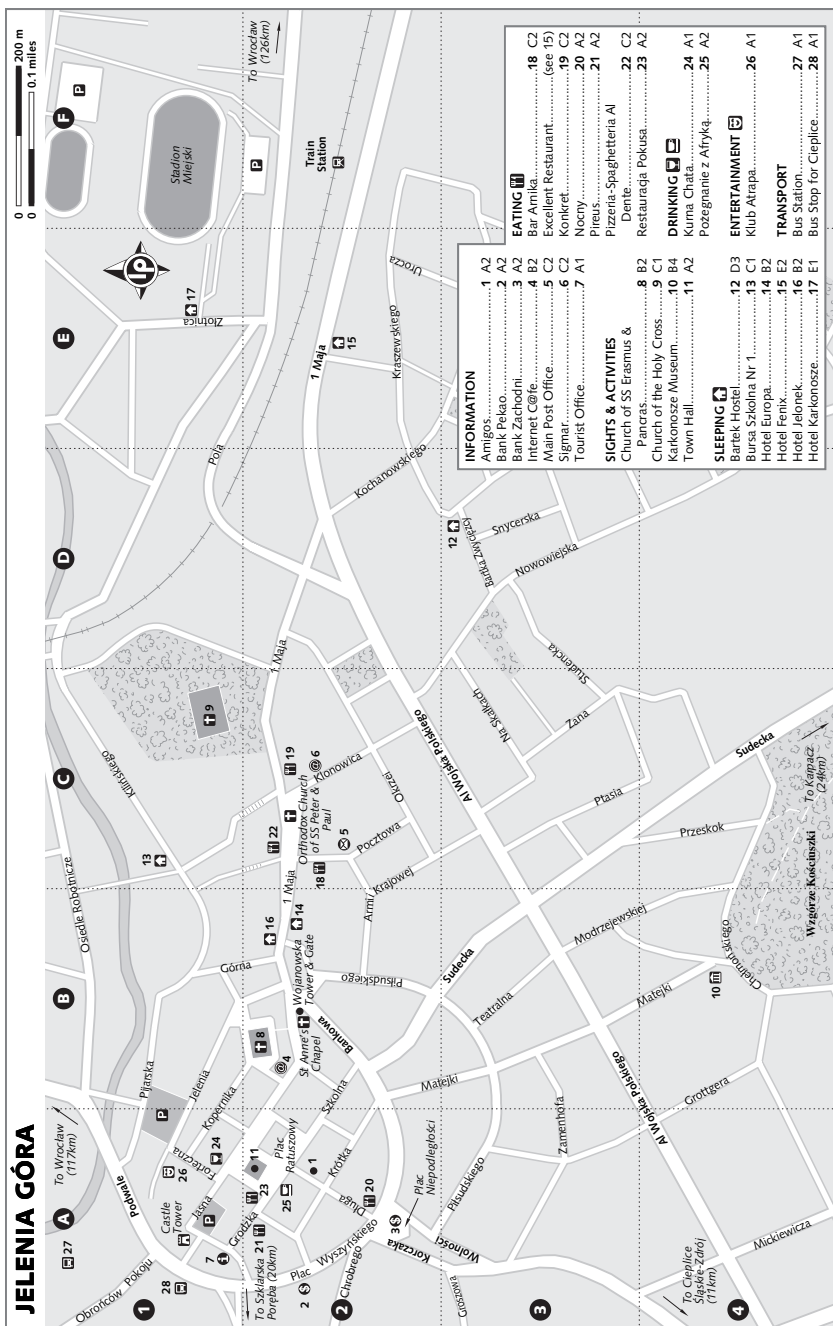
Jelenia Góra's main attraction is the massive **Church of the Holy Cross** (Kościół Św Krzyża), built in 1718 for a Lutheran congregation, though it has served a Catholic one since 1947. The three-storey galleries plus the dark, densely packed ground floor can accommodate 4000 people. The ceiling is embellished with illusionist Baroque paintings of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, while the magnificent organ over the high altar dates from 1729.

The **Karkonosze Muzeum** (Karkonoskie Muzeum Okręgowe; ☎ 075 752 3465; www.muzeumkarkonoskie.pbox.pl in Polish; ul Matejki 28; adult/concession/family 6/3/6zł, free Sun; ☎ 9am–4pm Tue–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun) is renowned for its extensive collection of glass dating from medieval times to the present; the Art Nouveau pieces are wonderful. On the museum grounds is a small skansen (open-air museum of traditional architecture) of traditional mountain huts typical of the Karkonosze Mountains.

The elongated **Rynek** (Town Sq), also called Plac Ratuszowy, is lined with a harmonious group of 17th- and 18th-century houses. Much of their charm is due to their porticoes and ground-floor arcades, which provide a covered passageway all around the square. The

COUNT VON MOLTKE & THE KREISAU CIRCLE

One of the few instances of united German resistance to the Nazi regime, the so-called Kreisau Circle was centred on the Krzyżowa estate of Count Helmuth James von Moltke. An attorney of German–South African parentage, Moltke opposed Hitler from early days, declining the chance in 1935 to become a judge as he would have been obliged to join the National Socialist Party. Even in 1940, when Germany was winning on all fronts, the circle was convinced that Germany would lose the war. Its members, from different political circles, prepared for a future democratic Germany integrated into Europe. Moltke, not necessarily in agreement with all members of the Kreisau Circle, opposed the plot of 20 July 1944 to assassinate Hitler. He argued that if the plot succeeded Hitler would become a martyr, and if it failed resistance leaders, the only ones who could help build a democratic Germany after the collapse of the Third Reich, would be decimated. Sadly the latter was what happened and, in the aftermath of the attempted coup, some 5000 of Hitler's opponents, including Moltke, were executed. 'What shall I say when I am asked: "And what did you do during that time?"' he wrote to his wife in 1941. Countess Freya von Moltke attended the opening of the first phase of the Foundation for European Understanding at Krzyżowa in 1994.



town hall on the square was built in the 1749, after its predecessor collapsed.

The **Church of SS Erasmus and Pancras** (Kościół św. Erazma i Pankracego), northeast of the Rynek, was erected in the 15th century; note the Gothic doorway in the southern entrance portraying Mary and St John at the foot of the Cross. The interior, with its theatrical 22m-high Rococo main altar crafted from brick-red marble, boasts mostly Baroque furnishings, including a richly decorated organ.

Sleeping

Bursa Szkolna Nr 1 (☎ 075 752 6848; www.bursa1.jg.new.pl; ul Kilińskiego 5/7; dm 15-20zł; ☎ Jul & Aug; (P)) This very basic school dormitory rents out its 130 beds in quad rooms during the summer holidays, though some space may be available in term time as well, mostly on weekends.

Bartek Hostel (☎ 075 752 5746; ssm.bartek@wp.pl; ul Bartka Zwycięzcy 10; dm 12.50-14.50zł, d 50zł; (P)) Modest but pleasant and housed in a cabinlike wooden building, the 42-bed hostel southeast of the Old Town has dorm rooms with between four and 10 beds as well as a few doubles.

Hotel Karkonosze (☎ 075 752 6756; www.hotelkarkonosze.com.pl in Polish; ul Złotycha 12; d/tr 100/120zł; (P)) Out towards the train station, this is one of the better sports dorms you'll come across in Poland, despite the tartan carpets. Sadly you don't get to see into the adjacent stadium from the 20-odd rooms.

Hotel Europa (☎ 075 649 5500; www.ptkarkonosze.pl in Polish; ul 1 Maja 16/18; s/d/ste 139/195/274zł; (P)) The large block opposite the Jelonek can't compete in terms of ambience and charm, but the 49 rooms are huge, there's a budget restaurant on site and rates are 20% lower at weekends. Back rooms look on to the car park.

Our pick: Hotel Jelonek (☎ 075 764 6541; www.hotel-jelonek.com.pl; ul 1 Maja 5; s/d 165/215zł, ste 250-450zł; (P) (Q)) Situated in a fine 18th-century burgher's house, this appealing 12-unit hostelry is the nicest in Jelenia Góra. Concentrate on the old prints and antiques in the public areas and turn a blind eye to the Pizza Hut downstairs with its separate entrance. The eight rooms are stylishly modern; the four enormous suites ideal for self-pampering.

Hotel Fenix (☎ 075 641 6600; www.hotelefenix.pl; ul 1 Maja 88; s/d/tr/q 189/249/289/329zł; (P) (X) (Q)) More convenient for the train station than the centre, the town's flashiest hotel offers 36 ultramodern rooms, and a spa and wellness centre with massage and treatments. It

also boasts the excellent Excellent Restaurant (below). Weekend rates drop by 15%.

Eating

Nocny (ul Długa 12; ☎ 24hr) This central shop open round the clock sells all the staples, including booze.

Bar Arnika (☎ 075 767 6124; ul Pocztowa 8; mains 5.50-15zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sat) One of the cheapest central options, Arnika is a tiny cafeteria serving basic Polish dishes.

Konkret (☎ 075 645 7256; ul 1 Maja 44; mains 8-44zł) Probably the most popular (though not necessarily the best) pizzeria in town, 'Concrete' won't slam you with its food but the outside seating and music are both draws.

Pizzeria-Spaghetteria Ai Dente (☎ 0501 682 383; ul 1 Maja 31; mains 9-24zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) Nestled in the foyer of the local cinema, Ai Dente offers competent versions of all the Italian standards, though pizza (9zł to 24zł) and pasta (9zł to 16zł) are its forte. Good selection of vegetarian dishes.

Restauracja Pokusa (☎ 075 752 5347; Plac Ratuszowy 12; mains 15-28zł; ☎ 9am-10pm) With outdoor tables in the arcaded passageway encircling the Rynek, Pokusa is a very agreeable place, with upbeat surrounds and a repertoire mostly based on Polish food.

Pireus (☎ 075 767 6600; Plac Ratuszowy 10; mains 16-38zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) This ever-popular Greek(ish) taverna in the Rynek arcade does everything from *avgolemono* (egg and lemon soup) and gyros to moussaka, and almost hits the target. Service is a bit frazzled.

Excellent Restaurant (☎ 075 641 6600; ul 1 Maja 88; mains 21-55zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) This aptly named restaurant in the Hotel Fenix, decorated in comforting peach and blue tones, blows its own trumpet with theme weeks and good set lunches.

Drinking & Entertainment

Pozegnanie z Afryką (☎ 075 755 0376; Plac Ratuszowy 4; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Another branch of the serious independent coffeehouse, 'Out of Africa' peddles any number of imported beans and, of course, serves coffee. Sip, savour and stock up your grinder.

Kurna Chata (☎ 075 642 5850; Plac Ratuszowy 23/24; ☎ 10am-late) A small, cosy café with a pub feel and folksy décor (think mountain hut and bales of hay), Kurna Chata is a good place on the Rynek for a drink and light meal.

Klub Atrapa (☎ 075 642 4784; www.klubatrapa.com; ul Forteczna 1; ☎ 6pm-4am Mon-Sat) One of the most attractive haunts in the centre, Atrapa is a great club with a dance floor, cheap beer and occasional live music.

Getting There & Away

The train station is about 1.5km east of the Rynek, while the bus station is on the opposite side of town, just northwest of the ring road.

Trains service Szklarska Poręba (12zł, one hour, up to 12 daily) and Wrocław (18.50zł to 31zł, 3½ hours, up to 15 daily); there are several daily to Kraków (46zł, 7½ hours) and Warsaw (106zł, 10¼ hours).

Buses to Karpacz (5zł to 6.40zł, one hour) and Szklarska Poręba (5zł, 45 minutes) run every hour or so. There's also regular bus service to Kamienna Góra (7zł, one hour), Legnica (13zł, 2½ hours) and Wrocław (20zł, 3½ hours). In summer there are buses to Prague and Berlin; contact the travel agency **Amigos** (☎ 075 753 2601; ul Długa 4; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-2pm Sat) for information about Eurolines.

CIEPLICE ŚLĄSKIE-ZDRÓJ

pop 8000

As its suffix 'Śląskie-Zdrój' suggests in Polish, Cieplice (cheh-*plee*-tseh), 11km south of the centre of Jelenia Góra, is a 'Silesian spa' – the oldest in the region. The local sulphur hot springs have probably been used for a millennium, and the first spa house was established as early as the late 13th century. The curative properties of the springs, which come out of the ground at a scalding 90°C, were only recognised in the late 18th century, paving the way for the building of the resort and spa town.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 075 755 8844; www.karkonosze.it.pl; Plac Piastowski 36; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) in the centre can supply you with a map and brochures, including one with four area walks lasting between one and two hours.

Sights

The town's core is made up of a large **Spa Park** (Park Zdrojowy), with an embarrassment of lovely *fin-de-siècle* pavilions and buildings, including the domed **Spa Theatre** (Teatr Zdrojowy) and the wooden open-air **Concert Shell** (Muszla Koncertowa). At the western end of pedestrian Plac Piastowski is the 18th-century **Church of St John the Baptist** (Kościół Św Jana Chrzcziciela), which contains an altarpiece painted by Michael Willmann. Should

you wish to sample the local waters, the **Pump Room** (Pijalnia; ul Ściegiennego) between the church and the tourist office serves water from four of the town's eight springs.

South of the spa park, in the timbered **Norwegian Pavilion** (Pawilon Norweski), is the **Natural History Museum** (Muzeum Przyrodnicze; ☎ 075 755 1506; www.muzeum-cieplice.com; ul Wolności 268; adult/concession 3.50/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-Apr). Its display of birds and butterflies from all over the world stems from the collection of the prominent Schaffgotsch family, local nobles who established the museum in 1876.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Caspar (☎ 075 645 5001; www.caspar.urlop.info.pl; Plac Piastowski 28; s 100zł, d 130-170zł, tr 190-220zł; ☎) What was once a rather tired budget place has metamorphosed into one of the most attractive boutique hotels in Silesia. Boasting its own spa and wellness centre, the Caspar has 29 beautifully designed rooms with hardwood floors and Oriental carpets; vaulted ceilings give the lounge a cathedral feel.

Hotel Pod Różami (☎ 075 755 1453; www.podrozami.pl; Plac Piastowski 26; s/d 120/170zł, ste 200-250zł; ☎) If you want to stay in Cieplice and make the most of the spa facilities, 'Under the Roses' is a sophisticated, 22-room option with sizable doubles. We love the café filled with old Victrolas and other antiques. It's set directly opposite the former Schaffgotsch Palace, part of which now serves as a school.

Café Sonata (☎ 075 755 7212; Plac Piastowski 13; dishes 7.50-15.50zł; ☎ 11am-10pm) Arguably the best of Cieplice's limited eating options, Sonata is housed in a traditional detached house at the eastern end of the pedestrian mall, with suitably refined interiors and homemade cakes.

Getting There & Away

To get to Cieplice from Jelenia Góra, take any of the frequent urban buses (2.25zł, 20 minutes) from the stop near the bus station, including bus 4, 6, 9 or 14.

KARKONOSZE NATIONAL PARK

Karkonosze National Park (Karkonoski Park Narodowy; ☎ 075 755 3348; www.kpnmab.pl; adult/concession 4/2zł) is a 5563-hectare belt that runs along the Polish-Czech border for some 25km. The two main settlements here are the resort towns of Szklarska Poręba and Karpacz.

The range is divided by the Karkonosze Pass (Przełęcz Karkonoska; 1198m). The highest summit of the eastern section is Mt Śnieżka (1602m), while the western portion is topped by Mt Wielki Szyszak (1509m). The park is predominantly spruce forest up to an altitude of about 1250m.

The characteristic features of the Karkonosze landscape are *kotły* (cirques), huge hollows carved by glaciers during the ice age and bordered with steep cliffs. There are six cirques on the Polish side of the range, the most spectacular being Kocioł Małego Stawu and Kocioł Wielkiego Stawu near Mt Śnieżka, and Śnieżne Kotły at the foot of Mt Wielki Szyszak.

The Karkonosze range is known for its harsh climate, with heavy rainfall (snow in winter) and highly variable weather, including strong winds and mists at any time of year. Statistically, the best chances of good weather are in January, February, May and September.

The national park is the most popular **hiking** territory in the Sudetes and boasts 33 trails covering 100km. The two main gateways are Szklarska Poręba and Karpacz, from where most tourists ascend Mt Szrenica and Mt Śnieżka respectively. For longer walks, the red trail runs right along the ridge between the two peaks, with excellent views on both sides. The trail also passes along the upper edges of the *kotły*. You can walk the whole stretch in six to seven hours. If you start early enough, it's possible to do the Karpacz-Szklarska Poręba (or vice versa) trip within a day, preferably by using the chairlift to Mt Szrenica or Mt Kopa to speed up the initial ascent.

You can break the walk by taking any of the trails that branch off from the main route, or by stopping at one of the half-dozen mountain hostels. The **Odrodzenie mountain hostel** (☎ 075 752 2546; www.karkomega.pl/schronisko_odrozenie in Polish; dm 25zł, d/q 120/180zł), with 112 beds, is roughly halfway between Mt Szrenica and Mt Śnieżka, while the **Samotnia hostel** (☎ 075 761 9376; www.samotnia.com.pl; dm 22-29zł, s/d/tr/q 37/70/105/128zł) at Kocioł Małego Stawu has the best views in the park. Book in advance.

Whatever you're into, take warm, water-proof clothes to deal with the unpredictable weather and get a detailed map of the area. The best one is the 1:25,000 *Karkonosze i Góry Izerskie* (6zł), which also includes the Iżera Mountains of the Western Sudetes to the northeast of Szklarska Poręba.

SZKLARSKA PORĘBA

pop 7100

At the foot of Mt Szrenica (1362m) at the western end of Karkonosze National Park, Szklarska Poręba (*shkhlahr*-skah po-rem-bah) is, with Karpacz on the eastern side, one of a pair of major health resorts and ski centres in the Sudetes. The main street, ul Jedności Narodowej, skirts Kamienna River on its way into the hills; the bus station is at the south end and train station at the north end. Szklarska Poręba (Schreiberhau in German), 21km southeast of Jelenia Góra, is usually a lively little place, full of walkers, skiers and souvenir *cudgels* (mini tomahawks), and makes a good base for the region's many outdoor activities.

Information

Bank Zachodni (ul Jedności Narodowej 16; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Biuro Turystyki WNW (☎ 075 717 2100; www.szklarska.com.pl in Polish; ul Wzgórze Paderewskiego 4) Travel agency for accommodation, hiking and cycling.

Post office (ul Jedności Narodowej 8; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

Sudety IT (☎ 075 717 2939; www.sudetyit.com.pl in Polish; ul Turystyczna 26; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) Travel agency specialising in snow sports.

Tourist office (☎ 075 754 7740; www.szklarskaporeba.pl; ul Pstrowskiego 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar)

Sights & Activities

The **Mt Szrenica chairlift** (☎ 075 717 3035; www.sudetylift.com.pl; ul Turystyczna 25a; one way/return 24/27zł; ☎ 9am-4.30pm May-Oct) rises 603m in two stages and deposits you at the top in about 25 minutes; it's used by skiers and snowboarders to reach five trails and two slopes in winter and by hikers the rest of the year. The lower station is 1km south of the centre, uphill along ul Turystyczna. Different prices and times apply during the ski season.

