

Wielkopolska



If you want to distil the essence of Poland's eventful history, head for Wielkopolska. The region's name means Greater Poland, and with good reason – this is where the Polish state was founded in the Middle Ages, when warring Slavic tribes united to become the original Poles. Centuries later, the local population has an understandable pride in its history. Every city, town and village has treasured relics that have escaped the upheavals of the past millennia and help to define them.

Despite this distinct identity, Wielkopolska is often overlooked by visitors focusing on the high-profile attractions of Poland's coast and its mountainous south. Though Poznań is a city focused on commerce, it has a lively character and plenty of sights; and outside the city, the Wielkopolska countryside offers a selection of charming heritage towns and attractive rural scenery. Among the province's sights are eccentrically constructed castles, steam trains, palaces, churches, nature reserves and a memorable Iron Age settlement. And at the heart of it all is the great cathedral of Gniezno, the birthplace of Catholic Poland.

It's an impressive menu – but Wielkopolska is also a great place to depart from the tourist trail, and strike out on your own. When you've had your fill of its major cities and towns, choose a destination from the bus or train station departure board and head on out. Wherever you end up, you'll be sure to find something of historic interest...it's that kind of place.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sampling the **historic buildings** (p373) and lively **entertainment** (p384) of Poznań's Old Town
- Going back to the Iron Age at the fortified village of **Biskupin** (p394)
- Exploring Gniezno's monumental historic **cathedral** (p391)
- **Cycling** (p380) through the Wielkopolska countryside
- Visiting the small, distinctive castles at **Kórnik** (p386) and **Gołuchów** (p399)
- Encountering meteorite craters at **Morasko** (p388)
- Dancing the night away at the **Ekwador club** (p385) in Manieczki
- Catching a steam train to **Wolsztyn** (p389)



■ POPULATION: 3.4 MILLION

■ AREA: 30,000 SQ KM



Getting There & Away

Poznań is the main entry point for Wielkopolska, with its own airport and excellent rail and bus connections.

POZNAŃ

pop 568,000

If you arrive in Poznań any evening and stroll into its central market square, you'll receive an instant introduction to the characteristic energy of Wielkopolska's capital. The city's Old Town district is buzzing at any time of the day, and positively jumping by night, full of people heading to its many restaurants, pubs and clubs. Though it's also famous for its numerous trade fairs, which periodically make Poznań near-inaccessible to the casual traveller, the combination of international business travellers and the city's huge student population has created a distinctive vibe that is quite independent of tourism.

In addition to its energetic personality, Poznań offers many historical attractions in its centre, particularly museums, and its plentiful transport links make it a great base from which to explore the quieter surrounding countryside.

HISTORY

The history of Poznań and the history of Poland were much the same thing in the nation's earliest days. The city was founded as a 9th-century settlement on the easily defensible island of Ostrów Tumski, during the reign of Poland's first ruler, Duke Mieszko I. Some historians even claim that it was here, not in Gniezno, that the duke's baptism took place in 966.

Mieszko's son, the first Polish king, Bolesław Chrobry, further strengthened the island, and the troops of the Holy Roman Empire that conquered the region in 1005 didn't even bother to lay siege to it. The Bohemian Prince Bratislav (Brzetysław), however, liked a challenge and damaged the town considerably in 1038. This marked the end for Poznań as the royal seat (though kings were buried here until 1296), as subsequent rulers chose Kraków as their home.

Poznań continued to develop as a commercial centre – in 1253 a new town centre was laid out on the left bank of the Warta

River. Soon afterwards a castle was built and the town was encircled with defensive walls. Poznań's trade flourished during the Renaissance period, and by the end of the 16th century the population had passed the 20,000 mark.

But into every city's life a little rain must fall. From the mid-17th century on, Swedish, Prussian and Russian invasions, together with a series of natural disasters, battered the city. In the Second Partition of 1793, Poznań fell under Prussian occupation and was renamed Posen, later becoming part of Germany and experiencing steady industrial growth up to the outbreak of WWI.

The Wielkopolska Insurrection, which broke out in Poznań in December 1918, led to the city's addition to the newly reformed Polish state (see boxed text, p375). Poznań's long trading traditions were then revived with the establishment of regular trade fairs in 1921.

The city fell into German hands once more during WWII, and was incorporated into Hitler's Third Reich. In 1945, the battle for its liberation took a month and did a huge amount of damage.

In the postwar era, Poznań was one of the first cities to feel the forceful hand of the communist regime, during a massive workers strike in June 1956 (see boxed text, p379). The spontaneous demonstration, cruelly crushed by tanks, turned out to be the first of a wave of popular protests on the long and painful road to overcoming communist rule.

Since the return of democracy, Poznań has taken advantage of its business traditions and favourable location near Germany to develop its role as an important educational and industrial centre.

ORIENTATION

Poznań Główny train station is about 2km southwest of the Old Town, which is the main tourist destination. Between the two spreads the modern commercial centre, where most businesses and many hotels are located.

Most tourist sights are either on or near the medieval marketplace, the Stary Rynek (Map pp376–7). The other important area for visitors is the birthplace of the city, Ostrów Tumski island (Map p374), 1km east of the Old Town, beyond the Warta River.

Maps

Poland's major publishers produce good, detailed maps of Poznań, which are readily available in the city. The tourist offices also provide free plans of the Old Town and central area.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Bookseller (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 856 0279; ul Powstańców Wielkopolskich; ☹ 9am–5pm) Big stock of Lonely Planet guides.

EMPIK Megastore (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 852 6690; ul Ratajczaka 44; ☹ 9am–10pm Mon–Sat, 11am–6pm Sun)

Globtroter (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 853 2915; Stary Rynek 98/100) Enter from ul Żydowska.

Księgarnia Kawiarnia Bookcrossing (Map pp376–7; ☎ 0664 139239; ul Ratajczaka 18; ☹ 11am–8pm) Down the arcade towards the Apollo Cinema. Has a shelf of used books you can swap with your own, and free internet access.

Omnibus (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 853 6182; ul Św Marcina 39; ☹ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat)

Cultural Centres

Centrum Kultury Zamek (Castle Cultural Centre; Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 646 5200; www.zamek.poznan.pl; ul Św Marcina 80/82) Active cultural hub located in the Kaiserhaus, hosting cinema, art and music events.

Internet Access

Adax (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 850 1100; ul Półwiejska 28; per hr 2.50zł)

E24 (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 859 6303; Stary Browar; per hr 1.50–4.50zł; ☹ 24hr)

Internet C@ffe (Map pp376–7; ul 23 Lutego 7; per hr3zł; ☹ 9am–9pm Mon–Sat, noon–8pm Sun)

Kawiarenka Internetowa (Map p374; Rondo Kaponiera; per hr 3zł; ☹ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri) Beneath the underpass.