There are some attractions in easy walking distance of town. The road to Jelenia Góra winds east in a beautiful valley along Kamienna River. Some 3km down the road (or along the green trail on the right bank of the river) is the 13m-high **Szklarka Waterfall** (Wodospad Szklarki). From here the blue trail heads to the mountains and you can follow it to Mt Szrenica in two to three hours.

The road that heads west 4km to the Czech border at Jakuszyce passes rocky cliffs called **Raven's Rocks** (Krucze Skały). About 500m further on, a red trail branches to the left. It's a 1.5km walk along this trail to **Kamieńczyk Waterfall** (Wodospad Kamieńczyka), the highest (843m) in the Polish part of the Sudetes. Continue for about 1½ hours along the same trail to get to Mt Szrenica. It is possible to hike across the border and join the yellow trail heading south to Vosecká in the Czech Republic, but make sure to carry your passport or EU national identity card with you.

The national park counts 19 mountain-bike trails totalling some 450km. You can rent bikes from **SG-Sport** (☎ 075 717 2074; ul Wzgórze Paderewskiego 5; ☎ 9am-8pm) for 5/25zł per hour/day. It also has scooters for 25/150zł and rents skis and snowboards in winter.

The **Bata farmhouse** (☎ 075 717 3234; www.agro.turystyka.ig.pl/bata; ul Wolności 19) has horses for riding (25zł to 30zł per hour) and gives lesson for 50zł per hour.

Sleeping & Eating

Schronisko Na Hali Szrenickiej (☎ 075 717 2421; dm 18-31zł, d from 90zł; ☒ ☑) Just west of the summit of Mt Szrenica itself, this ageing 110-bed wooden hostel is often full of school groups hiding from the weather. The basic two- to 12-bed dorms are perfectly serviceable, and there are a couple of en suite rooms if you prefer privacy. There's a sauna (50zł) for the weary.

Fantazja (☎ 075 717 3935; www.fantazja.com.pl; ul Jedności Narodowej 14; s 80-120zł, d 140-200zł, tr 180-270zł; ☒ ☑) This very central guesthouse has eight comfortable rooms, a solarium with massage and a popular restaurant (mains 11zł to 17zł, open noon to 10pm) serving international dishes.

OŚSiR Mauritius (☎ 075 717 2083; ul Dworcowa 6; s/d 83/150zł; ☒ ☑) At the northern end of town and 100m from the train station, this exotically named 44-room place is a very basic holiday home run by the post office. Rooms with balconies, a gym and a café-bar add to the attraction. Rates are 10% cheaper after the second night.

Hotel Las (☎ 075 717 5252; www.hotel-las.pl; ul Turystyczna 8; s/d 160/220zł, ste 300-600zł; ☒ ☑ ☎) Occupying its own forest clearing about 4km northeast of the centre, the somewhat garish 144-room Las offers an astonishing range of sports and fitness facilities, including a pool (adult/concession 15/10zł, open 8am to 10pm), which nonresidents can use.

Camping Pod Klonem (☎ 075 717 3525; ul Armii Krajowej 2; per person/small tent/large tent/caravan 9/9/12/17zł; ☒) One of several camping grounds in the area, this is a fairly sparse facility but it's just opposite the train station and a mere 500m from the centre of town.

Diavolo Pizza Bar (☎ 075 717 2507; mains 9-16zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) It might not serve the best pizza in the world, but this place does Polish dishes too, and it's just across the bridge from the bus station.

Getting There & Away

Some four daily trains go to Jelenia Góra (12zł, one hour) and another three to Wrocław (33zł, 4½ hours). Buses to Jelenia Góra depart at least hourly (5zł, 45 minutes) and there are five daily buses to Wrocław (27zł, three hours).

For the Czech Republic, take the bus to Jakuszyce (4zł, 15 minutes) and cross the border to Harrachov, the first Czech village, from where there are onward buses.

KARPACZ

pop 5050

Karpacz (*kar-pach*), 22km south of Jelenia Góra, on the slopes of Mt Śnieżka, is one of the most popular mountain resorts in Poland, as much for skiing in winter as for hiking the rest of the year. Indeed, its reliable snow cover makes Mt Śnieżka one of the country's top winter-sports centres. Karpacz (Krummhübel in German) is a fun place to visit and has some very fine wooden buildings.

Orientation

Karpacz is essentially a village spread over 3km along winding ul Konstytucji 3 Maja without any obvious centre. The eastern part, known as Karpacz Dolny (Lower Karpacz), has most of the places to stay and eat. The western part, Karpacz Górny (Upper Karpacz), is largely a collection of holiday homes. In the middle of the two districts is the main bus station and the landmark Hotel Biały Jar. About 1km uphill from here is the lower station of the chairlift to Mt Kopa (1377m).

Information

Bank Zachodni (ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 43; ☎ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri)

Biuro Turystyki Karpacz (☎ 075 761 9547; www.btkarpacz.com.pl; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 52; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 9am-2pm Sun) Travel agency.

Biuro Turystyki Sudety (☎ 075 761 6392; www.btsudety.com.pl; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 31; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Travel agency.

Tourist office (☎ 075 761 8605; www.karpacz.pl; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 25a; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

Sights & Activities

Karpacz has a curious architectural gem – the **Wang Chapel** (Kościółek Wang; ☎ 075 752 8290; www.wang.com.pl; ul Na Śnieżkę 8; adult/concession 5/4zł; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-6pm Sun mid-Apr–Oct, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-5pm Sun Nov–mid-Apr), the only Nordic Romanesque building in Poland. This remarkable wooden structure in Upper Karpacz was one of about 400 such chapels built at the turn of the 12th century on the bank of Lake Vang in southern Norway; only 28 of these 'stave churches' survive there today. By the 19th century it became too small for the local congregation, and was put up for sale to make way for a larger church. King Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia bought it in 1841, had it dismantled piece by piece and then had it transported to Karpacz via Berlin. Not only is it the oldest church in the Sudetes, it's also the highest situated (886m).

The church is made of hard Norwegian pine and has been constructed without a single nail. It's surrounded by a cloister that helps to protect it from mountain wind. Part of the woodcarving is original and in excellent shape, particularly the doorways and the capitals of the pillars. The freestanding stone belfry was built when the church was reconstructed here.

Bordered to the south by Karkonosze National Park, Karpacz is an ideal starting point for **hiking**. Most tourists aim for Mt Śnieżka, and there are half a dozen different trails leading there. The most popular routes originate from the landmark **Hotel Biały Jar** (ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 79) and will take you to the top in three to four hours. When planning a trip to Mt Śnieżka, try to include in your route two picturesque postglacial lakes, Wielki Staw and Mały Staw, both bordered by rocky cliffs. A couple of trails pass near the lakes.

If you prefer not to walk up Mt Kopa, a **chairlift** (Miejska Kolej Linowa; ☎ 075 761 9284; ul Turystyczna 4; one way/return 20/23zł; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm), which caters for skiers and snowboarders in winter, will take you up 528m in 17 minutes. From Mt Kopa, you can get to the top of Mt Śnieżka in less than an hour via the black trail.

On Kolorowa Hill in the centre of Karpacz, the **summer sleigh track** (letni saneczkowy; ☎ 075 761 9098; www.kolorowa.pl; ul Parkowa 10; 1/2/5/10 rides 5/8/17/30zł; ☎ 9am-late) is more than 1km long and allows for speeds of up to 30km/h.

Sleeping

The tourist office has a full list of accommodation. Rooms in private houses and holiday homes can also be arranged through local travel agencies and cost around 25zł to 40zł per person without bathroom or 40zł to 60zł with en suite.

Schronisko PTTK Strzecha Akademicka (☎ 075 753 5275; www.strzecha-akademicka.com.pl in Polish; dm 25zł, s/d/tr 35/60/85zł; ☒) Karpacz' own rugged mountaintop hostel sits snugly in a shallow valley atop Mt Złotówka (1258m), next to Mt Kopa, and is reached by a separate chairlift. The accommodation's strictly budget stuff, but you should see it when it snows.

Hotel Karolinka (☎ 075 761 9866; www.karolinka.karpacz.pl; ul Linowa 3b; r per person 40-60zł; ☒) The sweeping views from the front rooms make some amends for this hilltop eyesore of a hotel, and facilities include a sauna and its own ski lift.

Hotel Kolorowa (☎ 075 761 9503; www.hotel-kolorowa.pl; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 58; s/d 90/160zł, ste 150-200zł; ☒ ☑) This 26-room hotel-guesthouse opposite the summer sleigh track in Lower Karpacz offers good standards, the all-important sweet on pillows and some rooms with restful hill-side views. Restaurant and bar on site.

Hotel Rezydencja (☎ 075 761 8020; www.hotel.rezydencja.pl; ul Parkowa 6; s 150-210zł, d 180-240zł; ☒ ☑) The 14 tastefully decorated rooms of this stunner of a hotel, housed in an 18th-century hilltop villa overlooking the centre of Lower Karpacz, are among the most desirable in town. There's a spa, restaurant and café-bar on site.

Hotel Vivaldi (☎ 075 761 9933; www.vivaldi.pl; ul Olimpijska 4; s 180-240zł, d 220-300zł, ste 340-420zł; ☒ ☎ ☑) A pale-yellow building in the midst of the trees, the 27-room Vivaldi is a classy proposition on the winding road up to the chairlift and national-park entrance. Smart modern rooms add a bit of russet to the yellow theme, while model planes dogfight on the bar ceiling. The well-equipped spa has saunas and a Jacuzzi.

Camping Pod Lipami (☎ 0504 231 039; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 8; per person/small tent/large tent/caravan 7/5/6/15zł; ☒ ☎) This camping ground close to the bus station has its own outdoor pool.

Eating

Central Bar 49 (☎ 075 761 8592; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 49; mains 13-32zł) This atmospheric little cross between a bar and a restaurant serves up simple but better-than-average Polish dishes such as beetroot soup with croquette and grilled *kiełbasa* (Polish sausage).

Pizzeria Verde (☎ 075 761 8194; ul Konstytucji 3 Maja 48; mains 12.50-21.50zł; ☎ 1-9pm Tue-Sun) Just opposite the Central Bar 49, the Verde (did they mean Verdi?) is a cut above the usual pizzeria, with some decent pasta and meat dishes.

Getting There & Away

Buses run regularly to Jelenia Góra (5zł to 6.40zł, one hour, hourly). They go along Karpacz's main road, and you can pick them up at at least half a dozen points, though fewer go all the way to the Upper Karpacz stop. In July and August there are daily buses to Szklarska Poręba (6.40zł, 50 minutes) at 9.15am and 6.15pm.

KŁODZKO

pop 28,300

One of the oldest settlements in Silesia, Kłodzko (*kwots-koh*) started out as a major trade centre thanks to its location on the Nysa Kłodzka River, a tributary of the Odra. Like most settlements in the region, it changed hands every century or so, with Bohemia, Austria and Prussia all having a crack, and only after WWII did the town revert to Poland.

Due to its strategic position, Kłodzko (Glatz in German) has a long tradition of fortification. The early castles were replaced by a monstrous brick fortress, begun by the Austrians in 1662 and only completed two centuries later by the Prussians. Today it's the dominant, somewhat apocalyptic, landmark of the town and the best reason to pay a visit to Kłodzko, though the Old Town sits on a hillside and its steep winding streets have a special charm all their own.

Information

Bank Pekao (Plac Bolesława Chrobrego 20; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Bank Zachodni (ul Kościuszki 7; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Internet KKO.pl (☎ 074 647 6045; 1st fl, ul Okrzei 17; per hr 3-4zł; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun) Internet access, south of the Old Town.

Main post office (Plac Jagiełły 2; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat)

Orbis Travel (☎ 074 867 2775; Plac Grotgiera 1;

☎ 8am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat) Travel agency that shares an office with Eurolines.

PTTK office (☎ 074 867 3740; ul Wita Stwosza 1;

☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) Travel agency.

Tourist office (☎ 074 867 7007; www.ziemiaklodzka.pl; Plac Bolesława Chrobrego 1; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) In the town hall.

Sights & Activities

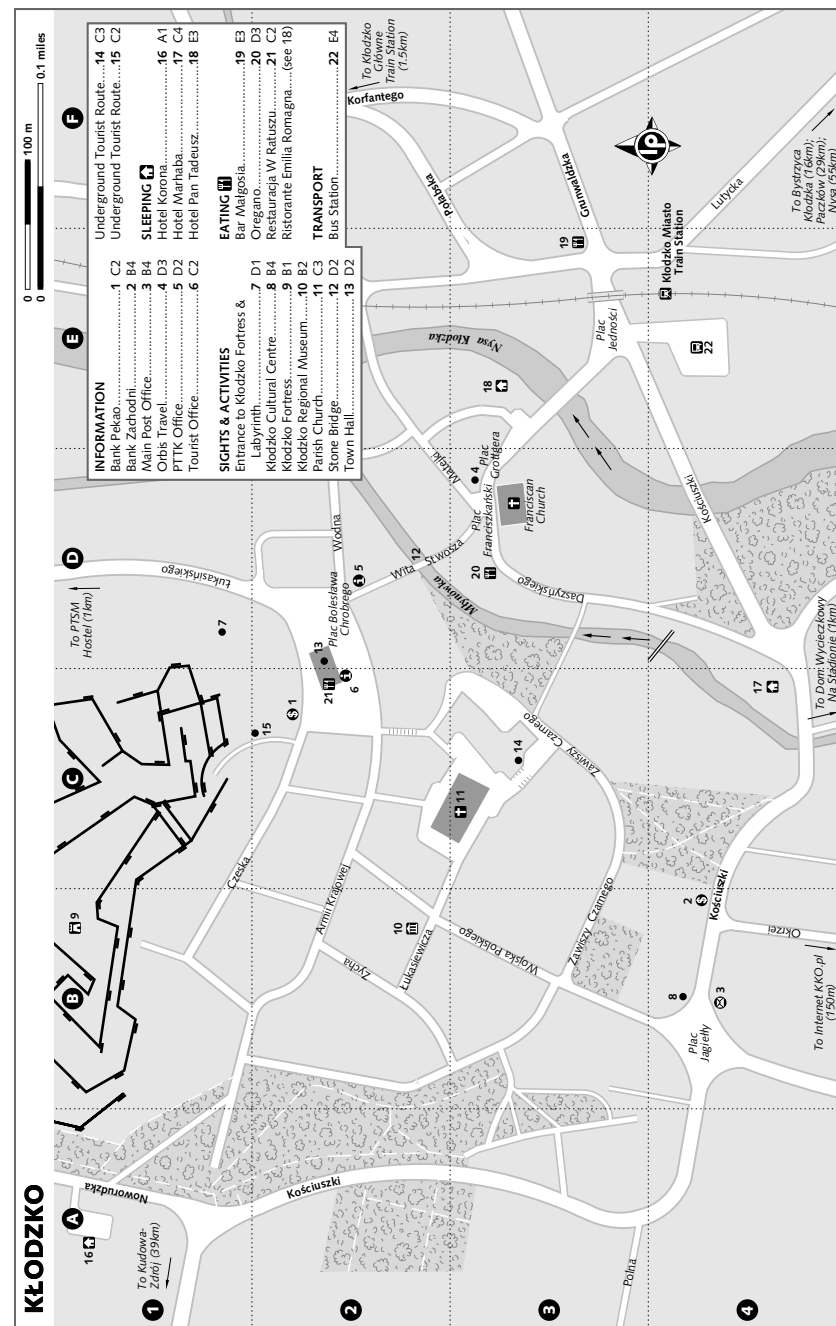
Mighty **Kłodzko Fortress** (Twierdza Kłodzka; ☎ 074 867 3468; ul Grodzisko 1; adult/concession 7/5zł; with labyrinth 13/9zł; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Apr–Oct, 9am-4pm Nov–mid-Apr), begun under Austrian rule in the mid-17th century, was extended, modernised and modified over the next 200 years. Today it covers 17 hectares, making it the largest and best-preserved fortress of its kind in Poland. The walls in the lower parts measure up to 11m thick, and even at the top they are never narrower than 4m.

On entering, you can wander around various pathways and chambers and go to the top of the fortress for a bird's-eye view of town. There are several exhibitions in the grounds, including a **lapidarium** containing old stone sculptures (mostly tombstones) collected from historic buildings around the region.

The real attraction here, though, is the extensive network of defensive tunnels. Guided 40-minute tours of this so-called **labyrinth** (labyrinth; adult/concession 7/5zł; with fortress 13/9zł; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Apr–Oct, 9am-4pm Nov–mid-Apr) begin on the hour, taking you on a 1km circuit including some passageways that are so low you have to bend over. The average temperature is about 8°C and the humidity very high.

Altogether 40km of tunnels were drilled around the fortress and served two purposes, those under the fortifications were principally for communication, shelter and storage, while the others, running up to 500m away from the fortress, were designed to attack and destroy enemy artillery. They were divided into sectors and stuffed with gunpowder; when the enemy happened to move their guns into a particular sector, the relevant chamber was blown up. This bizarre minefield was initiated in 1743 by a Dutch engineer, and by 1807 an immense labyrinth of tunnels had been built. The system was never actually used – at least not here.

Down the steps from the fortress is one of the entrances to the **Underground Tourist Route** (Podziemna Trasa Turystyczna; ☎ 074 867 3048; ul Zawiszy Czarnego 3; adult/concession 7/5zł; ☎ 10am-6pm



mid-Apr–Oct, 9am–4pm Nov–mid-Apr), another interesting set of tunnels. The 600m route, scattered with dungeon-type implements, uses some of the medieval storage cellars that were hollowed out under most of the Old Town. You can walk the whole length in 10 minutes, entering from either direction; the other end is in the Old Town.

The **parish church** (*kościół parafialny*), dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption and just by the lower tunnel entrance, is the most imposing religious building in town. It took almost 150 years before the massive Gothic structure was eventually completed in 1490, and the overall shape hasn't changed much since. Inside, the altars, pulpit, pews, organ and dozen carved confessionals all blaze with florid Baroque ornamentation, and even the Gothic vaulting, usually left plain, has been sumptuously decorated with plasterwork. Organ recitals are held in the church – enquire at the tourist office or the **Kłodzko Cultural Centre** (☎ 074 867 33 64; www.kok.net.pl; Plac Jagiello 1; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 2–6pm Sat & Sun).

A short walk uphill is the **Rynek**, officially called Plac Bolesława Chrobrego. Several pastel-coloured houses on its southern side have preserved their original Renaissance and Baroque décor. The **town hall** was built in 1890 after its predecessor was destroyed by fire; only the 17th-century Renaissance tower survived.

To the southwest the **Kłodzko Regional Museum** (Muzeum Ziemi Kłodzkiej; ☎ 074 867 3570; ul Łukasiewicz 4; adult/concession 5/3zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am–4pm Wed–Fri, 11am–5pm Sat & Sun) has a display relating to the history of the town and the region and a collection of contemporary glass – by local artists.