Tunel (Map p374; ☎ 061 863 5305; Poznań Główny, ul Dworcowa 1; per hr 3zł; ☹ 24hr)

Money

Bank BPH (Map pp376–7; Stary Rynek 97/98)

Bank Pekao (Map pp376–7) Northern Old Town (ul Masztalarska 8A); Western Old Town (ul Paderewskiego 3); Station area (ul Św Marcina 52/56)

Bank Zachodni (Map pp376–7; Plac Wolności 16)

Post

Main post office (Map pp376–7; ul Kościuszki 77; ☹ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun)

DISCOUNT CARD

The **Poznań City Card** (Poznańska Karta Miejska; www.poznan.pl; 1/2/3 days 30/40/45zł) provides free entry to major museums, sizable discounts at restaurants and recreational activities, and free public transport. It's available from tourist offices.

Tourist Information

City Information Centre (CIM; Map pp376–7;

☎ 061 851 9645; www.cim.poznan.pl; ul Ratajczaka 44; ☹ 10am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat)

Glob-Tour (Map p374; ☎ 061 866 0667; Poznań Główny, ul Dworcowa 1; ☹ 24hr)

Tourist office (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 852 6156; www.city.poznan.pl; Stary Rynek 59/60; ☹ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat Jun–Sep, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat Oct–May)

Travel Agencies

Almatour (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 855 7633; ul Ratajczaka 96)

LOT (off Map p374; ☎ 061 849 2261) At the airport.

Orbis Travel (Map pp376–7; ☎ 061 851 2000; Al

Marcinkowskiego 21)

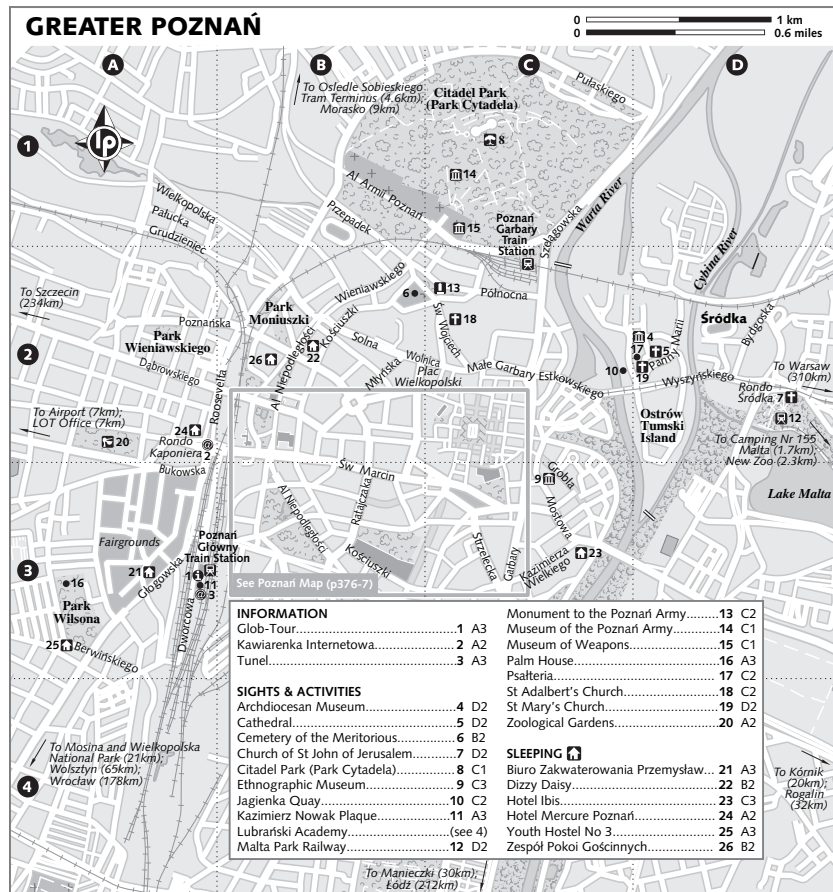
SIGHTS Stary Rynek

The heart of the city, the **Stary Rynek** (Old Market Sq) was laid out in 1253 and contains a vibrant mix of sights, restaurants and entertainment outlets.

TOWN HALL

Poznań's Renaissance **town hall** (Map pp376–7), topped with a 61m-high tower, instantly captures your attention. Its graceful form replaced the 13th-century Gothic town hall, which was consumed by fire in the early 16th century, along with much of the town. It was designed by Italian architect Giovanni Battista Quadro and constructed from 1550 to 1560; only the tower is a later addition, built in the 1780s after its predecessor collapsed. The crowned eagle on top of the spire, with an impressive wingspan of 2m, adds some Polish symbolism.

The main eastern façade is embellished with a three-storey **arcade**. Above it is a painted frieze depicting kings of the Jagiellonian dynasty, and a clock. Every day at noon two metal goats appear through a pair of small doors above the timepiece and butt their horns together 12 times, in deference to an old legend. Apparently two goats intended



for a celebratory banquet escaped and ended up clashing horns above the about-to-be-unveiled clock, much to the amusement of the assembled dignitaries. The clockmaker was duly ordered to add the errant animals' images to his piece.

The **Historical Museum of Poznań** (Muzeum Historii Miasta Poznania; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 856 8000; Stary Rynek 1; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 11am-6pm Wed, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) is inside the town hall. There's an interesting and well-presented exhibition on the town's history, despite the lack of English text, and the building's original interiors are worth the entry price on their own.

The Gothic vaulted **cellars** are the only remains of the first town hall. They were initially

used for trade but later became a jail. At the time of research they were under renovation, but previously they've housed exhibits on medieval Poznań.

The 1st floor is home to three splendid rooms. The largest, the richly ornamented **Renaissance Hall** (Sala Renesansowa), is a real gem, with its original stuccowork and paintings from 1555. The 2nd floor contains artefacts from the Prussian period, documents illustrating city life in the 1920s and '30s, and a collection of photos showing the devastation of the city in WWII.

In front of the building, near the main entrance, is the **whipping post** (*pregierz*), once the site of public floggings – and of more serious penalties, as the miniature model executioner

on top suggests. The original, dating from 1535, is on display in the museum.

AROUND THE SQUARE

Behind the town hall is the **Weigh House** (Waga Miejska; Map pp376-7), a postwar replica of the 16th-century building designed by Quadro, which was dismantled in the 19th century. South of it are two discordant post-war structures on the site of the old arsenal and cloth hall.