Southeast of the Rynek is a Gothic **stone bridge** (1390) spanning the narrow Młynówka River. With half a dozen Baroque statues flanking the sides, it is Kłodzko's answer to Charles Bridge in Prague.

The helpful and well-informed tourist office has information on **activities** as wide-ranging rock climbing, hiking, cycling, horse riding, skiing and taking to the waters. Ask for one of its topical brochures or *The Land of Active Tourism* illustrated map.

Sleeping

PTSM Hostel (☎ 074 867 2524; ul Nadrzeczna 5; dm 18.50–23zł) Just 1km north of the Rynek, this simple place has rooms with two to five beds.

Dom Wycieczkowy Na Stadionie (☎ 074 867 2425; www.noclegi.pop.pl; ul Kusocińskiego 1; d/tr/q 60/90/120zł; ☎ ☎) The sports centre by the city stadium, 500m south of the Old Town, offers basic accommodation for 38 guests. Rooms have private showers and there's a cafeteria.

Hotel Marhaba (☎ 074 865 9933; www.marhaba.ng.pl; ul Daszyńskiego 16; s 80–90zł, d 90–110zł, tr/ste 120/170zł; ☎) Bedsit-style rooms with shower or full en suite are the mainstay of this unfussy 20-room establishment, on the south side of town and backing on to the narrow Młynówka. Breakfast is 13zł extra.

Hotel Korona (☎ 074 867 3737; www.hotel-korona.pl; ul Noworudzka 1; s/d/ste 100/120/170zł; ☎) Located in the far northwestern part of town, this modern motel-like establishment accommodating 40 people is an option if you're just transiting through Kłodzko for the night.

Hotel Pan Tadeusz (☎ 074 867 0216; www.pantadeusz.com.pl; Plac Grottgera 7; s/d/tr/ste 150/190/230/265zł) This recently reopened 15-room boutique hotel is the choicest address in town and just about as central as you'll find in Kłodzko.

Eating

Bar Małgosia (☎ 074 867 36 40; ul Połabska 2; mains 5–9.50zł; ☎ 7am–7pm Mon–Fri, 8am–6pm Sat, 9am–5pm Sun) The 'Gretel' is a simple self-service bar that serves hearty Polish dishes until early evening.

Organo (☎ 074 867 1473; ul Daszyńskiego 10; mains 6.90–21.90zł) This branch of a popular Wrocław chain of eateries, opposite the monumental Franciscan church, serves some Polish dishes, but our money is on the pizza and pasta dishes.

Restauracja W Ratuszu (☎ 074 865 8145; Plac Bolesława Chrobrego 3; mains 12–25zł; ☎ 10am–9pm) Kłodzko's most formal restaurant, which you may or may not find open after trudging up the hill, has a good range of regional dishes and a tree-shaded terrace open in the warmer months.

Ristorante Emilia Romagna (☎ 074 867 0216; Plac Grottgera 7; mains 15–28zł; ☎ noon–10pm) This excellent eatery at the Hotel Pan Tadeusz serves authentic Italian dishes amid prewar splendour.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The bus station is the transport hub of the region. Buses are frequent to Kudowa-Zdrój (8zł, 50 minutes) and run every couple of hours to Bystrzyca Kłodzka (5.50zł, 30 minutes) and Wrocław (18.40zł, 1½ hours). There are no direct buses to Kletno; take the bus to

Stronie Śląskie (6.50zł to 7.40zł, 40 to 75 minutes) and change or walk from there.

Czech Republic

From Kłodzko you can travel to the Czech Republic via Kudowa-Zdrój to Náchod (40km west of Kłodzko, on the way to Prague) or via Bobosów to Králíky (45km south of Kłodzko, on the Brno road). Note, there are no longer border posts or border crossing formalities between Poland and the Czech Republic. See boxed text, p514, for more information.

One daily bus goes across the border from Kłodzko to Náchod (11.50zł, 1½ hours), leaving at 1.35pm and travelling via Kudowa-Zdrój. There's also a daily bus to Prague at 1.30pm following the same route. There are a lot more buses to Náchod from Kudowa-Zdrój.

Alternatively, take the daily bus from Kłodzko to Bobosów (9zł, 1½ hours) at just past 9am Monday to Saturday and walk across the border 2km to Králíky.

TRAIN

Kłodzko has two train stations. The centrally located Kłodzko Miasto station, next to the bus station, handles regional services, including trains to Bystrzyca Kłodzka (4.50zł, 20 minutes, five daily), Kudowa-Zdrój (14zł, two hours, four to five daily) and Wrocław (15.50zł, 1¾ hours, eight daily), and many long-distance trains. There are more long-distance trains from the main station, Kłodzko Główne, 2km north.

KUDOWA-ZDRÓJ

pop 10,200

There are three popular spas to the west of Kłodzko and Kudowa-Zdrój (*koo-doe-va zdruj*) is by far the most attractive, favoured by a mild climate and several mineral springs. It's also the usual jumping-off point for the marvellous Góry Stołowe.

Renowned since the 18th century, Kudowa-Zdrój (Bad Kudowa in German), 37km from Kłodzko, is one of the oldest spas in Europe, with well-preserved spa architecture and a pleasant park lining the single main road. It's the ideal pit stop for recharging in between the more strenuous activities the region has to offer.

Information

Arcom Internet Café (☎ 074 866 3838; ul Słoneczna 3; per 20/60min 1/3zł; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) Internet access.

Bank PKO (ul Zdrojowa 23) Southwest of the tourist office. **Góry Stołowe National Park headquarters** (Dyrekcja PNGS; ☎ 074 866 1436; www.pngs.pulsar.net.pl; ul Słoneczna 31; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri) Some 650m southeast of the tourist office.

Tourist office (☎ 074 866 1387; www.kudowa.pl; ul Zdrojowa 44; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat & Sun May–Sep, 9am–4pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat Oct–Apr)

Sights & Activities

You can't miss the macabre **Chapel of Skulls** (Kaplica Czaszek; ☎ 074 866 1754, 0605 540 927; ul Moniuszki 8; adult/concession 4/2zł; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 2–5.30pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–1pm & 2–4pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr) in the Church of St Bartholomew (Kościół Św Bartomieja) grounds at Czermná, 1km north of the centre. The length of its walls and ceiling are covered with human skulls and bones – about 3000 of them, with another 20,000 to 30,000 filling the crypt below. The overall effect is stunning and will certainly offer you a reality check (see boxed text, p345).

Kudowa has an attractive 17-hectare **Spa Park** (Park Zdrojowy) but most treatments on offer involve room and board at one of the sanatoria. If you want (literally) a taste of what Kudowa has to offer, the **pump room** (pijalnia; adult/concession 1/0.50zł; ☎ 7am–6pm Mon–Fri, 6am–6pm Sat, 9am–6pm Sun) in the southeastern corner of the park serves up two of the local mineral waters. The **Galos salt caves** (☎ 074 868 0481; www.galos.pl in Polish; adult/concession 14/10zł; ☎ 9am–9pm) to the west claim to relieve all your ills with their remarkable artificial sea-salt chambers. Their rivals, the **Solana caves** (☎ 074 866 1997; www.solana.pl) near the tourist office, make the same claims. The **Water World Aqua Park** (Aqua Park Wodny Świat; ☎ 074 866 4502; ul Moniuszki 2a; admission 9–12zł; ☎ 9am–9pm Mon–Sat, 10am–9pm Sun), on the southern edge of the park opposite where the buses stop, has more active, watery fun.

Fans of the bizarre should hop on over to the Góry Stołowe park headquarters and check out Poland's only **Frog Museum** (Muzeum Żaby; ☎ 074 866 1436; ul Słoneczna 31; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat & Sun). With a collection of some 3000 everyday objects with an amphibian theme, it's probably the only museum in the world where you can bring your own frog-related items to add to the collection. The national park was the first in Poland to build tunnels under roads to allow frogs to return to their ponds to spawn without injury. The aim of the museum is to raise awareness of frog conservation issues.

Sleeping

Recepcja Domów FWP (☎ 074 866 1261; www.fwp.pl in Polish; ul Słoneczna 7/9; s 28–58zł, d 50–106zł; ☎ 8am–7pm) This organisation will book a room in one of its two budget holiday homes on ul Słoneczna, with a total 145 beds.

Recepcja ZUK (☎ 074 868 0401; www.zuk-sa.pl; ul Moniuszki 2; dm 23–29zł, s 35–93zł, d 76–164zł, tr 90–168zł, ste 200–318zł; ☎ 24h) The Kłodzko Health Resort Company administers seven fine old villa sanatoriums in the centre of town, providing an unparalleled range of rooms. The emphasis is on medical treatment but they will accept casual guests.

Pensjonat Sudety (☎ 074 866 3756; www.kudowa.net.pl in Polish; ul Zdrojowa 32; s 65–75zł, d 90–100zł, tr 120–135zł; ☎) This 24-room pension could do with a touch of external renovation, but inside you'll find perfectly acceptable budget accommodation, all with en suites.

Pensjonat Akacja (☎ 074 866 2712; www.akacja.info.pl; ul Kombatantów 5; s/d/tr 95/140/180zł; ☎) This modernised classic villa happens to be one of our favourite places in Kudowa. Pensjonat Akacja is an excellent family-run guesthouse with 21 rooms in a quiet spot with plenty of space. Some of the rooms on the upper floors have balconies.

Willa Sanssouci (☎ 074 866 1350; www.sanssouci.info.pl; ul Buczka 3; s/d/tr/ste 110/140/180/200zł; ☎) Located in a lovely villa dating back to 1894, the 52-bed Sanssouci has comfortable, ample rooms and good service. If you're feeling lucky, it also has its own wishing well in the garden.

Eating

Cafe Pod Palmami (☎ 074 866 3834; Park Zdrojowy; mains 7–17zł; ☎ 10am–11pm Sun–Thu, 10am–2am Fri & Sat) This brick-lined café in the park is one of the best places in town to grab a light bite, and stays open till late on weekends for a bit of music-bar action.

Pizzeria Tevere (☎ 074 866 1575; ul Zdrojowa 36; mains 7–23zł; ☎ 10am–11pm Mon–Fri, 10am–midnight Sat, 11am–10pm Sun) This large pizzeria next to the Sudety pension has a huge leafy terrace out front, ideal for relaxing after a day of hiking in the Góry Stołowe.

Zagroda w Starym Młynie (☎ 074 866 3601; ul Fredry 10; mains 12–28zł; ☎ 2–10pm Tue–Sun) About 1.5km southwest of the centre en route to Náchod, the 'Old Mill Farmstead' is a bit of a schlep but well worth the trip for its excellent Polish food and attractive surrounds.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses depart from the corner of ul 1 Maja and ul Warszawska in the town centre – hourly departures for Kłodzko (8zł, 50 minutes) and seven a day to Wrocław (25zł, three hours).

For the Góry Stołowe, there are half a dozen buses a day to Karłów (5zł, 25 minutes), which pass by the turn-off to Błędné Skály. Private minibuses run along the same route year-round.

Count on up to 10 buses a day on weekdays to Náchod in the Czech Republic and eight at the weekend. Alternatively, go to the border (3km) and cross it on foot to Náchod, 2km behind the frontier, from where there are onward buses and trains.

TRAIN

The train station, 2.5km south of the town centre, isn't much use unless you want to go to Warsaw (55zł, 10½ hours, two direct trains daily). To Kłodzko (14zł, two hours, four to five daily) and Wrocław (31zł, 3½ hours, four daily), it's better to go by bus.

GÓRY STOŁOWE

The Góry Stołowe (*goo-ri sto-wo-veh*), or 'Table Mountains', are among the most spectacular ranges of all the Sudetes. Lying roughly 10km northeast of Kudowa-Zdrój, they are almost as flat-topped as their name suggests. However, the main plateau is punctuated by remnants of an eroded upper layer, forming secondary 'islands' scattered with fantastic rock formations. This magical landscape was created when the main strata of soft sandstone were eroded, leaving harder rocks behind.

In 1994 the whole area became the Góry Stołowe National Park (Park Narodowy Gór Stołowych). The highlights of the 6300-hectare park are the Szczeliniec Wielki and the Błędné Skály.

Information

The park's headquarters in Kudowa-Zdrój (p343) can provide all the information you need; its *How to Sightsee the Stołowe Mountains?* brochure-map is punctuationally challenged but useful. More detailed are Eko-Graf's 1:50,000-scale *Góry Stołowe* and a new 1:30,000-scale map of the same name from Galileos. Both have all the walking routes and the important rocks are individually marked.

HEAD CASES

The Chapel of Skulls in Czerwna was built in 1776 and looks pretty modest from the outside. Inside, however, it's a different story: thousands of neatly arranged skulls and bones decorate the walls, with more suspended from the ceiling. It's the only chapel of its kind in Poland and one of just three in Europe.

The creator of this unusual 'Sanctuary of Silence' was one Václav Tomášek, a Czech parish priest (Czerwna belonged to the Prague Archdiocese at that time). He and the local grave-digger spent two decades collecting human skeletons, which they then cleaned and conserved. The 'decoration' of the chapel wasn't completed until 1804. Skulls and bones that didn't fit on the walls and the ceiling were deposited in a 4m-deep crypt.

Since the region was the borderland of the Polish, Czech and German cultures, and Catholic, Hussite and Protestant traditions, many of the bones belonged to victims of nationalist and religious conflicts. The skeletons came mostly from numerous mass graves, the result of two Silesian wars (1740–42 and 1744–45) and the Seven Years' War (1756–63). The cholera epidemic that plagued the region also contributed to such an impressive quantity of raw material.

Several anatomically interesting skulls are displayed on the main altar, including those of a Tatar warrior, a giant and a victim of syphilis. Alongside them are the skulls of the masterminds of the enterprise – the priest and the grave-digger – at one with their work for all eternity.

Sights

SZCZELINIEC WIELKI

At 919m, **Szczeliniec Wielki** (adult/concession 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am–6pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct) is the highest outcrop of the Góry Stołowe range and has been a magnet for visitors for centuries. In 1790 German man of letters and walking enthusiast Goethe was one of the first trail tourists to pass through here. A decade later the man who would become America's sixth president, John Quincy Adams, remarked while touring Silesia that: 'This range of rocks...begins and ends so abruptly that it looks as if it were a crown upon the head of the mountain.'

Indeed, from a distance, the plateau looks like a high ridge adorned with pinnacles, rising abruptly from the surrounding fields. The most popular way to the top is from Karłów, a small village about 1km south of the plateau, from where a short road leads north to the foothills. You then ascend 682 stone steps (built in 1790) to a PTTK snack bar on the top – it takes about 40 minutes to get there.

The trail around the summit skirts the cliff edge (giving excellent views) before turning inland. The 'Long Steps' take you down to the 'Devils' Kitchen', from where, after passing through the chasm of 'Hell' and 'Purgatory', you can climb the narrow rocky steps to 'Heaven', another viewpoint.

The trail continues to two more viewpoints on the opposite side of the plateau and winds back to the starting point, passing a string of rocks carved into a wild array of shapes by

time and erosion. Signs tell you the names given to each formation; it takes more than a little imagination to see where some of these came from, but others, such as the Camel and the Horse, will raise a smile when you get them. Don't miss the great Ape overlooking the plains. The whole loop takes about an hour, including scenic stops.

BŁĘDNE SKĄŁY

About 4km to the west, the **Błędné Skály** (Errant Boulders; adult/concession 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am–6pm mid-Apr–mid-Oct) are another impressive sight. Hundreds of gigantic boulders were deposited at 852m by glaciers in vaguely geometric shapes, forming a vast stone labyrinth. A trail runs between the rocks, which are so close together in places that you have to squeeze through sideways.

An hour is enough to do the loop. Cars and vans, charged 10zł and 30zł extra respectively, are only allowed in and out within set 15-minute windows every hour. You can stay as long as you like once you're parked.

The Błędné Skály are about 3.5km from the Kudowa-Zdrój–Karłów road, linked to it by a narrow, paved road (no public transport). The turn-off is 7km from Kudowa-Zdrój and 6km from Karłów.

Getting There & Away

The Góry Stołowe covers a fairly small area, and a day trip generally gives enough time to cover the two highlights. There's just one bus a day from Kudowa-Zdrój to Karłów

(4zł, 20 minutes) at 11am, though an earlier one leaves at 8.20am in summer as well. They go along the Road of the Hundred Bends, which snakes spectacularly through the forest. There are lots more private minibuses from Kudowa-Zdrój. Cyclists can take advantage of a cycle path leading through to the Czech Republic.

WAMBIERZYCE

pop 1200

A small village at the northeastern foot of the Góry Stołowe, Wambierzyce (vahn-byeh-zhi-tseh) is an important pilgrimage site and one of the oldest in Poland. Legend has it that in 1218 a blind peasant recovered his sight after praying to a statue of the Virgin Mary, which had been placed in the hollow trunk of a lime tree. A wooden chapel was constructed on the miraculous site and was later replaced with a church. The fame of Wambierzyce (Albendorf in German), dubbed the 'Silesian Jerusalem', spread, and a large, two-towered basilica was subsequently built between 1695 and 1711. When this collapsed seven years after its completion, a new sanctuary was built using the surviving Renaissance façade.

The largest numbers of pilgrims arrive on 15 August (Feast of the Assumption) and 8 September (Birth of Mary), as well as on the Sunday closest to those dates.

Sights

A flight of 33 steps – Christ's age when he was crucified – leads to the squat, 50m-wide façade of the **Church of Mary** (Sanktuarium Maryjne; Plac Najświętszej Marii Panny 11), its palatial appearance underwritten by the complete absence of towers. The side entrance takes you into the square cloister running around the church, lined with chapels and Stations of the Cross; the walls are densely adorned with folk paintings of Mary and old votive pictures. In the chapel west of the main altar you'll find a relic of one of Poland's modern saints, Zygmunt Gorazdowski (1845–1920), a native of Polish Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) who fought in the 1863 uprising, despite severe pulmonary problems, and later become a pioneering priest, author and educator. He was canonised in 2005.

The church proper, in the centre of the complex, is much smaller than you'd think from the outside, due to the size of the cloister. It's laid out on two ellipses, with the main one being the nave and the other the chancel, each

topped with a painted dome. The Baroque décor includes an unusually elaborate pulpit with the symbols of the four Evangelists. In the sanctuary behind an ornamental grille (1725), the florid high altar displays the miraculous miniature figure (only 28cm high) of the Virgin Mary with Child.

From May to mid-September, at 9pm Friday to Sunday, the church illuminations take place, lighting up the façade dramatically with some serious technical wizardry.

The hill opposite the church is dotted with a motley collection of chapels, gates, grottoes and sculptures connected with the Passion of Christ and collectively known as **Calvary** (Kalwaria). It was established in the late 17th century to mirror the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem and was subsequently extended to include 74 chapels.