The arsenal site now houses the **Arsenal City Art Gallery** (Galeria Miejska Arsenal; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 9501; Stary Rynek 3; adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun), which partly atones for its external design sins by hosting temporary exhibitions of modern art. Its eastern neighbour is the **Wielkopolska Military Museum** (Wielkopolskie Muzeum Wojskowe; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 6739; Stary Rynek 9; adult/concession 3.50/2.20zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), and in the old Guardhouse on the western side of the cluster of buildings you'll find the **Museum of the Wielkopolska Uprising** (Muzeum Powstania Wielkopolskiego; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 853 1993; Stary Rynek 3; adult/concession 4/2zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-6pm Wed, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun), which details the battles waged by Polish fighters seeking independence from Germany after the end of WWI (see boxed text, below). It's an interesting if compact institution with displays of military uniforms, weaponry, photographs

and documents created for the newborn Polish state that the Uprising hoped to help create. There's a brochure in English.

On the eastern side of the two monstrosities is a much more endearing row of small, arcaded buildings, known as the **Fish Sellers' Houses** (Domki Budnicze; Map pp376-7). They were built in the 16th century on the site of fish stalls and later reconstructed after major WWII damage.

Directly opposite is the **Museum of Musical Instruments** (Muzeum Instrumentów Muzycznych; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 0857; Stary Rynek 45; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). It houses hundreds of instruments, from whistles to concert pianos, but it's less interesting than it should be. One room on the ground floor is filled with intriguing musical devices including a typewriter for musician notation, and a polyphon, the precursor of the record player. Upstairs, however, it's like an antiques clearance sale – rooms of pianos, rooms of violins, and so on, with little creative attempt to give them a context.

Southeastern Old Town

Off the southeastern corner of the Rynek, inside the 16th-century **Górka Palace** (Pałac Górków), is the **Archaeological Museum** (Muzeum Archeologiczne; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 8251; ul Wodna 27; adult/concession 6/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). Before going in, stop and

LINE IN THE SAND

Europe breathed a deep sigh of relief on 11 November 1918, the day the guns fell silent in WWI. But for Poles living in Wielkopolska, the fight was just beginning.

Germany had sued for peace in the west, but in the east it had been militarily successful against newly communist Russia, and still held firm authority in the ethnically Polish portions of its empire. However, change was in the wind – US President Woodrow Wilson had foreshadowed the creation of an independent Poland as a buffer state between Germany and Russia.

But where would the border of a new Poland fall? The Polish-majority inhabitants of Wielkopolska were unwilling to risk Poland's oldest province staying within Germany, and on 27 December 1918 a full-scale rebellion, the Wielkopolska Uprising, broke out in Poznań. Sparked by a stirring speech by acclaimed pianist Ignacy Paderewski (who later became prime minister of the new nation), the Uprising was led by Polish soldiers who had been drafted into the German army in the war, and was endorsed by underground citizens' committees.

The insurrection quickly escalated into a full-blown civil war that raged across Wielkopolska through the winter, as Polish forces liberated town after town. Their successful capture of Poznań's airport in early January 1919 even enabled them to launch airborne bombing raids on German targets in Frankfurt an der Oder a few days later.

Though a ceasefire was signed in February, skirmishes continued over the following months. But the Uprising had achieved its aim: on 28 June 1919, just over six months after hostilities had broken out, the Treaty of Versailles awarded Wielkopolska to the newly-formed Poland.



have a look at the fine Renaissance doorway on the building's eastern façade. The museum itself presents the prehistory of the region, from the Stone Age to the early medieval period, as well as an extensive Egyptian collection.

A few steps south of the museum is the **Parish Church** (Kościół Farny; Map pp376-7; ul Gołębia), originally built for the Jesuits by architects from Italy. After more than 80 years of work (1651-1732), an impressive baroque church was created, with an ornamented façade and a lofty interior supported on massive columns and crammed with monumental altars.

A five-minute walk east from here is the **Ethnographic Museum** (Muzeum Etnograficzne; Map p374; ☎ 061 852 3006; ul Grobla 25; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat,

10am-3pm Sun). It has a good collection of folk woodcarving – of note are the large roadside posts and crosses – and traditional costumes of the region.

Western Old Town

Plac Wolności, one of the main squares of contemporary Poznań, marks the western edge of the Old Town. Its chief attraction is the **National Museum** (Muzeum Narodowe; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 856 8117; Al Marcinkowskiego 9; adult/concession 10/6zł, free Sat; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue, 9am-5pm Wed, 10am-4pm Thu & Sun, 10am-5pm Fri & Sat; ♿), where an extensive collection of Polish and European art is displayed in countless rooms. The building's architecture isn't much to look at, but the art is displayed to best advantage in the spacious and light-filled



Sztuk Użytkowych; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 20 35; Góra Przemysłowa 1; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). The collection includes furniture, gold and silverware, glass, ceramics, weapons, clocks, watches and sundials from Europe and the Far East. Exhibits date from the 13th century to the present.

Just south of the castle is the richly decorated baroque **Franciscan Church** (Kościół Franciszkanów; Map pp376-7; ul Franciszkańska 2). Its **Chapel of the Virgin Mary** (Kaplica NMP), in the left transept, has a carved oak altar and a tiny, reputedly miraculous image of St Mary.

Station Area

Further west towards the train station along ul Św Marcin, on **Plac Mickiewicza**, you'll find one of Poznań's most significant memorials, the **Monument to the Victims of June 1956** (Pomnik Poznańskiego Czerwca 1956; Map pp376-7), which commemorates the ill-fated workers' protest (see the boxed text, p379). The monument, consisting of two 20m-tall crosses bound together, was unveiled on 28 June 1981, the 25th anniversary of the strike, at a ceremony attended by more than 100,000 people. It's a huge, evocative landmark, similar to the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers (p416) in Gdańsk. At the time of research, an accompanying **Museum of Poznań June 1956** (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 9464; ul Św Marcin 80/82) was under construction next door within the neo-Romanesque **Kaiserhaus** (Map pp376-7), built from 1904 to 1910 for Emperor Wilhelm II.

In addition to the Kaiserhaus, there are copious examples of Prussian architecture in this area. Notable specimens include the **Teatr Wielki** (p385), the **Collegium Maius** (Map pp376-7) and the **Collegium Minus** (Map pp376-7).

West of here, across the railway line and past the Hotel Mercure Poznań, are the **Zoological Gardens** (Ogród Zoologiczny; ☎ 061 848 08 47; ul Zwierzyniecka 19; adult/concession 9/6zł; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct-Mar), Poznań's original zoo, and one of the oldest in Poland. Animal lovers can breathe reasonably easily: the oldest enclosures are no longer occupied, with most larger animals having been relocated to the New Zoo (p380). Those that remain include giraffes and zebras in a sizable open space. The remaining faded, but decorative, 19th-century facilities are populated by birds, otters, lemurs, apacae, reptiles and amphibians, including some vividly coloured poisonous frogs.

interior and, unusually for Polish museums, it has disabled access throughout.

Polish painting of the last two centuries is represented by almost all the big names, including Jan Matejko, Stanisław Wyspiański and Jacek Malczewski. Look out for the distinctive work of Tadeusz Makowski, a 20th-century artist who created curious human figures from basic geometric shapes. An older noteworthy curiosity is the museum's collection of coffin portraits.

Between Plac Wolności and the Rynek stands Poznań's **castle** (Map pp376-7), though the residence you see today is the postwar reconstruction of a late-18th-century building, which hardly looks like a castle at all. It now houses the **Museum of Applied Arts** (Muzeum

INFORMATION					
Adax.....	1 D4	Kaiserhaus.....	30 B1	Pancake Square.....	56 D4
Almatur.....	2 C3	Monument to the Victims of June		Restauracja Delicja.....	57 D2
Bank BPH.....	3 F1	1956.....	31 A1	Restauracja Sphinx.....	58 B2
Bank Pekao.....	4 E1	Museum of Applied Arts.....	32 E1	Restauracja W-Z.....	59 B1
Bank Pekao.....	5 C2	Museum of Musical		Stary Browar Food Court.....	60 D4
Bank Pekao.....	6 E2	Instruments.....	33 F1	Tapas Bar.....	61 E2
Bank Zachodni.....	7 D1	Museum of Poznań June		Trattoria Valpolicella.....	62 E2
Bookseller.....	8 C3	1956.....(see 30)			
Centrum Kultury Zamek.....	9 A2	Museum of the Wielkopolska		DRINKING ☑	
City Information Centre.....	10 C1	Uprising.....	34 E1	Alter Ego.....	63 E2
E24.....	11 D4	National Museum.....	35 D1	Atmosfera.....	64 F1
EMPIK Megastore.....	12 D1	Parish Church.....	36 F2	Bodega.....	65 F1
Globtrotter.....	13 F1	Town Hall.....	37 E1	Czarna Owca.....	66 E2
Internet C@ffe.....	14 D1	Weigh House.....	38 E1	Nargila Klub.....	67 F2
Księgarnia Kawiarnia		Wielkopolska Military Museum.....	39 E1	Piwnica 21.....	68 F1
Bookcrossing.....	15 C3			Proletaryat.....	69 E2
Main Post Office.....	16 B2	SLEEPING ☑		Room 55.....	70 E1
Ornibus.....	17 C2	Brovaria.....	40 E1		
Orbis Travel.....	18 D2	Dom Polonii.....	41 F2	ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
Raczyński Library.....	19 D1	Domina Prestige.....	42 D2	Blue Note Jazz Club.....	71 B2
Tourist Office.....	20 E2	Frolic Goats Hostel.....	43 E2	Charyzma.....	72 F1
US Consulate.....	21 E2	Hotel Lech.....	44 B2	Czerwony Fortepian.....	73 F1
		Hotel Royal.....	45 B2	Deep.....	74 E2
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Hotel Rzymski.....	46 D2	Johnny Rocker.....	75 F1
Archaeological Museum.....	22 F2	Hotel Stare Miasto.....	47 E3	Lizard King.....	76 E1
Arsenal City Art Gallery.....	23 E1	Mini Hotelik.....	48 B2	Philharmonic Hall.....	77 A2
Castle.....	24 E1	Rezydencja Solei.....	49 F1	Teatr Polski.....	78 C1
Collegium Maius.....	25 B1			Teatr Wielki.....	79 A1
Collegium Minus.....(see 77)		EATING ☑			
Dominican Church.....	26 F1	Bar Mamamija.....	50 D2	TRANSPORT	
Fish Sellers' Houses.....	27 F1	Bar Mleczny Apetyt.....	51 E2	Bus Stop for Kórnik.....	80 A2
Franciscan Church.....	28 E1	Bar Wegetariarski.....	52 E2	Bus Terminal.....	81 B4
Górka Palace.....(see 22)		Cymes.....	53 F1	PKP Office.....(see 48)	
Historical Museum of Poznań.....	29 F1	Deserovnia.....	54 F2		
		Mezzoforte.....	55 D3		

Further south, a five-minute walk from the main train station along ul Głogowska, is the large **Park Wilsona**, which contains the **Palm House** (Palmiarnia; Map p374; ☎ 061 865 8907; ul Matejki 18; adult/concession 5.50/4zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Mar-Oct, 9am-3pm Tue-Sun Nov-Feb). Constructed in 1910, this is one of the biggest greenhouses in Europe. Inside, 19,000 species of tropical and subtropical plants are housed, including the continent's largest cactus collection and its tallest bamboo trees. The adjacent aquarium is home to exotic fish. Curiously, there's a surviving wartime air-raid shelter within the grounds, which you can pay 2zł to inspect.

North of the Old Town

Before WWII, the area north of the Rynek was populated mainly by Jews, though there's little trace of their community now.

The oldest surviving monument on this side of the river is the former **Dominican Church** (Kościół Poddominikański; Map pp376-7), now belonging to the Jesuits. Built in the mid-13th century, it was repeatedly reshaped and redecorated in later periods, but the fine early-Gothic doorway at the main entrance is still in place.

Further north, outside the boundaries of the Old Town, is the 15th-century **St Adalbert's Church** (Kościół Św Wojciecha; Map p374). Its 16th-century, freestanding wooden belfry is the only substantial historic wooden building in Poznań. Inside the church, the Gothic vaulting is decorated with striking Art Nouveau wall paintings. The crypt beneath, open to visitors, has become a mausoleum for the most eminent Poles from Wielkopolska, among them Józef Wybicki, who wrote the lyrics of the national anthem.

During the Christmas period, the mechanised *szopka* (Nativity scene) is open in the church. It includes several dozen movable figures that depict the history of the region, from Mieszko I to the present day.

Not far from the church you'll find the stark, modern **Monument to the Poznań Army** (Pomnik Armii Poznań; Map p374), dedicated to the local armed force that resisted the German invasion of 1939 for almost two weeks. It's just opposite the sloping **Cemetery of the Meritorious** (Cmentarz Zasłużonych; Map p374), the oldest existing graveyard in the city (1810).

STRIKING OUT

The June 1956 industrial strike in Poznań was the first mass protest in the Soviet bloc, breaking out just three years after Stalin's death.

It originated in the city's largest industrial plant, the Cegielski metalworks (then named after Stalin), which produced railway stock. When the workers demanded the refund of an unfairly charged tax, the factory management refused and simply threw the workers' delegates out of the meeting room. This sparked a spontaneous strike the next day, in which the metalworkers, joined by workers from other local industrial plants, headed for Plac Mickiewiczza (then named Plac Stalina).