East of the church you'll find the **Bethlehem Crèche** (Szopka Betlejemska; ☎ 074 871 9197; ul Objazdowa; adult/concession 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am–5.45pm Tue–Sun May–Sep, 10am–1pm & 2–3.45pm Tue–Sun Oct–Apr), a set of mechanised Nativity scenes. The main one includes 800 tiny figurines carved from lime wood, 300 of which move. Other scenes portray the Crucifixion, the Last Supper and the Massacre of the Holy Innocents. The crèche took a local craftsman 28 years to carve.

About 2.5km west of the church is a private **Ethnographic Open-Air Museum** (Skansen Museum Etnograficzne; ☎ 074 871 9184; ul Wiejska 52; ☎ 9am–sunset). The result of 10 years' work by the eccentric packrat owner, this is a museum featuring just about everything you could think of, including antiques, old household implements, minerals, stuffed birds and miners' uniforms, plus a small zoo. It's free, but donations are appreciated.

Sleeping & Eating

Locals, including the owners of the skansen, rent out rooms in their homes for about 20zł per person. The priests, too, offer budget accommodation in rooms with two to four beds. Just follow the sign to the Dom Pielgrzymy Nazaret, south of the Bethlehem Crèche on ul Objazdowa.

Hotel Wambierzyce (☎ 074 871 9186; www.hotel-wambierzyce.pl in Polish; Plac Najświętszej Marii Panny 1; s/d/tr/ste 150/240/280/600zł; ☎) Everything you need in one convenient spot, no more than a one-minute pilgrimage from the church. Rooms have some nice old-style trappings (including a couple of tiled heating stoves),

the restaurant is the best in town, and the pool table, minigym and bar should dispose of an evening one way or another.

Karczma Kowala (☎ 074 667 5072; ul Noworudzka 3; mains 7–15zł; ☎ 10am–10pm) This bright little place east of the church, on the way to the crèche, serves hearty Polish fare to hungry pilgrims.

Getting There & Away

There are up to half a dozen regularly scheduled buses to Kłodzko (5zł, 40 minutes) via Polanica-Zdrój, but only three services go direct to Kudowa-Zdrój (6.50zł, one hour).

BYSTRZYCA KŁODZKA

pop 10,500

Bystrzyca Kłodzka (bist-shi-tsay kwots-kah), perched on a hilltop above the Nysa Kłodzka River, is the second-largest town in the Kłodzko region. Since the 13th century, when it was founded, the town has been destroyed and rebuilt several times, though ironically it survived WWII virtually unscathed and still looks like a medieval fortified town. The few attractions here don't really add up to much, but somehow Bystrzyca Kłodzka (Habelschwerdt in German) feels right and you'll certainly enjoy walking around the Old Town.

Information

Bank PKO (ul Okrzei 1; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri)

Tourist office (☎ 074 811 3731; www.bystrzyckalodzka.pl; ul Rycerska 20; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat) In the Knights' Tower.

Sights

The houses lining the **Rynek**, officially known as Plac Wolności, are a blend of architectural styles. The octagonal Renaissance tower (1567) of the Italianate **town hall** in the centre gives the square an almost southern European feel. Next to the town hall is an elaborate Baroque **plague pillar** (1737) dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

In the 14th century the town was granted municipal status and surrounded by fortified **city walls** (*murzy miejskie*), some of which are still in place. The most substantial structures include the **Water Gate** (Brama Wodna) just south of the Rynek, and the **Kłodzko Tower** (Baszta Kłodzka; adult/concession 2.50/1.50zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 10am–2pm Sun), which you can climb, on the opposite side of the Old Town to the north.

East of the Rynek, the **Knights' Tower** (Baszta Rycerska) was reshaped in the 19th century and

turned into the belfry of a Protestant church that had been built alongside; you'll find the tourist office on the ground floor. After WWII the church was occupied by the rather esoteric **Philumenistic Museum** (Muzeum Filumenistyczne; ☎ 074 811 0637; www.muzeum2.filumenista.pl; Maly Rynek 1; adult/concession/family 4/3/14zł; ☎ 8am–4pm Tue–Sun), which displays lighters, matchbox labels from various countries and other paraphernalia related to the match industry. On the square southwest of the museum stands the old **whipping post** (*pregierz*) from 1566; the Latin inscription on its top reads 'God punishes the impious'.

The Gothic **Parish Church of St Michael the Archangel** (Kościół Parafialny Św Michała Archanioła) sits at the highest point of the Old Town, two blocks northwest of the Rynek. It has a nave and just one aisle with a row of six Gothic columns running right across the middle.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Piast (☎ 074 811 0322; ul Okrzei 26; s 35–60zł, d 50–80zł; ☎) About 150m northeast of the tourist office just outside the Old Town, this basic hotel with a mixture of rooms with and without en suite was undergoing renovations when we last visited, so expect better, brighter and more expensive things when you visit.

Hotel Abis (☎ 074 811 0645; www.hotelabis.pl; ul Strażacka 28; s/d/tr/ste 99/166/249/209zł; ☎) About 2km northwest of the centre and just off Rte 388, the Abis has 31 spic-and-span rooms in a modest modern block and offers excellent value for money. The stylish restaurant is worth a visit on its own.

Bistro Bałuszek (☎ 074 811 3899; ul Sienkiewicza 2; mains 5.50–15zł; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat, 11am–10pm Sun) Unfancy pub grub is available here in a fairly traditional style, with a terrace for summer sipping and nibbling.

Helios (☎ 074 811 0645; Plac Wolności 13; mains 6–16zł; ☎ 11am–10pm Sun–Thu, 11am–11pm Fri & Sat) Facing the Rynek, this pizzeria does a good range of pasta dishes as well.

Getting There & Away

The train station is just east of the tourist office. From here trains go to Kłodzko Miasto (4.50zł, 20 minutes, five daily), Międzyzlesie (4.50zł, 30 minutes, five daily) via Domaszków and Wrocław (17zł, two hours, five daily).

The bus station, on ul Sienkiewicza 200m north of the Parish Church of St Michael the

Archangel, has services to Kłodzko (5.50zł, 30 minutes) at least once an hour. There are also reasonable bus connections to Międzygórze (4.70zł, 40 minutes, hourly) and five or so buses to Stronie Śląskie (7.40zł, one hour) and Boboszów (8zł, 50 minutes).

MIĘDZYGÓRZE

pop 690

Międzygórze (myen-dzi-goo-zeh), 18km southeast of Bystrzyca Kłodzka, is a small, charming village set in a deep valley surrounded by forest. The town was an exclusive German mountain resort called Wolfslgrund in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and still has half a dozen splendid (though rundown) historic villas that look as if they have been dropped in from the Tyrol.

Information

Dom Wczasowy Nad Wodospadem (☎ 074 813 5120; www.miedzygorze.net; ul Wojska Polskiego 12) The reception desk at this hotel doubles as a local tourist office, and the helpful staff can supply you with all manner of maps and brochures.

PTTK office (☎ 074 813 5195; www.pttkmiedzygorze.ta.pl; ul Wojska Polskiego 2; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat) Has information about activities in the area.

Sights & Activities

Międzygórze's countryside is a gold mine for hikers and walkers. If you plan on hiking in the area, get a copy of Compass' *Ziemia Kłodzka* 1:50,000-scale map (10zł).

Northwest of the village is **Mt Iglizna** (845m), with the Baroque **Church of Mary of the Snows** (Sanktuarium Maria Śnieżna) in its shadow. You can get there by any of three different trails – waymarked red, green or yellow – in about 1½ hours.

About halfway up the yellow trail you'll come to the **Fairytales Garden** (Ogród Bajek; adult/concession 4/2.50zł; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Apr), a little hillside plot of models and huts based on Polish fairy stories. It was originally assembled in the 1920s and completely restored in the 1970s and late 1980s.

There are at least five longer trails originating in or passing through the village. The most popular is the hike southeast to the top of **Mt Śnieżnik** (1425m), the highest peak in the region. It will take about 2½ hours to get there by the red trail. The best map to have is the 1:30,000 *Masyw Śnieżnika* (Śnieżnik Massif; 8zł) from Compass.

Northeast of Międzygórze is **Black Mountain** (Czarna Góra), which has an excellent **ski centre** (☎ 074 814 1245; www.czarnagora.pl in Polish) and reliable snow coverage. You can get here via the blue or green trails in about three hours. In Międzygórze the **Centrum Śnieżnik** (☎ 0502 525 564; www.snieznik.omega.pl; ul Wojska Polskiego 6; ☎ 9.30am-6pm) organises ski lessons (four-hour day 150/250zł weekend/weekday) and will kit you out for a day on the slopes for around 130zł.

At the western end of town behind the Dom Wczasowy Nad Wodospadem is the 21m-high **Wilczki Waterfall** (Wodospad Wilczki). The best vantage point is from the bridge right above the drop.

Centrum Śnieżnik rents **bicycles** for 25zł a day.

Sleeping & Eating

Schronisko Na Śnieżniku (☎ 074 813 5130; www.sudety.info.pl/nasnieszniku in Polish; dm 21zł; ☎) If you're climbing Mt Śnieżnik and don't feel like coming back the same day, this 58-bed PTTK hostel awaits you half an hour before reaching the summit.

Chata Lidia (☎ 074 812 5403; www.sudety.info.pl/chatalidia in Polish; ul Wojska Polskiego 27; r from 25zł per person; ☎) On the road into Międzygórze from Bystrzyca Kłodzka and just before the Dom Wczasowy Nad Wodospadem, 'Lydia's Hut' is one of the most stylish tourist farms in the Sudetes and can organise horse riding, cycling and skiing tours.

Recepcja FWP (☎ 074 813 5109; www.fwp.pl in Polish; ul Sanatoryjna 2; r per person 25-35zł, with full board 50-60zł; ☎ 7am-11pm) The FWP runs three of the nicest holiday homes in town, offering everything from singles with shared bathroom to full-board suites.

Dom Wczasowy Nad Wodospadem (☎ 074 813 5120; www.miedzygorze.net; ul Wojska Polskiego 12; d 70-100zł, tr/q/ste 90/100/150zł; ☎) At the western end of the village, right next to the waterfall, Nad Wodospadem offers reasonable rooms one step up from a hostel and has its own café-restaurant. Breakfast is an extra 12zł.

Willa Millennium (☎ 074 813 5287; www.millennium.ta.pl; ul Wojska Polskiego 9; s 75zł, d 95-99zł, ste 135zł; ☎) The 10-room Millennium offers central alpine-style accommodation at bargain prices. It has its own restaurant and a charming communal terrace.

Pizzeria Wilczy Dół (☎ 074 813 5286; ul Sanatoryjna 2; mains 7-15zł; ☎ 1-7pm Tue-Thu, noon-8pm Fri & Sun,

noon-9pm Sat) A lot more than a pizzeria (as it bills itself), this rather charming alpine-style eatery also serves hearty rib-sticking Polish main courses.

Getting There & Away

All outbound buses go via Bystrzyca Kłodzka (4.70zł, 40 minutes), with services at least every couple of hours or so. Six buses continue to Kłodzko (8.40zł, one hour).

KLETNO

pop 50

Kletno is an elongated hamlet stretching some 3km. But it's not the scattering of cottages or even the spectacular scenery along the road from Międzygórze, 41km to the southwest, that brings visitors to Kletno (Klessengruden in German). Poland's most beautiful cave is hidden in the trees beyond the village. Bones belonging to a cave bear, which lived here during the last Ice Age, were found and gave the place its name, the **Bear's Cave** (Jaskinia Niedźwiedzia; ☎ 074 814 1250; www.jaskinia.pl; adult 11-18zł, concession 6-13zł; ☎ 10am-5.40pm Feb-Apr & Sep-Nov, 9am-4.40pm May-Aug, closed Mon & Thu).

The cave was discovered accidentally during marble quarrying in 1966, and a small 400m section of the 3km labyrinth was opened to the public 11 years later. You enter through a protective pavilion that houses a snack bar and a small exhibition focusing on the cave's history, then proceed into the spectacular corridors and chambers, festooned with stalactites and stalagmites. The humidity inside the cave is nearly 100% and the temperature is 6°C all year, so bring something warm. Visits are by 40-minute tours (Polish only) in groups of up to 15 people, starting every 20 minutes.

Getting There & Away

Kletno is most easily accessed via Stronie Śląskie, which has regular bus connections with Kłodzko (6.50zł to 7.40zł, 40 minutes to 1½ hours, up to 18 daily) and Bystrzyca Kłodzka (7.40zł, one hour, up to nine daily). From here it's a 9km walk south to the cave by the yellow trail (2½ hours). If this is too much for you, take the bus to Bolesławów (about 11 daily), get off at Stara Morawa and walk the remaining 5km. There's one afternoon bus to Kletno from Stronie Śląskie (3.30zł, 15 minutes) at 3pm, but as it returns straight away you'll either have to walk back or leave

in time to get the last bus from Stara Morawa (around 5pm).

You can also reach the cave by walking for 2½ hours directly from Międzygórze. Take the black-marked ski trail that goes east from the centre along a rough road and switch to the yellow one leading north.

PACZKÓW

pop 8500

More than 750 years of history have left Paczków (*patch-koof*), a sleepy town midway between Nysa and Kłodzko, with one of the most complete sets of medieval fortifications in the country. Within the walls of what the Germans called Patschkau, the tiny Old Town is so attractive that it's been dubbed the 'Polish Carcassonne'.

Information

Bank Zachodni (Rynek 11; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) **Post office** (ul Pocztowa 10; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 077 431 6790; www.paczkow.pl; ul Słowackiego 4; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon, 7am-3pm Tue-Fri)

Sights

The oval ring of Paczków's **defensive walls** was built around 1350 and surrounded by a moat. This system protected the town for a time, but when firearms arrived in the 15th century, an additional, external ring of defences was erected outside the moat (it was pulled down in the 19th century). The original walls were fortunately retained and, as the town escaped major destruction during WWII, they still encircle the historic quarter. They were initially about 9m high for the whole of their 1200m length and had a wooden gallery for sentries below the top.

Four gateways were built, complete with towers (all of which still stand) and drawbridges, and there were two dozen semicircular towers built into the walls themselves (19 have survived, though most are incomplete). The most interesting is the round **Kłodzko Gate Tower** (Wieża Bramy Kłodzkiej), with its irregular loopholes; the oldest is the 14th-century **Wrocław Gate Tower** (Wieża Bramy Wrocławskiej; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 6am-6pm), which can be climbed. Buy your ticket at the kiosk opposite.

The Rynek occupies a good part of the Old Town. The **town hall** (Rynek 1) was built in the mid-16th century but only its tower is original; the main building was largely modernised

in the 1820s. You can climb to the top of the **tower** (adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Sep), which provides much better views than the Wrocław Gate Tower.

The **Parish Church of St John the Evangelist** (Kościół Parafialny Św Jana Ewangelisty), just south of the Rynek, is a squat Gothic cube built in the second half of the 14th century. Even the Renaissance parapets are heavy and unattractive, though the Gothic doorway is some compensation. Inside, the church now has predominantly neo-Gothic furnishings, and only a few fittings from earlier times remain. The most unusual feature is the well in the right-hand aisle, which provided drinking water during times of siege.

A short walk north of the Rynek is the interesting **Gas Industry Museum** (Muzeum Gazownictwa; ☎ 077 431 6834; ul Pocztowa 6; admission free; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri), installed in an old redbrick gas works that operated from 1902 to 1977. The museum gives an insight into the gas production process, featuring the machinery and various related products such as heaters, irons, lamps and stoves, as well as Europe's largest collection of gas meters.

Sleeping

PTSM Hostel Pod Basztą (☎ 077 431 6441; ul Kółkątaja 9; dm 20-30zł; ☎ Jul & Aug) This seasonal hostel is on the 3rd floor of a school located on the west side of the walled town. The entrance is at the back of the building, via ul Narutowicza.

Korona Paczkowa Hotel (☎ 077 431 6277; ul Wojska Polskiego 31; d 80-110zł, tr 100-145zł, q 120-180zł; P) Korona is a small 10-room hotel about 300m southeast of the Rynek. Decent rooms, friendly owner-staff and a homely atmosphere are capped off by a lovely garden and terrace.

Camping Nr 258 (☎ 077 431 6509; ul Jagiellońska 8; camp site/cabin/apt 6/45/90zł; ☎ Jun-Sep; P) This camping ground about 1km south of the Old Town has a collection of rustic cabins and a tent area. It's in the local sports centre, which has a swimming pool.

Getting There & Away

The bus station, on the northeastern edge of the Old Town, has services to Nysa (4zł to 6.90zł, 45 minutes) and Otmuchów (3.70zł, 30 minutes) at least twice an hour, and to Opole (20zł, two hours) about six times a day. In the opposite direction, buses run to Kłodzko (6.90zł, 50 minutes) every two to three hours.

OTMUCHÓW

pop 5300

If you're travelling from Kłodzko to Nysa, you may want to stop at Otmuchów (ot-moo-hoof), about 12km south of Nysa. The town was founded around AD 1000 by King Bolesław Chrobry, who built a fortified castle here to repel invasions by the Germans, Czechs and Moravians. The town passed into the hands of Wrocław bishops for over 500 years and came to be an important ecclesiastical centre. Set between two lakes – Lake Otmuchów to the west and Lake Nysa to the east – Otmuchów has now become a local holiday spot and is worth a stop.

Sights & Activities

The sloping Rynek retains little of its former character apart from the 16th-century **town hall**, which has a Renaissance tower and a lovely double **sundial** dating from 1575 on the south side. The Baroque **Parish Church of St Nicholas** (Kościół Parafialny Św Mikołaja), overlooking the Rynek from the west, was built at the end of the 17th century and most of its internal decoration, including frescoes by Dankwart and paintings by Willmann, dates from that period.

Just south of the church, atop the hill, is the massive **Bishops' Castle** (Zamek Biskupi), erected in the 13th century but much extended and remodelled later. It's now a hotel (see below), but you can climb the tower year-round.

Just 1.5km west of the Rynek and across fields and marshland is the 29-hectare **Lake Otmuchów** (Jezioro Otmuchowskie). This artificial body of water was created between 1928 and 1933 and today it is a regional centre for water sports, including sailing, kayaking, windsurfing and swimming. Most of the lake-related action happens along ul Plażowa.

Sleeping & Eating

Ośrodek Wypoczynkowy Sandacz (☎ 077 431 5581; ul Plażowa 1; r per person from 20zł) This holiday home on the water with direct access to a small beach offers basic accommodation in 12 rooms with shared facilities.

Gościniec Zamek (☎ 077 431 4691; www.zamek.otmuchow.pl; ul Zamkowa 4; s 100-130zł, d/tr/ste 160/190/200zł; P) If you're going to stick around, you should make this place a priority. The 35-room 'Castle Guesthouse' has no end of character, with a vine-covered restaurant,

lots of greenery, the odd cannon and farming implements all over the place. Breakfast is 15zł extra.

Getting There & Away

Otmuchów lies on the road linking Paczków (3.70zł, 30 minutes) to the west with Nysa (3.50zł, 20 minutes) to the east and buses run about twice an hour. The Otmuchów bus station is just south of the castle hill on ul Mickiewicza.