The 100,000-strong crowd that gathered (a quarter of the city's total population) demanded 'bread and freedom', insisting that changes had to be introduced to improve working conditions, and requested that authorities come and discuss the issue. The demonstration was disregarded by city officials.

Matters soon got out of hand. The angry crowd stormed police headquarters and the Communist Party building, and released 257 prisoners from the local jail after disarming the guards. Shortly afterwards, a battle for the secret-police headquarters broke out, and it was there that the bloodshed began, when police started firing at people surrounding the building. Tanks were introduced into the action, and troops were hastily brought from Wrocław and told they were there to pacify a German riot.

Fierce street battles continued for the whole night and part of the next day, resulting in a total of at least 76 dead and 900 wounded. More than 300 people were arrested, 58 of whom were indicted.

These figures make the protest the most tragic in communist Poland, yet it was underreported and for a long time underestimated. The historic importance of the revolt has only recently been appreciated and given the status it deserves, as an event on par with the internationally famous shipyard strikes in Gdańsk.

Further north is the large **Citadel Park** (Wzgórze Cytadela; Map p374), laid out on what was once a massive Prussian fortress known as the **Citadel** (Cytadela). It was involved in one major battle, when the Germans defended themselves for four weeks in 1945; it was destroyed apart from a few fragments.

Today Citadel Park incorporates two museums: the **Museum of Weapons** (Muzeum Cytadeli Poznańskiej; ☎ 061 820 4503; adult/concession 4/2zł, free Fri; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) and the **Museum of the Poznań Army** (Muzeum Armii Poznań; ☎ 061 820 4503; adult/concession 4/2zł, free Fri; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun). There are also cemeteries for Polish, Soviet, British and Commonwealth soldiers, all on the southern slopes of the hill.

Ostrów Tumski

To the east, over the Warta River, is the island of **Ostrów Tumski** (Map p374). You're walking through deep history here, the place where Poznań took its first steps, and with it the Polish state. The original 9th-century settlement was gradually transformed into an oval stronghold surrounded by wood-and-earth

ramparts, with an early stone palace. Mieszko I added a cathedral and further fortifications, and by the end of the 10th century Poznań was the most powerful stronghold in the country.

In the 13th century, when Poznań had spread beyond the island and the newly designed town was laid out, Ostrów lost its trade and administrative importance, but remained the residence of the Church authorities.

Today it's a tiny, quiet ecclesiastical quarter radiating an air of history, dominated by Poznań's monumental, double-towered **cathedral** (Map p374; ul Ostrów Tumski; adult/concession 2.80/1.80zł). Basically Gothic with additions from later periods, most notably the baroque tops of the towers, the cathedral was badly damaged in 1945 and took 11 years to rebuild.

The aisles and the ambulatory are ringed by a dozen chapels containing numerous tombstones. The most famous of these is the **Golden Chapel** (Złota Kaplica), behind the high altar, its golden ceiling decorated with various saints. For the princely sum of 2zł, the church attendant will turn on the chapel illumination for you. Dating from the 15th century, the chapel was completely rebuilt in the 1830s as

the mausoleum of the first two Polish rulers, Mieszko I and Bolesław Chrobry. Enveloped in Byzantine-style decoration are the double tomb of the two monarchs on one side and their bronze statues on the other.

The rulers' original burial site was the **crypt**, accessible from the back of the left-hand aisle, though it's robbed of atmosphere by the bright lighting and wooden walkways. Apart from the fragments of what are thought to have been their tombs, you can see the relics of the first pre-Romanesque cathedral dating from 968 and of the subsequent Romanesque building from the second half of the 11th century, along with dozens of coins tossed in by more recent Polish visitors. A diorama explains the development of the cathedral over the centuries, with some English captioning.

Opposite the cathedral is **St Mary's Church** (Kościół NMP; Map p374; ul Panny Marii), built in the mid-15th century. Just behind the church is the early-16th-century **Psalteria** (Map p374), which was home to the choristers. Below here on the riverbank, the paddleboat **Jagienka** (Map p374; ☎ 061 827 0589; adult/concession 1hr cruise 12/9zł, 2hr cruise 22/16zł; ☎ 11am-5pm May-Sep) sets off for regular pleasure cruises.

North of the cathedral is **Lubrański Academy** (Akademia Lubrańskiego), also known as the Collegium Lubranscianum, the first high school in Poznań (1518). Within the walls you will find the **Archdiocesan Museum** (Map p374; Muzeum Archidiecezjalne; ☎ 061 852 6195; ul Lubrańskiego 1; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat), a collection of sacred art from the 12th century onwards.

Lake Malta

If you venture east from Ostrów Tumski, over the bridge that stretches over the Cybina River, and beyond the Rondo Śródka, you'll discover the **Church of St John of Jerusalem** (Kościół Św Jana Jerozolimskiego; Map p374; ul Świętojańska 1). One of the oldest brick churches in the country, this late-12th-century building was extended in the Gothic period and later acquired a baroque chapel. The interior contains beautiful Gothic star vaults, and the Romanesque doorway in the main western entrance is magnificent.

South of the church is the terminus of the **Malta Park Railway** (Kolejka Parkowa Maltanka; Map p374; ☎ 061 877 2612; ul Jana Pawła II; adult/concession 4.50/3zł; ☎ 10am-6.45pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6.30pm Sat & Sun

May-15 Oct), which runs miniature trains along the shoreline of the 70-hectare artificial **Lake Malta** (Jezioro Maltańskie; Map p374), a favourite summer spot for families, picnickers and boating enthusiasts. During the Malta International Theatre Festival (opposite) in June, the lake's banks are used for outdoor theatre productions and other events, creating a lively atmosphere. At other times there are sailing regattas and outdoor concerts by the lake, and in winter there's a ski slope in operation.

The railway terminates at the **New Zoo** (Nowe Zoo; off Map p374; ☎ 061 877 3517; ul Krańcowa 81; adult/concession 9/6zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-4pm Oct-Mar). This sprawling institution covers 116 hectares at the eastern end of the lake, and houses diverse species including Baltic grey seals, in a leafy pine forest environment.

ACTIVITIES

If you're challenged for time in Poznań, a good way to get a feel for the city's history is to follow one or more of the 10 self-guided **walking routes**, outlined in free brochures available from the tourist office. Each walk takes two hours, and leads you past selected historic and scenic locations, with the brochure explaining their significance in English. A more ambitious stroll is the **Royal-Imperial Route**, mapped out in another free brochure, which takes you from the shores of Lake Malta to the city's west, passing 56 sights along the way.

Poznań is also good for **cycling**, with plenty of bike trails through the city and beyond. To get started, ask the tourist office for the brochure *Poznań on Two and Four Wheels*, and its map of Wielkopolska's major marked bicycle routes. Bicycles can be hired from **MPK** (☎ 061 869 9361; ☎ 6.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat, 7am-4pm Sun) at the Osiedle Sobieskiego tram terminus to the north of the Old Town, reached via trams 12, 14, 15 or 16.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Poznań's trade fairs are its pride and joy, though few are of interest to casual visitors. The main ones take place in January, June, September and October, with dozens of other trade shows of varying size throughout the year. July, August and December are almost completely free of fairs.

Major cultural events:
Poznań Jazz Festival (☎ 061 813 2566; www.jazz.pl) Held in March.

St John's Fair (Jarmark Świętojański; ☎ 061 853 6081) A handicraft and antiques fair, held on the Stary Rynek in June.

Malta International Theatre Festival (☎ 061 646 5243; www.malta-festival.pl) Fringe and alternative theatre, held in late June.

Wieniawski International Violin Competition (☎ 061 852 2642; www.wieniawski.pl) Held every five years in October (next due in 2011).

SLEEPING

Try not to arrive in Poznań during one of the numerous trade fairs – they wreak havoc on the city's accommodation range, doubling prices and reducing available beds. Outside trade fair periods, room prices drop significantly on weekends. Prices given here are standard weekday rates for 'off-fair' periods. Unless otherwise specified, prices include breakfast. The tourist offices and Glob-Tour (p373) are knowledgeable about lodging options and should be able to help you find a bed.

Budget

HOSTELS & HOTELS

Youth Hostel No 3 (off Map p374; ☎ 061 866 4040; ul Berwińskiego 2/3; dm 29zł, tr 102zł) The closest hostel to the train station, a 550m walk southwest along ul Głogowska. It's the smallest and most basic of the lot and fills up fast. Most of the 52 beds here are in eight- to 10-bed dorms.

Dizzy Daisy (Map p374; ☎ 061 829 3902; www.dizzydaisy.pl; Al Niepodległości 26; dm/s/d/tr 40/65/100/135zł; ☎ Jul-Sep; P ☎) A sociable summer backpacker haunt within easy reach of the centre. The standards are basic but it's got everything you need, including kitchen and laundry for guest use.

Frolic Goats Hostel (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 4411; www.frolicgoatshostel.com; ul Wrocławska 16/6; dm 50-65zł, d/ste 140/200zł; ☎ ☎) Named after the feisty goats who fight above the town hall clock, this shiny new hostel is aimed squarely at the international backpacker. The pleasant green lounge complements tidy, reasonably uncrowded dorms, bike hire is available for 25zł per day, and room rates are unaffected by trade fairs. Enter from ul Jaskółcza.

Mini Hotelik (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 633 1416; Al Niepodległości 8; s 80zł, d 107-135zł, ste 187zł; P ☎) As it says on the label, this is a small hotel between the train station and the Old Town. It's basic but clean, and a step up from hostel accommodation with colourfully painted rooms (though breakfast isn't included). Enter from ul Taylora.

PRIVATE ROOMS

Biuro Zakwaterowania Przemysław (Map p374; ☎ 061 866 3560; www.przemyslaw.com.pl; ul Głogowska 16; s 43-65zł, d 65-96zł; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) This private-accommodation agency is opposite the train station, and will diligently hunt you down a place to stay. Rooms are almost always available, but at trade fair times there may be less choice; the price ranges given here run from ordinary days up to trade-fair periods.

CAMPING

Camping Nr 155 Malta (off Map p374; ☎ 061 876 6155; www.posir.poznan.pl; ul Krańcowa 98; camp sites per person 7zł, bungalows 130-350zł; P ☎) Malta is the best of Poznań's three camping grounds and the closest to the centre – it's on the northeastern shore of Lake Malta, 3km east of the Old Town. Sixty-six heated bungalows, including five specially adapted for disabled guests, provide good all-year shelter.

Midrange

Capital Apartments (☎ 061 852 5300; www.topoznanhotels.com; apt 180-200zł) This company maintains a number of renovated apartments dotted around the city centre, most within walking distance of the Rynek. Call to discuss available options (staff will meet travellers at apartments). They're a good-value option if you're tired of hotel breakfasts and want to prepare your own food, or if the lack of laundrettes in Poland is making you desperate for a washing machine.

Zespól Pokoi Gościńczych (Map p374; ☎ 061 851 6841; www.ibch.poznan.pl; ul Wieniawskiego 17/19; s/d/ste 140/220/250zł; P ☎) Don't be confused by the unlikely looking building – this accommodation is indeed part of the Poznań Institute of Biochemistry, though the lack of signage classifies it as a well-kept scientific secret. From ul Wieniawskiego, ignore the main doors and walk along the building to the right, then left towards a door at the back.

Dom Polonii (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 7121; Stary Rynek 51; s/d 140/230zł) Dating from 1488, the Dom Polonii occupies one corner of Poznań's market square, offering just two double rooms to anyone who's organised enough to book sufficiently in advance. The only way you could get more central would be by tunnelling under the town hall.

Hotel Lech (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 853 0151; www.hotel-lech.poznan.pl; ul Św Marcin 74; s/d/tr/ste 162/244/336/254zł) A comfortable, good, standard three-star,

with slightly worn furniture but high ceilings. It's set in a convenient location, midway between the train station and the Old Town, and the accommodating staff are used to dealing with tourists. Flash your ISIC card for a substantial discount.

Hotel Rzymski (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 8121; www.hotelrzymski.com.pl; Al Marcinkowskiego 22; s/d/tr 195/250/300zł; ste 280-430zł; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) If walls could talk, this hotel would have a story worth listening to. It began life as the German-owned Hotel de Rome, changed to Polish ownership, was used in WWII as a hotel for the German military, then became Polish-owned once more, still with the same name (Rzym is Rome in Polish). The décor is overly brown and old-fashioned, but the rooms are comfortable and the multilingual staff helpful.

Rezydencja Solei (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 7351; www.hotel-solei.pl; ul Szewska 2; s/d/ste 189/289/359zł; ☒) Temptingly close to the Rynek, this tiny hotel offers small but cosy rooms in an old-fashioned residential style, with wallpaper and timber furniture striking a homely note. The attic suite is amazingly large and can accommodate up to four people.