NYSA

pop 47,900

For centuries Nysa (*ni-sah*) was one of the most important religious centres in Silesia. In the 17th century it became a seat of the Catholic bishops, who were in flight from newly 'Reformed' Wrocław. The bishops soon made Nysa a bastion of the Counter-Reformation; so strong was their hold that the town came to be known as the Silesian Rome.

Around 80% of Nysa's buildings were destroyed during fierce battles in 1945, and some of the postwar reconstruction leaves a lot to be desired in aesthetic terms. Visit Nysa for the dramatic cathedral, the little-big town vibe and one unique hotel.

Information

Bank Zachodni (ul Krzywoustego 7/9; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Omnibus (☎ 077 433 5927; Rynek 32; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Free internet access next door to the tourist office.

Post office (ul Krzywoustego 21; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat)

PTTK office (☎ 077 433 4171; ul Bracka 4; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist office (☎ 077 433 5927; Rynek 32; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun)

Sights

There's no mistaking Nysa's powerful **Cathedral of SS James and Agnes** (Katedra Św Jakuba i Agnieszki), with its imposing blackened bulk and fine stone double portal. Built in 1430, it was remodelled after a fire in 1542, but hasn't changed much since then. The cathedral's 4000-sq-metre roof, supported by 18 brick columns inside, is one of the steepest church roofs in Europe.

The vast interior, much of it dating from the late 19th century, looks distinctly sober and noble, its loftiness being the most arrest-

ing feature. On closer inspection, however, you'll see that its side chapels (a total of 18) boast wonderful stained glass and a wealth of tombstones, funeral monuments and epitaphs, making up the largest collection of funerary sculpture in any Silesian church.

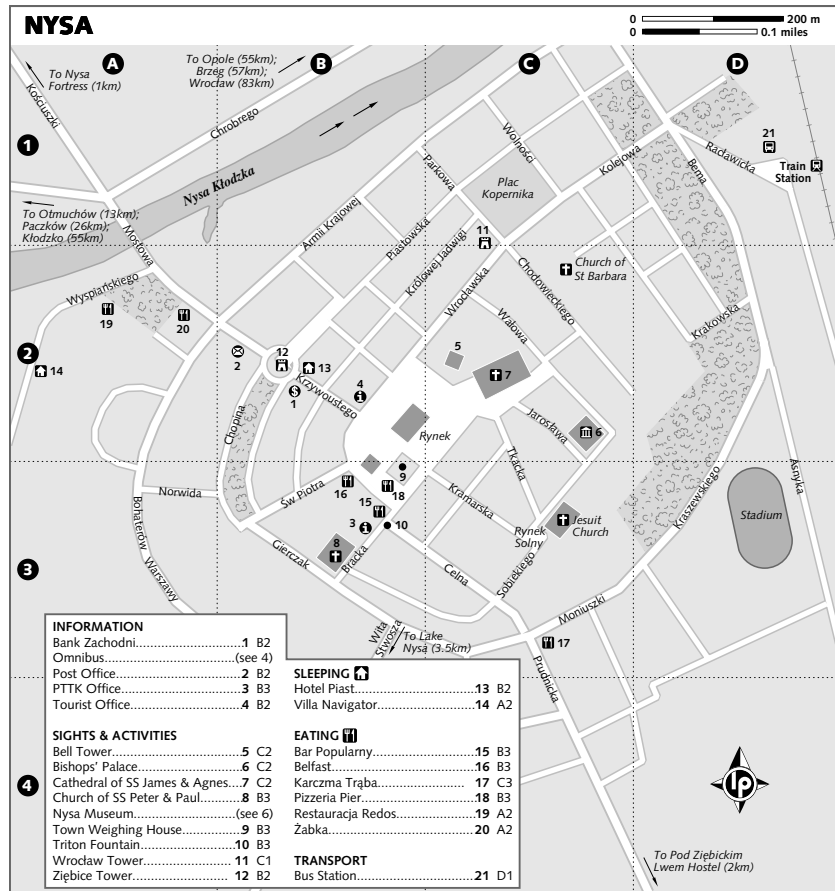
The freestanding block next to the cathedral is the **bell tower** (*dzwonnica*), which was begun 50 years after the church was built and originally intended to be over 100m high. Despite 40 years' work it only reached half that height, and consequently looks truncated and odd, especially with the tiny turret tucked on to it.

To the east of the cathedral is the 17th-century **Bishops' Palace** (Pałac Biskupi), a spacious double-fronted former Episcopal residence now housing the **Nysa Museum** (Muzeum w Nysie; ☎ 077 433 2083; ul Jarosława 11; adult/concession 5/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun). Exhibits range from archaeological finds to photos documenting war damage, plus a model of the town in its heyday. The museum also features European paintings from the 15th to the 19th centuries, mostly from the Flemish and Dutch schools.

Stretching out from the foot of the cathedral, the vast **Rynek** shows the extent of the war damage. Only the southern side of the square is anything like it used to be, with its restored houses originally dating from the 16th century. The detached building facing them, the **Town Weighing House** (Dom Wagi Miejskiej; 1604), retains fragments of 19th-century wall painting on a side wall. Just round the corner, on ul Bracka, there are more historic houses and a 1701 copy of the Baroque **Triton Fountain** by Bernini in Rome.

Just past the fountain is the twin-towered **Church of SS Peter and Paul** (Kościół Św Piotra i Pawła), built in the 1727 for the Hospitallers of the Holy Sepulchre. It has one of Silesia's best Baroque interiors, complete with an opulent high altar, organ and *trompe l'œil* wall paintings.

The only significant traces of the medieval defences are two 14th-century brick towers: the **Ziębice Tower** (Wieża Ziębicka; ul Krzywoustego), with unusual turrets and dragon guttering; and the white-plastered **Wrocław Tower** (Wieża Wrocławska; ul Wrocławska). About 1.5km to the northwest and across the Nysa Kłodzka River are the remains of **Nysa Fortress** (Twierdza Nysa; ul Obrońców Tobruku), an enormous citadel built by Prussian King Frederic II and site of the annual **Nysa Fortress**



Days (www.twierdzanysa.pl) held for three days in late July/early August.

Like nearby Otmuchów, Nysa has its own artificial body of water, the 20-hectare **Lake Nysa** (Jezioro Nyskie), formed in 1972 when the Nysa Kłodzka River was dammed. The sandy **lido** (☼ 9am-7pm May-Sep) in the lake's northeast corner, 3.5km from the centre of town, is particularly popular in season.

Sleeping

Pod Ziębickim Lwem Hostel (☎ 077 433 3731; www.kadett.d.pl/nysa; ul Krakiecka 28; dm 13-15zł; (P) ☒) About 2km south of the Old Town, this 48-bed hostel has small but smart dorms of two to four beds, providing a little more privacy than many other hostels.

our pick Villa Navigator (☎ 077 433 4170; www.villanavigator.pl; ul Wyspiańskiego 11; s 70-150zł, d 100-180zł;

(P) ☒) This charming 12-room establishment run by an loquacious couple is exactly what a guesthouse should be, from the antique furniture, oil paintings and potted plants to the sociable breakfasts in the family parlour. Mansard rooms on the 3rd (top) floor are smaller and simpler but still thoroughly serviceable. For a real treat, ask for the Danzig (No 4) or Secessionist (No 3) room.

Hotel Piast (☎ 077 433 4084; www.hotel-piast.com.pl; ul Krzywoustego 14; s/d/tr/ste 135/170/255/230zł; (P) ☒) Good tourist-class standards, a fridge in each room and small balconies entice guests into what could easily be overlooked as yet another concrete city block.

Eating

Zabka (ul Krzywoustego 29; ☎ 6am-11pm) A branch of the late-night convenience store chain.

Bar Popularny (☎ 077 433 3015; Rynek 23/24; mains 2.30-8zł; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) This un-reformed milk bar-cafeteria looks drab and basic, but the food is predictably acceptable. Set meals are a snip at 9.30zł.

Restauracja Redos (☎ 077 433 4972; ul Wyspiańskiego 1a; mains 8-20zł; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) A pavilion near the river and the Villa Navigator holds this lively bar-restaurant, whipping out pizza and other modern staples for a youngish crowd.

Karczma Trąba (☎ 077 433 8974; ul Prudnicka 1; mains 8.80-17.80zł; ☎ 11am-2am) The 'Trumpet' attracts a chilled crowd with its enlightened Polish and international dishes (good choice of vegetarian ones), intimate seating, easy-listening canned jazz and eclectic décor.

Pizzeria Pier (☎ 077 433 5560; Rynek 39; mains 10-19zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Drinkers and diners alike congregate in this den of pasta and pizza clutching the hindquarters of the Town Weighing House.

Belfast (☎ 077 433 4880; Rynek 24/25; mains 10-38zł; ☎ 8am-midnight) Taking its name from the brewery sign on the outside, the Belfast is Nysa's most stylish place, serving inventive Italian and Polish dishes and – wait for it – green beer.

Getting There & Away

The bus and train stations face one another on ul Raclawicka, a 500m walk northeast of the Rynek. Getting around the area is easiest by bus; there are services to Paczków (4zł to 6.90zł, 45 minutes, up to 10 daily), Kłodzko (10zł, 1½ hours, up to six daily), Opole (10zł, 1½ hours, hourly) and Wrocław (12zł to 16zł, two hours, hourly). Trains are less frequent but may be useful when travelling to Opole (17zł, 1½ hours, eight daily).

UPPER SILESIA

After the idyllic villages and unfettered nature of the Sudetes, arriving in Upper Silesia (Górny Śląsk) may feel like stepping into a cold shower. Heavily developed and industrialised, the area occupies just 2% of Poland's territory, yet it's home to a full 9% of the population. Thanks to large deposits of coal,

it's traditionally been the nation's centre of heavy industry and the most densely urbanised area in Central Europe. Under socialism this region was the 'reddest' in Poland and relatively well treated as a result.

Few people come to Upper Silesia for the sights. But whatever your feelings on urban sprawl, there are some important destinations in the region, including the unmissable Auschwitz extermination camp complex. Upper Silesia is also an easy port of call if you're heading to Kraków or the Czech Republic.

KATOWICE

pop 311,500

Katowice (kah-to-vee-tseh), the centre of the so-called Upper Silesian Industrial District (Górnośląski Okręg Przemysłowy), is a difficult child to love. The GOP contains 14 cities and a number of neighbouring towns, forming one vast conurbation with a population of well over three million. It's one of the biggest industrial centres in Europe, and one of the most outdated, though EU money is now helping to modernise the area and the work done here.

Historically, Katowice is a product of the 19th-century industrial boom, but it only became a city in the interwar period. After WWII, at the height of the Stalinist cult craze, the city was renamed Stalingród, but reverted to its old name soon after Comrade Joe died in 1953. Katowice has few significant historical monuments, but it's a major commercial and cultural centre.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

EMPIK (☎ 032 203 7201; www.empik.com; ul Piotra Skargi 6; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Best for newspapers and magazines.

INTERNET ACCESS

Eurocafé (☎ 032 710 5361; www.cafe.katowice.pl in Polish; per 15/30/60min 1.50/2.50/3.50zł; ☎ 24hr) At the train station.

Internet Bob Café (☎ 0501 406 567; ul Chopina 8; per 15min 1zł; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-5am Fri & Sat, 2-10pm Sun)

Kino Helios Internet Café (☎ 032 603 0101; Altus Shopping Centre, ul Uniwersytecka 13; per 15/30/60min 1/2/3.50zł; ☎ 9.30am-10pm) The city's best, at Helios Cinema.

Wic Internet Café (☎ 032 259 9523; www.wic.pl in Polish; ul Opolska 5; per 15/30/60min 1/1.50/3zł; ☎ 24hr)

LAUNDRY

Eko Express (☎ 032 603 0200; Altus Shopping Centre, ul Uniwersytecka 13; ☎ 7.15am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun)

MONEY

Bank Pekao (ul Św Jana 5; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

Bank Zachodni (Al Korfantego 5; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 032 259 3808; www.um.katowice.pl; ul Młyńska 2; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Orbis Travel (☎ 032 355 9960; ul Staromiejska 21; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

Sights

The central **Rynek** is not lined with historic burghers' houses as you'd find elsewhere in Silesia but encircled by drab postwar blocks. It's a showpiece of the 'early Gierek style' – the term Poles sarcastically give to architecture spawned during the fleeting period of apparent prosperity in the early 1970s, when Edward Gierek's government took out hefty loans from the West to make Poland a 'second Japan'.

North of the Rynek, the **Silesian Museum** (Muzeum Śląskie; ☎ 032 258 5661; www.muzeumslaskie.pl; Al Korfantego 3; adult/concession/family 9/4.50/12zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) features one permanent exhibition – Polish paintings from 1800 to 1939 – as well as various tempo-

rary displays from its vast collections (fine art, archaeology, ethnography and local history and culture).

Some 350m further north is the large roundabout called the Rondo, which now houses the new **Rondo Art Gallery** (Galeria Rondo Sztuki; www.rondosztuki.pl in Polish; Rondo Gen Jerzego Ziętka 1; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). Facing it to the northeast is the landmark **Spodek** (☎ 032 258 3261; www.spodek.com.pl; Al Korfantego 35), a sports and concert stadium built in 1971 that truly deserves its name of 'Flying Saucer'.

The enormous **Provincial Park of Culture and Recreation** (Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku) is possibly Katowice's most popular attraction and the conurbation's most important recreation area. It includes a large stadium, zoo, amusement grounds, planetarium and the **Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park** (Górnosłański Park Etnograficzny; ☎ 032 241 0718; www.chorzow.pl/skansen; ul Parkowa 25; adult/concession 7/4zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Fri) with scores of traditional wooden buildings spread over 20 hectares. The park is about 3km northwest of the centre; reach it from the Rondo on tram 6, 11 or 23.

Some 800m south of the Rynek is the **Cathedral of Christ the King** (Katedra Chrystusa Króla; ul Plebiscytowa 49a), Poland's largest cathedral, measuring 89m by 53m. The massive sandstone structure was erected between 1927 and 1955. The spacious interior is topped with a large dome rising 59m from the floor, but apart from colourful stained-glass windows and an unusual 'wheel' crucifix it's fairly plain. Behind it, the **Archdiocesan Museum** (Museum Archidiecezjalne; ☎ 032 608 1452; ul Jordana 39, enter from ul Wita Stwosza 16; admission free; ☎ 2-6pm Tue & Thu, 2-5pm Sun) has a collection of sacral art from the late 14th century, including some beautiful Gothic altarpieces.

About 1.5km further to the southwest, in **Park Kościuszki**, is the lovely, timber-shingled **Church of St Michael** (Kościół Św Michała), dating from 1510 and brought from the Upper Silesian village of Syrynia in 1939.

Katowice has Silesia's best-preserved **Jewish Cemetery** (Cmentarz Żydowski; ☎ 032 251 2826, 032 253 0209; ul Kozielska 16; ☎ 8am-5pm Sun-Thu, 8am-noon Fri). Established in 1868, it's divided into two parts, of which the front one is the older.

Just east of the cemetery is the **Skyscraper** (Drapacz Chmur; ul Żwirki i Wigury 15), Poland's first such building when completed in 1934 and considered the best example of functionalism in Poland. The 14-storey, 60m-tall tower was the highest building in the country until 1955. Just opposite is the lovely Art Deco **Garrison Church of St Casimir** (Parafia Wojskowa Św Kazimierza; ul Skłodowskiej-Curie 20), which opened just a year before Skyscraper.

Those with time on their hands should head for the suburb of **Nikiszowiec**, which is about 6km to the southeast, where there is a unique housing estate built for miners (and their families) who worked at the nearby Nickisch (now Poniatowski) shaft between 1908 and 1924. Built of attractive red brick, with a network of streets between them, the nine blocks are interconnected by gateways, and the complex was totally self-sufficient, with everything from shops, restaurants and a swimming pool to a hospital, a school and a detention centre. Bus 12 (2.40zł) goes here from the centre.

Sleeping

Ślączek Hostel (☎ 032 351 1956; www.sltzn.katowice.pl; ul Sokolska 26; dm 20-30zł) This 50-bed HI hostel is an 800m walk north of the train station, offering the usual basic accommodation in dorms of up to eight people.



INFORMATION	Rondo Art Gallery.....	13 C1	Restauracja A Dong.....	24 B2	
Bank Pekao.....	1 C3	Silesian Museum.....	14 C2	Złoty Osioł.....	25 C3
Bank Zachodni.....	2 C2	Skyscraper.....	15 B3		
EMPIK.....	3 B2	Spodek.....	16 D1	DRINKING ☎ ☎	
Eurocafé.....	4 B3			Gaudi Café.....	26 C3
Internet Bob Café.....	5 B2	SLEEPING ☎		Spiz.....	27 B2
Orbis Travel.....	6 C3	Hotel Diamant.....	17 C3		
Tourist Office.....	7 C3	Hotel Katowice.....	18 C2	ENTERTAINMENT ☎	
Wic Internet Café.....	8 B2	Hotel Monopol.....	19 C3	Dekadencja.....	28 D3
		Hotel Olimpijski.....	20 D1		
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Hotel Polonia.....	21 C3	TRANSPORT	
Archdiocesan Museum.....	9 C4	Ślączek Hostel.....	22 B1	Bus Station.....	29 B2
Cathedral of Christ the King.....	10 C4			LOT Office.....	30 C2
Garrison Church of St Casimir.....	11 B3	EATING ☎		Polski Express	
Jewish Cemetery.....	12 A3	La Grotta.....	23 C3	Bus Stop.....	31 C2

Hotel Olimpijski (☎ 032 258 1233; www.hotelspodek.katowice.pl; Spodek, Al Korfantego 35; s 120zł, d 160-180zł, ste 220zł; 🏠) Don't expect much from this step up from a hostel in the Spodek stadium, apart from a great location and lots of traffic. Still, it's probably the best deal in town.

Hotel Polonia (☎ 032 251 4051; www.hotelpolonia.katowice.pl; ul Kochanowskiego 3; s/d/tr 120/190/270zł; 🏠 🍷 🍷 🍷) This 81-bed hotel, while offering nothing special beyond bare-bones comfort, is just a five-minute walk south of the train station. The welcome here is always warm.

Hotel Katowice (☎ 032 258 8281; www.hotel-katowice.com.pl; Al Korfantego 9; s/d/tr 180/224/298zł, ste 272-292zł; 🏠 🍷 🍷 🍷) A typical communist-era product, this 230-bed block has little character, lots of broken things and some downright nasty rugs. But it's not short on amenities (bar, restaurant, cake shop) and the town centre's a light stroll away. Prices go down by 25% at the weekend.

Hotel Diament (☎ 032 231 2244; www.hoteldiamentul.pl; ul Dworcowa 5; s/d/ste 269/359/439zł; 🏠 🍷 🍷 🍷) This 43-room link in a small local chain is just a stone's throw from the Monopol. It's comfortable, convenient and reliably friendly.