Browaria (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 858 6868; www.browaria.pl; Stary Rynek 73/74; s 250zł; d 290-350zł; ste 410zł; P ☒ ☑ ☒) This multitasking hotel also operates as a restaurant and bar, but most impressive is its in-house boutique brewery, whose operations you can view within the building. The elegant rooms have tasteful dark timber tones, and some have views onto the Rynek.

our pick Hotel Stare Miasto (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 663 6242; www.hotelstaremiasto.pl; ul Rybaki 36; s 215zł; d 295-325zł; ste 350-450zł; P ☒ ☑ ☒) Stylish value-for-money hotel with a tasteful chandeliered foyer and spacious breakfast room. Rooms can be small but are clean and bright with lovely starched white sheets. Some upper rooms have skylights in place of windows.

Hotel Ibis (Map p374; ☎ 061 858 4400; www.ibishotel.com; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 23; s/d 287/315zł; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) A typical hotel in this reliable business chain, Poznań's Ibis offers a multitude of predictably well-maintained rooms within an easy walk of the historic centre. If you don't like surprises, this is a good place to hang your hat.

Top End

Hotel Royal (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 858 2300; www.hotel-royal.com.pl; ul Św Marcin 71; s 320zł; d 420-450zł; ste 500zł; P ☒ ☑) Tasteful terracotta tones predominate

in this smart, refined hotel, situated on the main road leading into the centre. Spring for the spacious suite for extra elbow room, or just hang around the lobby perusing the photos of famous Polish TV stars who've stayed here.

Hotel Mercure Poznań (Map p374; ☎ 061 855 8000; www.orbisonline.pl; ul Roosevelta 20; s/d from €111/123; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) In a gigantic modern building just off a busy main road, this hotel offers all the expected facilities for business travellers, including a gym, a restaurant and a bar. The 'big box' look is softened by musical designs on bedspreads and curtains, a reference to the nearby Philharmonic Hall. It's handy for the train station and Zoological Gardens.

Domina Prestige (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 859 0590; www.dominahotels.com; ul Św Marcin 2; apt 560-840zł; P ☒ ☑ ☒ ☒) Some hotels try to make you feel like you're at home – the Domina makes you wish your home was a bit more like this. The luxury serviced apartments come with stylish interiors, kitchens with full facilities and more mod cons than a New York penthouse.

EATING

Poznań's sophisticated dining scene centres on the Old Town, whose narrow streets contain eateries offering every cuisine imaginable. There are also notable concentrations of restaurants around ul Św Marcin and ul 27 Grudnia.

Bar Mleczny Apetyt (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 1339; ul Szkolna 4; mains 4-8zł; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) The latest-closing *bar mleczny* (milk bar) in town enjoys a good, central location. The food is exactly what you'd expect, and none the worse for that, with *naleśniki* (crepes) choices galore.

Pancake Square (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 835 3642; ul Półwiejska 45; mains 4-9zł; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 11am-8pm Sun) No prizes for guessing which dish takes centre stage here. The modern café ambience suits the lightness of the raw materials, but be prepared for busy weekday crowds sharing your enthusiasm for the fare.

Bar Mamamija (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 665 8508; ul Św Marcin 12; mains 4-11zł; ☎ 11am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Dragging the traditional *bar mleczny* firmly into the 1970s, students and snackers alike dig this retro joint's rainbow paint job and kidney-shaped tables. Pasta, stroganoff and other fads join the usual suspects on the budget menu. Head downstairs off the street to find it.

Bar Wegetariański (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 1255; ul Wrocławska 21; mains 5-12zł; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat; ☒) This cheap vegetarian eatery is in a cellar off the main road, bedecked with plant life around the walls, and offers the usual meat-free dishes. The low prices keep it popular with the masses.

Stary Browar Food Court (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 850 10 76; ul Półwiejska 42; ☎ 9am-9pm) The dining section of this gigantic shopping mall offers decent food in chic surrounds, from Ottoman Turkish cuisine to seriously good wine. There are also cafés scattered through the complex, and the building's spectacular old-meets-new architecture is worth a visit in its own right.

Mezzoforte (Map pp376-7; ☎ 0511 784288; ul Piekary 5; mains 8-35zł; ☎ 9.30am-midnight Sun-Thu, 9.30am-2am Fri & Sat) Funky restaurant with a mosaic-tiled bar and bright orange walls decorated with giant poppy designs. The menu contains an array of pizzas and pastas, alongside photos of two customers enjoying their meal together just a little *too* much. From 9pm you can trek downstairs to enjoy Poznań's smallest nightclub – good luck finding enough space to dance!

Restauracja W-Z (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 665 8801; ul Fredry 12; mains 12-39zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) Short for Wielkopolska Zagroda (Wielkopolskan Farm), the W-Z takes its rustic theme to the limit – the building contains a re-creation of a country cabin, complete with timber roof, allowing diners to feast on excellent Polish cooking either inside or round the edge. The attached W-Z Café is a good place to grab a quick coffee.

Restauracja Sphinx (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 5362; ul Św Marcin 66/72; mains 15-50zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) Firmly installed on the Poznań food map, the all-conquering kebab chain offers reasonable-value grills and salads, amid ancient Egyptian décor and colourful lampshades.

Cymes (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 851 6638; ul Woźna 2/3; mains 18-26zł; ☎ 11am-10pm) If you're tired of pork for dinner, this ambient Jewish restaurant is the logical place to go. The interior is warm and cosy, done out like a residential dining room with ceramic plates on the walls. On the menu are various poultry and fish dishes, including a whole goose for eight people, to be ordered 24 hours beforehand.

Deserovnia (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 5029; ul Świętosławska 12; mains 18-34zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) One side of this split-personality venue is a sporty bar, all dark timber, beer and photos of sports

stars. The other side is a gracious restaurant serving classy Polish cuisine. Heads or tails?

Trattoria Valpolicella (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 7191; ul Wrocławska 7; mains 21-66zł; ☎ 1-11pm) Serves a wide variety of pasta and other Italian specialities, well suited to a glass of vino, in convincingly rustic Mediterranean surroundings.

our pick Tapas Bar (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 8532; Stary Rynek 60; mains 31-54zł; ☎ noon-midnight) This atmospheric place dishes up authentic tapas and Spanish wine in a room lined with intriguing bric-a-brac, including jars of stuffed olives, Mediterranean-themed artwork and bright red candles. Most tapas dishes are 17zł to 19zł, so forget the mains and share with friends. There's a nightclub downstairs for post-prandial dancing.

Restauracja Delicja (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 1128; www.delicja.com.pl; Plac Wolności 5; mains 47-85zł; ☎ noon-11pm) One of Poznań's top restaurants, tucked away off Plac Wolności, the Delicja has its own miniature courtyard and an illustrious reputation for top-notch international cuisine along French-Italian lines. Refinement and elegance are *de rigueur*.

DRINKING

Once you've done the rounds of the beer gardens on the Rynek, there are plenty of places elsewhere in town worth seeking out for a drink. Ul Woźna and ul Nowowiejskiego have plenty of student-oriented bars, while ul Żydowska caters for a more mature audience and the southern Old Town has a bit of everything.