Hotel Monopol (☎ 032 782 8282; www.hotel.com.pl; ul Dworcowa 5; s/d 490/560zł, ste 650-790zł; 🏠 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) The 114-room Monopol is a tasteful reincarnation of Katowice's most celebrated prewar hotel: modern and full of stylish walnut and chrome surfaces, with friendly, informed staff, huge shower heads, two restaurants, and a fitness centre with two saunas and swimming pool. There's a fabulous 19th-century floor mosaic under glass in the lobby.

Eating

Several pedestrian strips hold Katowice's highest concentrations of eateries: ul Stawowa, just north of the train station, has plenty of snack bars and unfussy restaurants; while the areas around ul Staromiejska and ul Wawelska, northeast of the station, are a bit more cosmopolitan and upmarket.

Złoty Osioł (☎ 032 203 5005; ul Mariacka 1; two-course set meal 8.90zł; 🍷 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) A cheerful, popular vegetarian café of the kind you'd expect in health-conscious Western Europe, the 'Golden Donkey' has hippy décor (think psychedelic walls and distressed furniture) and meat-free dishes, including some vegan dishes.

La Grotta (☎ 032 206 8166; ul Wawelska 3; mains 12-40zł; 🍷 9am-10pm) On a short but heaving pedestrian street by the train station, this charming two-floor trattoria is Katowice's best Italian eatery and reaches far beyond the usual pizza and pasta offerings.

Restauracja A Dong (☎ 032 258 6662; ul Matejki 3; mains 24-42zł) With the university having just added Chinese to its curriculum, there is a need for authentic Chinese food in Katowice and this is your baby.

Drinking & Entertainment

Gaudi Café (☎ 032 253 8775; ul Wawelska 2) In tribute to the acclaimed Spanish architect, this is the coolest café on the centre's coolest pedestrian street. The coffee and cakes are good, but it's the out-there interior that'll leave you in awe.

Dekadencja (☎ 032 203 4433; ul Mariacka 20; 🍷 noon-5am Mon-Sat, 4pm-1am Sun) Arguably the best dive on a street of dives. Decadence is the kind of place you'll come to and never leave. Legendary club nights.

Spiz (☎ 032 781 1132; www.spiz-katowice.pl; ul Opolska 22; 🍷 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 10am-2am Fri & Sat) This branch of the Wrocław microbrewery bar-restaurant has live music some nights.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Katowice International Airport (☎ 032 392 7200; www.gtl.com.pl) is in Pyrzowice, 35km north of the city. Domestic flights currently cover just Warsaw (three daily), with international services to 30 or so European cities, including Frankfurt (up to three daily), London (up to five daily), Munich (daily) and Paris (three weekly). **LOT** (☎ 032 206 2462; ul Piastowska 1; 🍷 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) has an office near the Hotel Katowice.

BUS

The bus station, on ul Piotra Skargi some 500m north of the train station, handles a couple of buses a day to most destinations around the region, with plenty of long-distance and international services as well.

Polski Express buses depart from in front of Hotel Katowice. There are two buses a day to Kraków (23zł, 1½ hours) at 10.40am and 9.40pm, and one to Warsaw (69zł, 6½ hours) at 7.50am via Częstochowa and Łódź.

TRAIN

Trains are the main means of transport in the region and beyond. The train station is

in the city centre and trains depart hourly for Oświęcim (15.50zł, one to 1½ hours), Pszczyna (7.50zł, 45 minutes), Kraków (20zł, 1½ hours), Opole (28zł, 1¾ hours), Wrocław (36zł, 2¾ hours), Poznań (42zł, five hours), Częstochowa (14zł to 17zł, 1½ hours) and Warsaw (46zł, 2¾ hours). International destinations include Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Hamburg, Prague and Vienna.

OŚWIĘCIM

pop 40,650

Oświęcim (osh-fyen-cheem) is a quiet, medium-sized industrial town on the border between Silesia and Małopolska, about 30km southeast of Katowice and about 40km west of Kraków. The Polish name may be unfamiliar to most foreigners, but the German one is not. This is Auschwitz, the scene of the largest attempt at genocide in human history and the world's largest cemetery.

The Auschwitz extermination camp was established in April 1940 by the Germans in the prewar Polish army barracks on the outskirts of Oświęcim. Auschwitz was originally intended for Polish political prisoners, but the camp was 'repurposed' as a dedicated centre for the wholesale extermination of the Jews of Europe. For this purpose, the much larger camp at Birkenau (Brzezinka), also referred to as Auschwitz II, was built 2km west of the original site in 1941 and 1942, followed by another one in Monowice (Monowice), several kilometres to the west.

It is now estimated that in total this death factory eliminated some 1.6 million people of 27 nationalities, including 1.1 million Jews, 150,000 Poles and 23,000 Roma.

The name Auschwitz often describes the whole Auschwitz-Birkenau complex. In 2007, its Unesco world heritage listing was changed from 'Auschwitz Concentration Camp' to 'Auschwitz-Birkenau: German Nazi Concentration & Extermination Camp (1940-45)'. Both Auschwitz and Birkenau are open to the public as the **State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau** (Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau; ☎ 033 843 2022; www.auschwitz.org.pl; ul Więźniów Oświęcimia 20; donation requested; 🍷 8am-7pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm May & Sep, 8am-5pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Mar & Nov, 8am-3pm Dec-Feb). The museum's visitors centre is at the entrance to the Auschwitz site.

There's also a **tourist office** (☎ 033 843 0091; www.cit.oswiecim.neostrada.pl; ul Leszczyńskiej 12; 🍷 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar) near the Auschwitz site.

Sights

AUSCHWITZ

Auschwitz was only partially destroyed by the fleeing Nazis, and many of the original brick buildings stand to this day as a bleak testament to the camp's history. Some 13 of the 30 surviving prison blocks now house museum exhibitions, either general or dedicated to victims from particular countries or races that lost citizens at Auschwitz.

During the communist era, the museum at Auschwitz-Birkenau was conceived as an antifascist exhibition – the fact that most of the victims were Jewish was played down, and undue prominence was given to the Poles killed here. This approach has changed: block 27, once dedicated to the 'suffering and struggle of the Jews', now presents Auschwitz more correctly as a place of the 'martyrdom of the Jews'.

From the visitors centre in the entrance building, you enter the barbed-wire encampment through the infamous gate, still displaying the grimly cynical legend *Arbeit Macht Frei* (Work Brings Freedom). Visit the exhibitions in the prison blocks, then go to the gas chamber and crematorium.

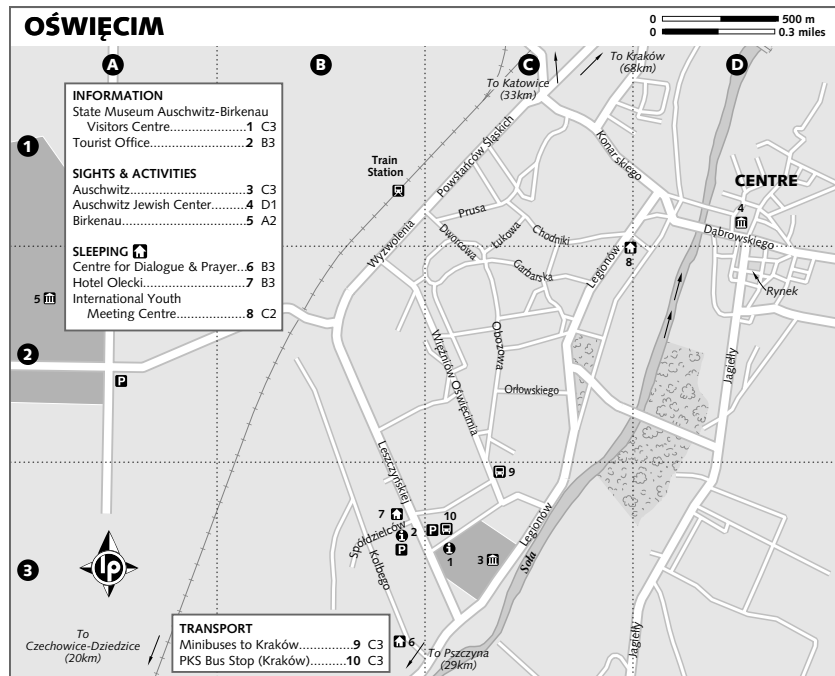
A 17-minute **documentary film** (adult/concession 3.50/2.50zł) about the liberation of the camp by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945 is screened in the visitors centre every half-hour, with a foreign-language soundtrack a few times a day (the English version is normally at 10am, 11am, 1pm and 3pm).

Photography and filming are permitted throughout the camp, though visitors should be discreet when using such equipment. There's a self-service snack bar by the entrance as well as a *kantor* (private currency-exchange office), free left-luggage room and several bookshops with publications about the place.

Get a copy of the museum-produced *Auschwitz Birkenau Guidebook* (3zł), available in many languages, including English. It has plans of both camps and gets you round the grounds. **English-language tours** (26zł) of both camps, including entry to the documentary film, last 3½ hours and depart at 10.30am, 11.30am and 1.30pm, with an additional one at 3.30pm from April to September.

BIRKENAU

It was actually at Birkenau, not Auschwitz, that the torture and murder of more than a



million Jews took place. Massive (175 hectares), purpose-built and typically 'efficient', the camp had more than 300 prison 'barracks'. (They were actually stables built for 52 horses but housed 300 people each.) Birkenau also had four huge gas chambers complete with crematoria. Each could asphyxiate 2000 people at one time, and there were electric lifts to raise the bodies to the ovens. The camp could hold up to 200,000 inmates – and often did.

Though much of Birkenau was destroyed by the retreating Nazis, the size of the place, fenced off with long lines of barbed wire and watchtowers stretching almost as far as your eye can see, will give you some idea of the scale of the crime; climb the tower at the entrance gate to get the full effect. Some of the surviving barracks are open to visitors for viewing, silent contemplation and prayer (p279). Make sure to leave enough time (at least an hour) to walk around the camp.

AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTRE

In the centre of the town of Oświęcim, the excellent **Auschwitz Jewish Center** (☎ 033 844 7002; www.ajcf.org; Plac Skarbka 5; admission free; 🕒 8.30am–8pm

Sun–Fri Mar–Oct, 8.30am–6pm Sun–Fri Nov–Feb) approaches the Holocaust from another angle, with permanent exhibitions building up a picture of Oświęcim's thriving Jewish community in the years before WWII. While the restored synagogue (1913), archive photos and Judaica found beneath the town's Great Synagogue in 2004 are much less harrowing than the camps' displays, trying to reconcile the family portraits here with the museum's ranks of mug shots quickly brings home the realities of what happened. It's hard to forget you're looking at the last remnants of Polish Jewry, an all-but-exterminated culture.

Sleeping & Eating

Centre for Dialogue and Prayer (Centrum Dialogu i Modlitwy; ☎ 033 843 1000; www.centrum-dialogu.oswiecim.pl; ul Kolbego 1; camping per person 20zł, bed per adult/student 88/68zł; 🕒 10am–5pm) This 50-bed centre is a Catholic facility 500m southwest of the tourist office, providing comfortable and quiet accommodation in rooms of two to 10 beds (most with en suite) and a restaurant.

International Youth Meeting Centre (Międzynarodowy Dom Spotkań Młodzieży; ☎ 033 843 2107; www

.m.dsm.pl; ul Legionów 11; camping 15zł, s 110–120zł, d 150–170zł, tr 180–210zł; 🕒 10am–5pm) This German-built centre, 1km east of the train station, is essentially for long-staying groups, but they'll take anyone if there are vacancies. Meals and cheaper rooms with shared bathroom are available.

Hotel Olecki (☎ 033 847 5000; www.hotelelecki.pl; ul Leszczyńskiej 12; s/d/tr 150/180/200zł, ste 300–350zł; 🕒 10am–5pm) This spanking new 29-room hotel, just opposite the tourist office and entrance to Auschwitz, is the most comfortable and centrally located accommodation in Oświęcim.

Getting There & Around

For most tourists, the jump-off point for Oświęcim is Kraków. Buses (8zł, 1½ hours, up to 10 daily) can be a more convenient option than trains, as they drop you off in the parking lot opposite the entrance to Auschwitz. Minibuses, which are even more frequent, arrive at and depart from ul Więźniów Oświęcimia, northeast of the museum. Take note that the last minibus goes back to Kraków at 7pm and the last bus 15 minutes later.

If you want to stay beyond that time you'll need to take a train back to Kraków (11zł, 1½ hours, up to 12 a day). If Katowice is your starting point, there are five daily trains (15.50zł, one hour) and twice as many buses (6zł, 1½ hours), though only one stops near the museum. If you want to go to Pszczyna (10zł) from Oświęcim, take the train to Czechowice-Dziedzice (up to 12 daily) and change there. The whole journey should take about 1½ hours.

To get from the train station to the museum, take any of the southbound city buses (2.40zł), including the 24, 25, 28 and 29. Taxis will take you to either camp for 10zł to 15zł.

From mid-April to late October, there is a free bus linking Auschwitz with Birkenau. It departs hourly, from 10.30am to 5.30pm (11am to 6pm from Birkenau), from outside the entrance to the visitors centre. Alternatively, you can walk (2km) or take a taxi (10zł to 15zł).

There are no buses from Birkenau to the train station; walk the 2km or take a taxi. Alternatively, catch the free shuttle bus back to Auschwitz and change there for one of the frequent buses to the station.

PSZCZYNA

pop 25,000

One of the oldest towns in Silesia (its origins go back to the 11th century), Pszczyna (*pschi-nah*), the 'pearl of Silesia', was home for centuries to the Piasts. In 1847, after centuries of changing ownership, it became the property of the powerful Hochberg family of Prussia.

In the last months of WWI, Pszczyna was the flashpoint of the first of three consecutive Silesian uprisings in which Polish peasants took up arms and demanded that the region be incorporated into Poland. Their wishes were granted in 1921, following a plebiscite held by the League of Nations.

Information

Bank Zachodni (ul Piastowska 2; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Fri)

Post office (ul Batorego 1; 🕒 7am–8pm Mon–Fri,

7am–1pm Sat)

PTTK office (☎ 032 210 3530; www.pttk-pszczyna.slask.pl in Polish; Rynek 15; 🕒 8am–5pm Mon–Fri,

9am–1pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 032 212 9999; www.pszczyna.info.pl; Brama Wybranców 1; 🕒 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat, noon–6pm Sun) Just inside the castle gate.

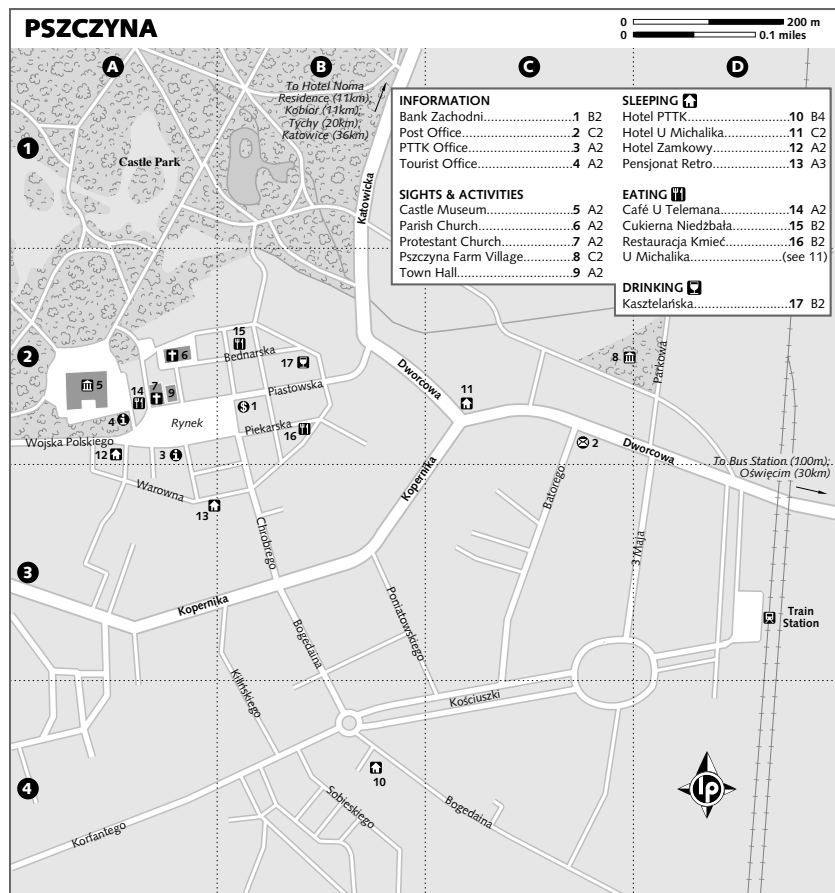
Sights

On the western side of the Old Town, Pszczyna's grandiose **castle** dates back to the 12th century, when the Opole dukes built a hunting lodge here. It has been enlarged and redesigned several times, most recently in 1870.

The Hochbergs, who owned the castle until 1945, furnished their home according to their status – they were among the richest families in Europe, ruling vast swathes of land from their Silesian family seat, the castle at Książ (p332). Priceless works of art completed the scene, but most were lost during WWII.

Today the palace houses the **Castle Museum** (Muzeum Zamkowe; ☎ 032 210 3037; www.zamek-pszczyna.pl; adult/concession/family 12/7/28zł; 🕒 11am–3pm Mon, 10am–3pm Tue, 9am–5pm Wed–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 10am–6pm Sun Jul & Aug, 11am–3pm Mon, 10am–3pm Tue, 9am–5pm Wed, 9am–4pm Thu & Fri, 10am–4pm Sat, 10am–5pm Sun Apr–Jun, Sep & Oct, 11am–3pm Tue, 9am–4pm Wed, 9am–3pm Thu & Fri, 10am–3pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun Nov–Mar), with about a dozen rooms open over three floors. Those wanting more detailed information should pick up a copy of the English-language guidebook *The Castle Museum in Pszczyna* (14zł) from the ticket office.

The castle's interiors feature bedchambers, drawing rooms and salons filled with



tapestries, ceramics, paintings and hunting trophies. Unforgettable are the **library** (biblioteka; adult/concession 4/2zł), panelled entirely in walnut, and the stunning **Mirror Chamber** (Sala Lustrzana), which hosts occasional chamber music concerts. Some of the palace's rooms also contain themed exhibitions, including a **collection of armour** (zbrojownia) in the basement and one of miniscule portraits in the **Cabinet of Miniatures** (Gabinet Miniatur; adult/concession 2.50/1.50zł) on the 3rd floor. Behind the castle is the extensive English-style **Castle Park** (Park Zamkowy) along the Pszczynka River.

The castle gives on to the elongated and leafy **Rynek**, lined with old burghers' houses dating mostly from the 18th and 19th centuries. On its northern side is the **Protestant**

church and, next to it at No 2, the **town hall**, both remodelled early this century. Behind the town hall is the 14th-century **parish church**, extensively rebuilt over the years, with a typically lavish interior featuring a ceiling painting of the Ascension.

A five-minute walk east of the Rynek is the small but interesting **Pszczyna Farm Village** (Zagroda Wsi Pszczyńskiej; ☎ 0603 131 186; ul Parkowa; adult/concession 5/2.50zł; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Sat, 10am-sunset Sun Apr-Nov), a small but interesting skansen with half a dozen 200-year-old timber houses – including a mill, smithy and barn – collected from the region.

The town of **Tychy**, some 20km north of Pszczyna, 16km south of Katowice and on the same train line, has been famous for its

beer for four centuries, and a tour of the **Tyskie Browary Książęce** (Tychy Prince's Brewery; ☎ 032 327 8430; wycieczki.tyskie.kp.pl; ul Mikołowska 5; ☎ 2-6pm Mon, 10am-2pm Tue, noon-6pm Wed, 10am-6pm Thu, 10am-8pm Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) is well worth a stopover. The tours last about 2½ hours and include a visit to the Tychy Brewing Museum (Tyskie Museum Piwowarstwa) and, of course, a beer tasting in the pub. They are free and conducted in six languages, including English, but you should book in advance by phone or email.

Sleeping

Hotel PTTK (☎ 032 210 3833; www.pttk-pszczyna.slask.pl in Polish; ul Bogedaina 16; s 45-75zł, d 60-99zł; (P)) The PTTK hotel, south of the Rynek, is charmingly situated in a former redbrick prison, though the last inmate left in 1975. There's nothing cell-like about the rooms now, though the cheaper rooms share facilities. Breakfast is not included.

Pensjonat Retro (☎ 032 210 2245; retro@retro.pl; ul Warowna 31; s 95-110zł, d 120-140zł, tr 160zł; (P)) Named (and decorated) long before retro became a byword for cool, this guesthouse with 15 rooms in two buildings is a friendly and central choice.

Hotel U Michalika (☎ 032 210 1355; umichalika@post.pl; ul Dworcowa 11; s/d/tr 110/150/190zł; (P)) This hotel is owned and operated by local chef-turned-entrepreneur Stefan Michalika and offers 16 modern and upbeat rooms. It is located east of the Old Town. The in-house restaurant is very good.

Hotel Zamkowy (☎ 032 449 1720; www.hotelzamkowy.eu; Rynek 20; s/d/tr 200/240/320zł) Also known by its English name, the Castle Hotel is a stunner of a new 10-room boutique caravanserai housed in a renovated 18th-century burgher's house. If the marble floors in the public areas and the guestrooms' enormous bathrooms don't impress, the views of the Rynek and the castle will. Rates come down between 10% and 15% at the weekend.

Hotel Noma Residence (☎ 032 219 4678; www.promnice.com.pl; ul Promnicka; r 300-540zł, ste 600-740zł; (P) ☎ ☎ ☎) Housed in a half-timbered royal hunting lodge at Kobiór, 9km south of Tychy and on the train line linking Katowice with Pszczyna, this 13-room hostelry is a destination in itself and must be seen to be believed. Built in 1868, it retains many of its original features and all of its character. The two rooms in the Hunting Cottage 100m from the main building are cosy and romantic;

the pair of Duke's Suites extravagant beyond your dreams.

Eating & Drinking

Cukierna Niedźbala (☎ 032 210 3691; ul Bednarska 10; ☎ 7am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 7am-2pm Sat, 9.30am-2pm Sun) Probably Pszczyna's best bakery (judging from the queues) and famous for its poppy-seed pastries.

Café U Telemana (☎ 032 449 1520; www.utelemanna.roj.pl; dishes 5-12zł; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Thu, 9am-11pm Fri & Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) Located in the courtyard of the castle, this is a good pit stop for a drink or a snack after viewing the castle. The café is named after 18th-century composer Georg Philip Telemann (1681-1767), who lived here for four years in the early 18th century.

Restauracja Kmieć (☎ 032 210 3638; www.kmiec.pna.pl; ul Piekarska 10; mains 15-27zł; ☎ noon-9pm) Set in a historic townhouse dating from 1756, this long-established family restaurant has a solid range of old-fashioned Polish food and is hugely popular for it.

U Michalika (☎ 032 210 1355; ul Dworcowa 11; mains 14-26zł; ☎ 11am-10pm Tue-Sat, noon-10pm Sun & Mon) Located at the hotel of that name, this is said to be the best restaurant in Pszczyna.

Kasztelańska (☎ 032 210 3638; ul Bednarska 3; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-midnight Fri & Sat, noon-11pm Sun) This pub is a bit more relaxed than the places on the Rynek and makes a good spot for a leisurely beer.

Getting There & Away

The bus and train stations are to the east of the centre, about 200m apart. Trains to Katowice (7.50zł, 45 minutes) via Tychy and Kobiór run roughly every hour. To Oświęcim (10zł, 1½ hours), take any of the frequent trains to Czechowice-Dziedzice and change there. There's only one bus to Oświęcim (6zł, 40 minutes) but four to Kraków (15zł, 2½ hours). If you want to get to Kraków and there's no bus due, go by train to Katowice, from where trains leave every hour or so.

LOWER SILESIA

A fertile lowland extending along the upper and middle course of the Odra River, Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk) was settled relatively early on, and is full of old towns and villages. Architecture buffs will have a field day with the wide assortment of castles and churches

preserved in some unlikely spots, and the area's larger towns have more than enough to tempt those with partying on their minds.

OPOLE

pop 126,700

Halfway between Katowice and Wrocław, Opole lies on the border of Upper and Lower Silesia, but generally considers itself part of its own Opole Silesia (Śląsk Opolski) and is the capital of its own voivodeship called Opolskie. The region is known for an active German minority, one of the few communities of its kind to survive the war. They number about 45,000 and are represented in local government.

The first Slav stronghold was built here in the 9th century. In the 13th century Opole became the capital of its principality and was ruled by a line of Silesian Piasts until 1532, even though it was part of Bohemia from 1327. Later, Opole fell to Austria, then to Prussia, and after significant destruction in WWII returned to Poland in 1945.

Today Opole is a fairly large regional industrial centre best known for the **National Festival of Polish Song** (Krajowy Festiwal Piosenki Polskiej), which has taken place annually in June since 1963 and is broadcast nationwide on TV.

Information

Bank Pekao (ul Osmańczyka 15; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat)

Bank Zachodni (ul Ozimska 6; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri)

EMPIK (☎ 077 400 1715; www.empik.com; ul Krakowska 45/47; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat, noon–9pm Sun) Good for newspapers and magazines.

HMS Computers (☎ 077 453 1200; ul Krakowska 26; per hr 4zł; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat) Internet access.

Main post office (ul Krakowska 46; ☎ 24hr)

Orbis Travel (☎ 077 453 9730; www.orbis.opole.pl; ul Krakowska 31; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) Eurolines is based at this travel agency.

PTTK office (☎ 077 454 5113; ul Krakowska 17; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) Travel agency.

Tourist office (☎ 077 451 1987; www.opole.pl; ul Krakowska 15; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat Jul & Aug, 10am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–1pm Sat Sep–Jun)

Sights

Opole's **Rynek**, badly damaged during WWII, has been rebuilt. It is lined with attractive sand-coloured Baroque and Rococo houses and, particularly on the west side, pubs and

bars. The 64m-high tower of the oversized **town hall** in the middle was modelled after the one at the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and looks a little out of place here. The original, dating from 1864, collapsed in 1934 but was rebuilt in the same style.

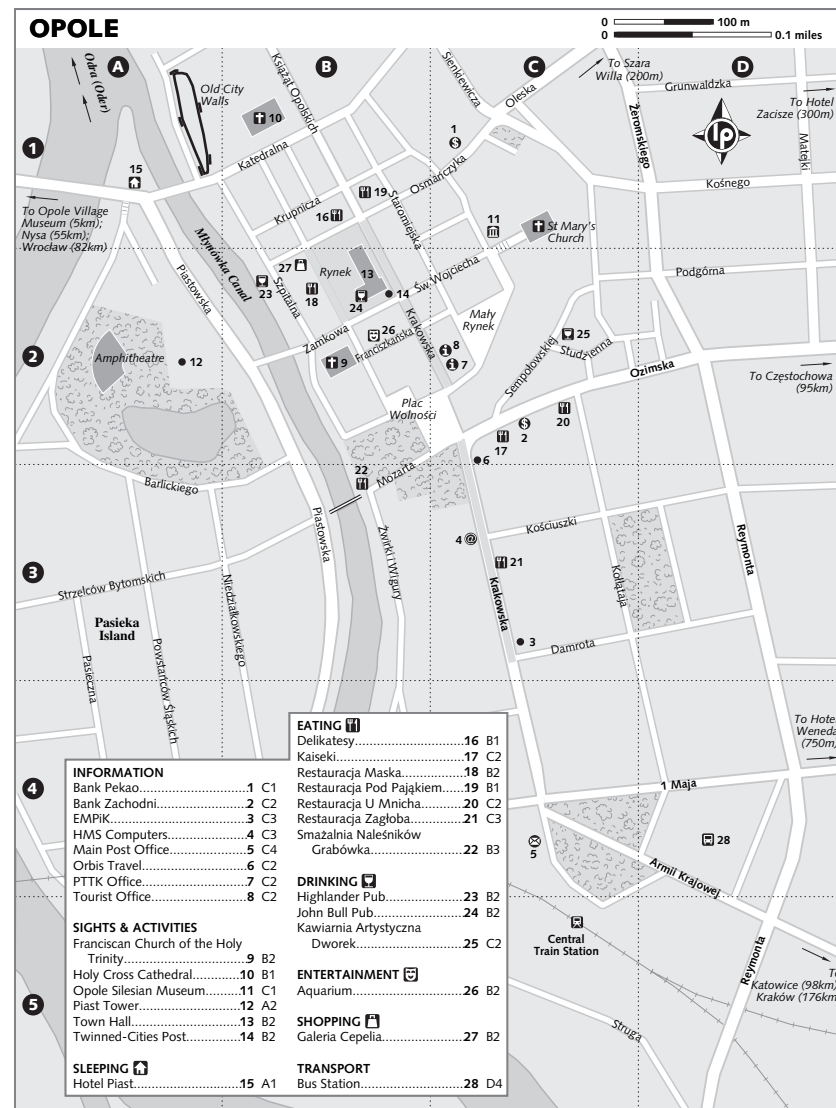
Opole is even madder than most Polish municipalities about matching up with towns and cities worldwide, judging from the **twinned-cities post** southeast of the town hall; it lists 13 twins of Opole – from Roanoke in the American state of Virginia to Grasse in France and Carrara in Italy.

The **Franciscan Church of the Holy Trinity** (Kościół Franciszkanów Św Trójcy; Plac Wolności 2), off the southern corner of the Rynek, was built of brick around 1330, but the interior was reshaped later on various occasions. It boasts an ornate high altar, an 18th-century organ, and a domed Renaissance chapel in the left-hand aisle, separated by a fine, late-16th-century wrought-iron grille. The highlight of the church is the **Chapel of St Anne** (Kaplica Św Anny), which is accessible from the right-hand aisle through a doorway with a tympanum. The Gothic-vaulted chapel houses a pair of massive double tombs (interring the local dukes) carved in sandstone in the 1380s. They were originally painted but the colour has almost disappeared. There are 13 more coffins in the crypt below.

Two blocks east of the Rynek, a former Jesuit college (1698) houses the **Opole Silesian Museum** (Muzeum Śląska Opolskiego; ☎ 077 453 6677; Mały Rynek 7; adult/concession 3/1zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am–4pm Tue–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat, noon–5pm Sun). The permanent display features the prehistory and history of the surrounding area and city, and there are always temporary exhibitions.

The Gothic **Holy Cross Cathedral** (Katedra Św Krzyża; ul Katedralna 2), a short walk north of the Rynek, features 73m-high towers and mostly Baroque interior furnishing. The chapel in the right-hand aisle shelters the red-marble tombstone of the last of the Opole dukes, Jan II Dobry (John II the Good), who popped his dual clobs here in 1532. A Gothic triptych (1519), the last survivor from the church's original collection of 26 pieces, is also displayed in this chapel. The lovely bronze gate at the western entrance was erected in 1995 to mark the church's 700th year.

The only vestige of the dukes' castle is the 33m-tall **Piast Tower** (Wieża Piastowska; ☎ 077 453 6121; ul Piastowska 14; adult/concession 4/2zł; ☎ 10am–1pm



& 2–6pm Tue–Sun), a sturdy watchtower with 3m walls and foundations 6m deep. Built in the 14th century, the castle was pulled down in the 1920s to make room for office buildings. You can climb the 163 steps to the top for a panoramic view over the city.

Opole also has an excellent skansen, the **Opole Village Museum** (Muzeum Wsi Opolskiej; ☎ 077

474 3021; ul Wrocławska 174; adult/student 6/3zł, free Mon; ☎ 10am–6pm Tue–Sun mid–Apr–mid–Oct, 10am–3pm Mon–Fri mid–Oct–mid–Apr). Located in the suburb of Bierkowice, 5km west of the centre, the 20-hectare skansen has a variety of rural architecture from the region. A shingled church from 1613, a windmill from 1734, a smithy from 1726 and a couple of large granaries are

among the showpieces. Several houses are fully furnished and decorated and can be visited. It's accessible by bus 9 with 'Bierkowice' written in front.

Sleeping

Hotel Zacisze (☎ 077 453 9553; www.hotel-zacisze.opole.pl; ul Grunwaldzka 28; s 70-120zł, d 130-220zł; P ☒ ☒ ☒) Located about 500m east of the Rynek, the 18-room Zacisze has a range of small but acceptable single and double rooms in a wonderfully leafy residential area. Cheaper rooms have shared facilities.

Szara Willa (☎ 077 441 4560; www.szarawilla.pl; ul Oleska 11; s 160-280zł, d 180-290zł; P ☒ ☒) Opole's first and only boutique hotel, the 'Gray Villa' has a crisp modern feel and design elements that are clearly Asian influenced. The 19 rooms are generously sized, with high ceilings, and four rooms in front give on to a large terrace. A plus is the attached fitness centre with bowling alleys.

Hotel Weneda (☎ 077 442 1000; www.hotel-weneda.opole.pl; ul 1 Maja 77; s 180-220zł, d 220-270zł, ste 280-320zł; P ☒ ☒ ☒) Don't be put off by the slightly shabby block – this is a decent mid-category hotel with 29 rooms and substantial weekend discounts. It's a 750m walk from the bus station, with plenty of city buses going past.

Hotel Piast (☎ 077 454 9710; www.hotelpiast.com.pl; ul Piastowska 1; s/d 239/288zł, ste 272-316zł; P ☒ ☒) Commanding the best location in the centre, the Piast sits on the northern tip of Pasięka Island, a short trot away from the Old Town. As you'd expect for these prices, the 29 rooms are classy and comfortable, and the house restaurant and bar do good business. Rooms are 199zł at the weekend.

Eating

Delikatesy (Rynek 13/14; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Thu, 7am-midnight Fri, 8am-midnight Sat, 8am-10pm Sun) This late-night sundries shop is conveniently located on the Rynek.

Smazalnia Naleśników Grabówka (☎ 077 454 1796; ul Mozarta 2; crepes 5.50-9.50zł; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) Enjoying a riverside location and gorgeous terrace, this tiny place offers authentic-tasting sweet and savoury crepes with a choice of two dozen different fillings.

Restauracja Maska (☎ 077 453 9267; Rynek 2/4; mains 9-30zł; ☎ 10am-2am) Maska is a charming establishment divided into a pub and restaurant, so you can dine on varied Polish cui-

sine to an incongruous soundtrack of funky house classics. Jerzy Grotowski's Theatre of 13 Rows (see p325) operated in this house from 1959 to 1964.

Kaiseiki (☎ 077 441 9100; ul Ozimska 4; dishes 9-39zł; ☎ noon-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun) This very stylish and very Japanese eatery in a modern shopping mall in the centre serves sushi by the piece as well as more substantial mains such as tempura.

our pick Restauracja Zagłoba (☎ 077 441 7860; www.zagloba.pl; ul Krakowska 39; mains 14-35zł; ☎ noon-midnight) One of our favourite restaurants in provincial Poland, this cellar eatery serves inspired modern Polish food in historic vaults and has won several local awards. Try the excellent Casimir's Delight (pork loin with wild mushroom sauce). Brunch is served from noon to 4pm at the weekend and is popular: make sure you book ahead.

Restauracja U Mnicha (☎ 077 454 5234; ul Ozimska 10, enter from ul Kollątaja; mains 17.50-29zł; ☎ 9am-11pm) This modern, monk-themed basement restaurant (modernised with air conditioning) serves up sandwiches, pizzas and hefty salads and holds regular summer barbecues in its small garden area.

Restauracja Pod Pajakiem (ul Książąt Opolskich 2/6; mains 18-30zł; ☎ 11am-9pm) 'Under the Spider' is a large Hungarian restaurant northeast of the Rynek that has live music on some nights.

Drinking & Entertainment

John Bull Pub (☎ 0502 634 922; Rynek-Ratusz; ☎ 10am-late) This facsimile of a pub from provincial Britain (right down to the busy carpet and fruit machines) has a huge 'African-style' terrace (go figure) on the Rynek that stays open till midnight in the warmer months.

Kawiarnia Artystyczna Dworek (☎ 077 454 3606; ul Studzienna 1; ☎ noon-2am) A leafy terrace tucked out the back of the Old Town, the 'Arts Palace Café' shelters a pub, art gallery and music club.

Highlander Pub (☎ 077 456 5528; ul Szpitalna 3; ☎ 11am-late) A good central place for a beer and a bop, the friendly but not-very-Scottish Highlander hosts DJs playing anything from tribal house to Latin and dancehall.

Aquarium (ul Franciszkańska 1; ☎ 5pm-4am) Soaked in UV light, the basement Aquarium brings on some top dance nights, including an entertaining kitsch funk party. It's serious clubbing for over-21s.

Shopping

Galeria Cepelia (☎ 077 454 1408; Rynek 5/6) Opole is famed for its porcelain hand-painted with fine floral motifs, and Cepelia is where you'll find the widest selection.

Getting There & Away

The train station and bus station face each other, not far south of the Old Town; you can walk to the Rynek in 10 minutes.

Opole is on the main line between Katowice (28zł, 1¼ hours, hourly) and Wrocław (22zł, 1¼ hours, hourly). Most Katowice trains continue to Kraków (36zł, 3½ hours). There are also frequent trains to Częstochowa (14zł, 1¼ hours), as well as morning and late-afternoon fast trains to Warsaw (84zł, 4½ hours).

Buses go regularly to Nysa (10zł, 1½ hours, up to 12 daily) and Klodzko (15zł, three hours, five daily), a route not so well serviced by trains.

LEGNICA

pop 105,400

Some 79km west of Wrocław, the origins of Legnica (leg-nee-tsa) go back to the 10th century, but it wasn't until the 13th century that real development began, when it became the joint capital of the Duchy of Legnica-Brzeg. In the 16th century the town saw golden days under Bohemian rule as an active centre of culture; the first university in Silesia was established here at that time. After the last Piast duke died in 1675, the town fell to the Habsburgs. In 1742 the Prussians took control.

Badly damaged during WWII, Legnica (Liegnitz in German) has revived as an industrial centre following the discovery of copper and nickel deposits in the region. Much of the city is drab and feels only partly constructed, but the few surviving historic buildings in the centre make for an interesting diversion.

Information

Bank Pekao ul Wrocławska (ul Wrocławska 26/28; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat); Plac Klasztorny (Plac Klasztorny 1; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

Bank Zachodni (ul Gwarna 4; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri)

Post office (ul Dworcowa 4; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun) Near the train and bus stations.

Tourist office (☎ 076 851 2280; www.legnica.pl in Polish; Rynek 29; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Under the arcade next to the theatre.

Sights

The brick **Piast Castle** (Zamek Piastowski) on the northern edge of the Old Town should be your first port of call. Erected in the 13th century, it was rebuilt in Gothic style (two towers from that period survive), then thoroughly modernised in the 1530s as a Renaissance residence, and again in 1835 when the noted German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel gave it a neoclassical look. Enter through the main gate, which is embellished with a Renaissance portal (1533), the only significant remnant of the 16th-century renovation. A glass pavilion in the middle of the courtyard shelters the foundations of the 13th-century Romanesque **Castle Chapel** (Kaplica Zamkowa; admission 2.50zł; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sat). The castle is now part of the city university.

The Baroque **Franciscan Church of St John the Baptist** (Kościół Franciszkanów Św Jana Chrzyciela; ul Partyzantów), southwest of the castle and north of the Rynek, is Legnica's most important church. The chapel off the right-hand (east) wall is actually the sanctuary of the former Gothic church, set at right angles to the existing one. Richly decorated, with a spectacular painted ceiling, the chapel also houses the extravagant **Legnica Piasts mausoleum** (☎ 9am-4pm). Enquire at the **Museum of Copper** (Muzeum Miedzi; ☎ 076 862 4949; ul Św Jana 1; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sat) nearby and they will open the chapel for you and show you around.

At the southern end of the Rynek, the **Cathedral of SS Peter and Paul** (Katedra Św Piotra i Pawła; Plac Katedralny) retains two original Gothic doorways. The one on the northern side (facing the Rynek) has a splendid (though recut) tympanum depicting the Adoration of the Magi, while that on the west depicts Mary with the infant Jesus. The interior has the usual hotchpotch of furnishings, of which the oldest piece, the bronze baptismal font with bas-reliefs in the chapel off the left aisle, dates from the late 13th century and is reputedly the oldest metal font in Poland.

The **Marian Church** (Kościół Mariacki; ul Biskupia) is another notable building, one of the oldest churches in Silesia but refurbished in mock-Gothic style in the 19th century. It's used today by the small Protestant community for Sunday services and doubles as a venue for cultural events, such as organ and chamber music concerts. Have a look at the luridly coloured **new townhouses** along ul Szpitalna and ul Środkowa to the southwest, which are trying to blend in with the older ones.

Sleeping

Legnica Hostel (☎ 076 862 5412; ssmlegnica@02.pl; ul Jordana 17; dm/d/tr 22/62/81zł; P ☒) The hostel, an 800m walk southeast of the centre and through City Park (Park Miejski), offers 50 beds, most of which are in five- to 10-bed dorms.

Hotel Kamieniczka (☎ 076 723 7392; www.hotel-kamieniczka.pl; ul Młynarska 15/16; s 85-145zł, d 125-210zł, tr/q/ste 275/365/405zł; P ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Central and sensitively modernised, this 17th-century townhouse hotel on the edge of the Old Town and opposite City Park is the pick of Legnica's scant accommodation offerings. The two dozen rooms are smart but not overdone, there are a couple of spacious suites and the house restaurant consolidates the touch of class. Rooms 3 and 4 on the 1st floor have large balconies.

Qubus Hotel (☎ 076 866 2100; www.qubushotel.com; ul Skarbowska 2; s 235-265zł, d 280zł, ste 345-535zł; P ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) A branch of the ever-growing chain of hotels, this 219-room business hotel is housed in a towering modern edifice that seems totally overblown for Legnica's modest needs. Still, if it's comfort you want you won't be complaining, and some hefty discounts – 25% to 35% – are available at the weekend.

Eating

Efez (☎ 076 727 7464; ul Najświętszej Marii Panny 9; mains 6.90-29.90zł; ☎ 9.30am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-midnight Fri, 9.30am-1am Sat, 10am-11pm Sun) This modern and bright Turkish place, in the central Galeria Piastów shopping centre, has excellent doner kebabs and *dürüm* (kebab wrapped in very thin, flat wheat bread) for 6.90zł to 12.90zł, as well as lots of salads.

Restauracja Tivoli (☎ 076 862 2304; ul Złotoryjska 21; mains 7-25zł; ☎ 10am-9pm) This low-key traditional restaurant, 200m southwest of the Rynek, has served hearty Polish fare since 1957. We love the plates and old photos on the walls as well as the open buffet of *zakąski* (hors d'oeuvres).

Antica Roma (☎ 076 722 5060; ul Skarbowska 1; mains 12-28zł) This comfortable eatery a short distance southwest of the castle has pizza (12zł to 15zł), pasta (13zł to 18zł) and more ambitious Italian main courses.

Getting There & Away

The train and bus stations are next to each other on the northeastern edge, just over ul Pocztowa from the Old Town. Take the bus to regional destinations such as Legnickie

Pole (3.70zł, 30 minutes, up to 15 daily), Jelenia Góra (13zł, 2½ hours, up to 11 daily), Świdnica (12zł, 1½ hours, up to eight daily) and Kłodzko (22zł, three hours, up to four daily). There are hourly trains to Wrocław (11zł, 1½ hours) and several trains a day to Warsaw (107zł, 7½ hours).

LEGNICKIE POLE

pop 4950

The small village of Legnickie Pole (*leg-neets-kyeh po-leh*), or 'Legnica Field', holds its place in folk history due to the great battle of 9 April 1241. Silesian troops under the command of Duke Henryk Pobożny (Henry the Pious) were defeated by the Tatars. The duke was killed and beheaded; the enemy stuck his head on a pole and proceeded to Legnica, but failed to take the town. In the absence of his head, the duke's wife, Princess Anna, identified his body by the six toes on his left foot.

Henryk's mother, Princess Hedwig (Księżna Jadwiga; see p327), built a small commemorative chapel on the site of his decapitation, later replaced by a Gothic church. The church now shelters the **Museum of the Battle of Legnica** (Muzeum Bitwy Legnickiej; ☎ 076 858 2398; adult/concession 4.50/2.50zł; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun). The modest exhibition features weapons, armour and a copy of the duke's tomb – the original is in the National Museum in Wrocław – in the nave on the ground floor, and a miniature model of the battle (commentary in German and Polish only) on the 1st floor.

Across the road from the museum is the former Benedictine Abbey. Its central part is occupied by the **Church of St Hedwig** (Kościół Św Jadwigi), a masterpiece of Baroque art dating from the 1730s and designed by Bohemian architect Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer, who also did the sublime Minorite church in Eger in northern Hungary. Inside, the vaulting has splendid frescoes by Bavarian painter Cosmas Damian Asam. The fresco over the organ loft shows Princess Anna with the body of her husband after the battle.

Sleeping & Eating

Jurta Motel (☎ 076 858 2094; www.rmjurta.webpark.pl; ul Kossak-Szczuckiej 7; s 55-70zł, d 65-90zł, tr/ste 90/140zł; P) The only year-round place to stay in central Legnickie Pole, the 32-bed Jurta has rooms with or without en suite, and there's a simple in-house restaurant to keep you from starving.

Camping Nr 234 (☎ 076 858 2397; ul Henryka Brodatego 7; per person/small tent/large tent/caravan 11/9/12/20zł; ☎ May-Sep; P ☒) This basic camping ground has 10 triangular cabins and a tent area. Nonguests can use the site's pool for 5zł (child 3zł).

Getting There & Away

Up to 15 daily buses run to Legnica (3.70zł, 30 minutes), though most leave in the morning. There are also a number of private minibuses (3zł).

ZIELONA GÓRA

pop 118,750

Like the majority of other towns in the region, Zielona Góra (*zhyeh-lo-na goo-rah*) was founded by the Silesian Piasts. It was part of the Głogów Duchy, one of the numerous regional principalities, before it passed to the Habsburgs in the 16th century and to Prussia two centuries later. Unlike most other Silesian towns, however, Zielona Góra, or 'Green Mountain', came through the 1945 offensive during WWII with minimal damage, which is why prewar architecture is well represented here.

Zielona Góra also stands out as Poland's only wine producer. The wine-making tradition runs all the way back to the 14th century, but the climate is less than ideal and viticulture was never a very profitable endeavour here. Though the output today is merely symbolic, the city still holds the **Feast of the Grape Harvest** (Święto Winobrania) at the end of September, as it has for the past century and a half.

Information

Bank Pekao (ul Pieniężnego 24; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)
Bank Zachodni (ul Sikorskiego 9; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)
Internet Café (☎ 068 324 6369; www.ipub.pl; ul Kupiecka 28; per hr 5zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) In the basement, down the steps below the graffiti.
Post office (ul Bohaterów Westerplatte 21; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm Sat, 9am-2pm Sun)
Tourist office (☎ 068 327 0323; www.zielona-gora.pl; ul Kupiecka 15; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, plus 10am-2pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun–mid-Sep)

Sights

Lined with brightly painted houses, the renovated **Stary Rynek** (Old Market Sq) is a pleasant and harmonious square at the end of the long pedestrian stretch of Al Niepodległości

and ul Żeromskiego. The 18th-century **town hall**, complete with a slim 54m tower, has escaped being over-modernised in spite of changes over the years.

The **Lubuski Regional Museum** (Muzeum Ziemi Lubuskiej; ☎ 068 327 2345; www.zgora.pl/muzeum in Polish; Al Niepodległości 15; adult/concession 6/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 11am-5pm Wed-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) has a large collection of Silesian sacral art from the 14th to 18th centuries, a fascinating Clock Gallery and a permanent exhibition of works by Marian Kruczek (1927–83). Kruczek used everyday objects – anything from buttons to spark plugs – to create some striking assemblages, and this is the largest collection of his work in Poland. In the same building (and included in the ticket price) you'll find the new **Wine Museum** (Muzeum Wina), which illustrates the history of wine-making in the region, as well as the **Museum of Torture** (Muzeum Dawnych Tortur), Poland's largest exhibition on the history of criminal law, the penalty system and torture methods employed from the Middle Ages until the 18th century.

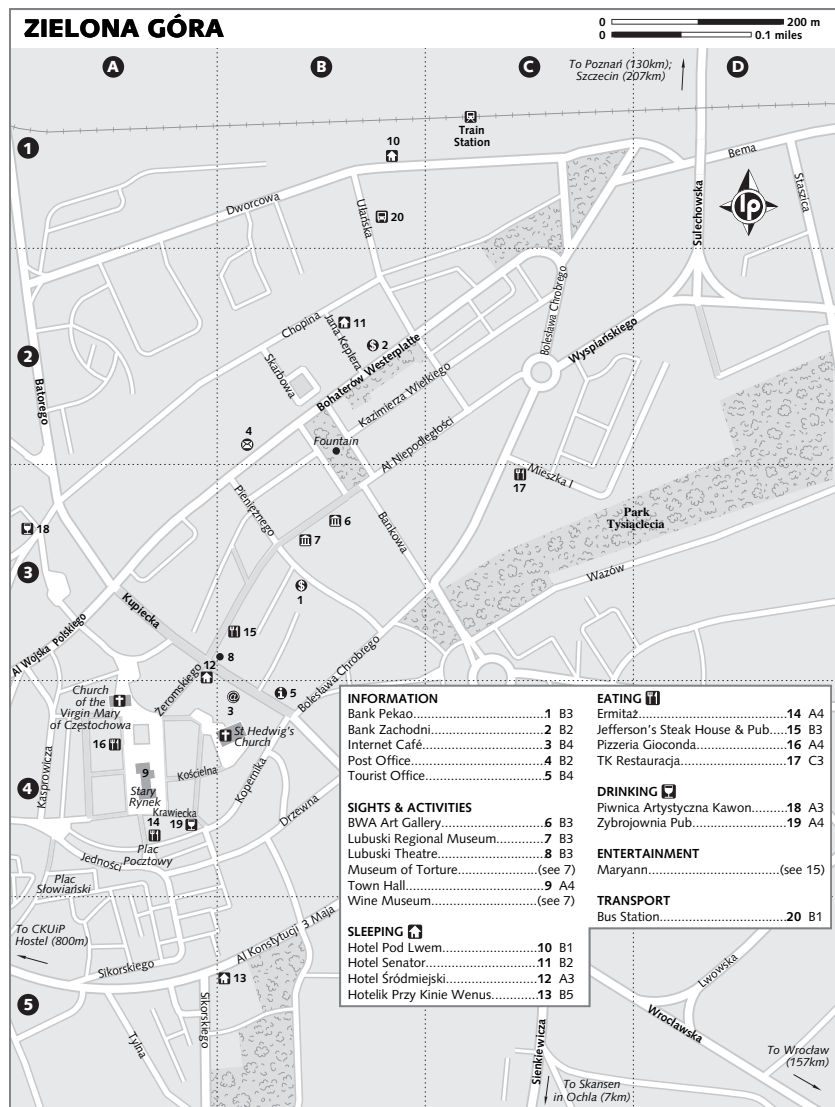
Next door to the museum is the **BWA Art Gallery** (☎ 068 325 3726; www.bwazg.pl in Polish; Al Niepodległości 19; admission varies; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, 11am-5pm Wed-Fri & Sun, noon-4pm Sat), which hosts changing exhibitions of contemporary art. On the same street to the south, don't miss the fabulous Art Deco **Lubuski Theatre** (Teatr Lubuski; ☎ 068 452 7272; Al Niepodległości 3/5), designed by the Berlin architect Oskar Kaufmann in 1931.

There's a **skansen** (Muzeum Etnograficzne Skansen; ☎ 068 321 1591; www.muzeum-etnograficzne.zielona-gora.pl; ul Muzealna 5, adult/concession/family 7/5/16zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-3pm Tue-Sun Nov-Mar) in Ochla, 7km south of the city, served by bus 27. About three dozen traditional buildings – half of them residential – have been reassembled over 13 hectares of land.

Sleeping

CKUIP Hostel (☎ 068 453 0139; www.cku.zgora.pl; ul Długa 13; dm 26-33zł, s/d 100/140zł; ☒) This spotless hostel, 800m west of the Stary Rynek over the ring road, has place for 70 travellers, mostly in good six-bed dorms.

Hotelik Przy Kinie Wenus (☎ 068 327 1329; Al Konstytucji 3 Maja 6; r 80-120zł; P) This family house 'By the Venus Cinema' on the southern ring road has been converted somewhat haphazardly into a four-room guesthouse. It's noisy but very inviting.



Hotel Śródmiejski (☎ 068 325 4471; www.srodmiejski.maxmedia.pl; ul Żeromskiego 23; s 100-180zł, d 120-300zł, tr 270zł; P ☎) Slightly institutional corridors don't detract from the comfortable rooms (with or without en suite) at this very central place. Generous weekend discounts available.

Hotel Pod Lwem (☎ 068 324 1055; www.hotelpodlwem.emeteor.pl; ul Dworcowa 14; s 120zł, d & tr 160-190zł;

☎) Convenience of a different kind, the 18-room 'Under the Lion' sits just opposite the bus station, looking like a rural guesthouse that somehow woke up between a main road and a train line. Cosy furnishings expand on the homely theme.

Hotel Senator (☎ 068 324 0436; www.hotelsenator.net; ul Chopina 23a, enter from ul Jana Keplera; s 220-260zł;

d 260-320zł; P ☎) Prices may seem a little steep here, but that's mainly because they include half board (breakfast and dinner) and two nonalcoholic drinks. At the weekend room-only rates are heavily reduced, with singles/doubles from 143/169zł. Either way it's a great little 43-bed establishment, with eager service and comfortable rooms.

Eating

Pizzeria Gioconda (☎ 068 324 6565; ul Mariacka 5; mains 6.50-15.50zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Tuck into the fastest Italian food on the Stry Rynek under the inscrutable gaze of Mona Lisa. Gourmet it ain't, but you'll certainly encounter worse pizzas than these.

TK Restauracja (☎ 068 451 2626; www.kasyno.zgo.pl; ul Bolesława Chrobrego 35/41; mains 12-30zł; ☎ noon-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Discreetly removed from the centre, TK's is so unobtrusive you barely notice it's there – quite an achievement for a 20-foot glass-fronted restaurant.

Jefferson's Steak House & Pub (☎ 068 329 3939; www.jeffersons.pl; Al Niepodległości 3/5; mains 13.90-32.90zł; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Thu, 10am-2am Fri & Sat, noon-midnight Sun) This pleasant place with comfortable 'living room' décor in the theatre building has a good range of steaks and stays open late enough to permit at least a couple of post-performance nightcaps. But just what the third president of the US (yes, that's Tom all right) has to do with it remains a mystery.

Ermitaż (☎ 068 329 0443; Plac Pocztowy 16; mains 28-55zł; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) The new kid on the block, this café-restaurant attracts ZG's movers and shakers with its stylish décor, Mediterranean-tinged cuisine (lots of pasta dishes for 19zł to 22zł), excellent coffee and large terrace.

Drinking & Entertainment

Piwnica Artystyczna Kawon (☎ 068 324 4386; ul Zamkowa 5; ☎ 11am-2am Mon-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) Weird beer-bottle installations, tables made from sewing machines, rusty swords, old dust-covered lanterns – it may sound like a cliché, but you really do need to see this place to believe it.

Zbrojownia Pub (☎ 0669 337 319; ul Krawiecka 7/9; ☎ 4pm-4am Mon-Sat, 4pm-1am Sun) This basement bar boasts the best opening hours in town. Insomniacs, barflies and plenty of part-timers gather to take in occasional gigs and admire the random décor.

Maryann (☎ 068 329 3939; Al Niepodległości 3/5; ☎ 8pm-4am Thu-Sun) This hugely popular club one floor down from Jefferson's Steak House & Pub tries to be everything to everyone: 'music club, drink bar, party, TV, talk/comment, chill out'. On Friday night, when karaoke is on offer, it decidedly ain't for us.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is about 1km northeast of the city centre, and the train station just across ul Dworcowa. Major destinations by bus include Poznań (22zł, 2¼ hours, up to seven daily) and Wrocław (23zł, 3½ hours), with between seven and nine departures a day. There are also up to seven buses to Jelenia Góra (26zł, four hours), which is a more convenient way of getting there than by train, and five buses to Legnica (17.50zł, 2½ hours).

There are six trains to Wrocław daily (36zł, 3½ hours), one to Kraków (50zł, eight hours), four to Szczecin (38zł, five hours) and six to Poznań (31zł to 53zł, 2½ hours). For Warsaw (88zł, 5½ hours), there's one morning express train and one fast afternoon train.

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