Proletariat (Map pp376-7; ☎ 0508 173608; ul Wrocławska 9; ☎ 1pm-late Mon-Sat, 3pm-late Sun) Bright red communist-nostalgia bar with an array of socialist-era gear on the walls, including military insignia, portraits of Brezhnev and Marx, and the obligatory bust of Lenin in the window. Play 'spot the communist leader' while sipping a boutique beer from the Czarnków Brewery.

Alter Ego (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 853 1347; Stary Rynek 63; ☎ 11am-late Mon-Sat, 7pm-late Sun) The basement of the Powszechna bookshop conceals an intriguing narrow bar with a lively dance-music policy. Look closely at the portholes separating the seating booths, and you may find something alive within their depths...

Nargila Klub (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 1026; ul Koźnia 5/4; ☎ 2pm-midnight) If you don't know what a *narghile* is, one look at the generic Turkish-Arabic décor here should give you a

clue. Whether you call it a sheesha, hookah, hubble-bubble or water pipe, you can bung in some flavoured tobacco and puff away on the snug cushions and carpets.

Czarna Owca (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 3240; ul Jaskótcza 13; 🕒 from 4pm Mon-Fri, from 6pm Sat) Calling your pub the 'Black Sheep' hardly encourages good behaviour, so sipping a quiet pint is seldom on the agenda here. When you've finished boozing in the dark, intimate bar, join the herd on the downstairs dance floor for DJs playing house, pop, rock, Latin or retro sounds, depending on the night.

Piwnica 21 (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 2926; ul Wielka 21; 🕒 from 5pm) On busy weekend nights this brick basement bar is packed with music fans taking in DJs, or classic live pub gigs in a jazz-blues vein, helped on by table football and draft stout.

Room 55 (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 3224; Stary Rynek 80/82; 🕒 9am-midnight Mon-Thu, 9am-2am Fri & Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) This well-placed bar, bang on the Rynek, features mellow red chairs and banquettes, with a mezzanine area for observing the beautiful people below. There's also a food menu.

Bodega (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 851 0094; ul Żydowska 4; 🕒 11am-11pm Sun-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) On a street populated with cafés, Bodega's sleek modern lines stand out. The geometrically sharp interior is composed of mellow chocolate and gold tones, with candles on the tables, and chatting locals enjoying the relaxed vibe. Good coffee is accompanied by snacks and sweet temptations.

Atmosfera (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 851 0399; ul Mokra 2; 🕒 noon-11pm) If you're on the run from the Foreign Legion, or just trying to escape the hordes in the Stary Rynek, you could do worse than head for this hidden-away café in tiny ul Mokra. The décor is a faded blue showcase of floral wreaths and abstract art, just worn enough to give it character. To become even more unfindable, head to the upstairs room.

ENTERTAINMENT

Poznań's comprehensive monthly *iks* (4zł) contains listings on everything from museums to outdoor activities, with a short summary of the most important events in English. It's available from Ruch kiosks and the tourist offices (p373). The free monthly *Aktivist* can also be helpful, especially for nightlife, and *In Your Pocket* (5zł) pulls no punches with its colourful descriptions of local clubs.

Live Music & Clubs

Ourpick Johnny Rocker (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 853 6232; ul Wielka 9; 🕒 from 5pm) This super-smooth basement venue with a curvy bar is crammed with happy drinkers sitting cabaret-style in front of a stage that features live blues, jazz or rock acts every weekend. If the sounds are overwhelming, you can always retreat to the stylish 'red room'.

Lizard King (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 0472; Stary Rynek 86; 🕒 noon-2am) Simultaneously happening and laid-back, this venue is easily located by the big guitar on its outside wall. Friendly crowds sit drinking and eating in the split-level space, casting the occasional glance at the lizard over the bar. There's live music most nights, usually from 9pm, including rock, jazz and blues.

Czerwony Fortepian (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 0174; www.czerwony-fortepian.pl; ul Wroniecka 18; 🕒 5pm-late Mon-Sat, 2-10pm Sun) This smart bar-restaurant and jazz joint takes its name from an antique red piano, played by an array of visiting guest artists. A place for upscale aficionados who know their swing from their skiffle.

Charyzma (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 851 7948; ul Ślusarska 6; 🕒 6pm-late) No overbearing personality here, just an intelligent, low-key sense of cool and some well-chosen, left-field music, covering various bases from emo to blues. Believe it or not, the club occasionally runs tango courses on Monday, complete with Argentinian wine.

Deep (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 855 7302; ul Wrocławska 5; 🕒 8pm-late) One for the townies, this underground den is a hotbed of sportswear, short skirts and bumpin' black music. Deep is the kind of place that is good for rowdy nights out with your mates.

As well as the Dubliner, Balzac and Bogota pubs, the Centrum Kultury Zamek is also home to the **Blue Note Jazz Club** (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 851 0408; www.bluenote.poznan.pl; ul Kościuszki 76/78), a major live jazz spot and occasional dance club, which holds regular concerts and jam sessions by local groups and occasional big-name gigs.

Classical Music, Opera & Ballet

Philharmonic Hall (Filharmonia; Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 853 6935; www.filharmonia.poznan.pl; ul Św Marcin 81) This musical institution holds concerts at least weekly, performed by the house symphony orchestra, often featuring visiting artists. Poznań also has Poland's best boys' choir, the

GET OUT OF TOWN!

Poznań has a reasonable selection of dance venues, but for dedicated clubbers around the country there's only one place to go for a real weekend: Manieccki. Never heard of it? Hardly surprising – but this tiny town south of the Wielkopolska National Park is a nightlife mecca.

Roll up at the weekend, and you'll discover why. Manieccki is home to **Ekwador** (☎ 061 282 0850; www.ekwador.com.pl in Polish; ul Wybickiego; 🕒 9.30pm-late Fri & Sat), possibly the most famous club in Poland and a consistent ambassador for dance music at home and abroad. The list of visiting DJs, both Polish and international, is stellar.

If you can't make it to the club itself, parties are held in more accessible venues around the country. In summer the management is partial to holding special events in beach venues on the Baltic coast – check the hyperactive website for details of the latest.

It's easiest to get here with your own transport, but there are also nine buses from Poznań to Manieccki on Friday, and five on Saturday (7.40zł, 1¼ hours).

Poznańskie Słowiki (Poznań Nightingales), who can be heard here.

Teatr Wielki (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 659 0280; www.opera.poznan.pl; ul Fredry 9) The usual stage for opera, ballet and various visiting performances. The annual Verdi festival in October is a particular highlight, and you should also look out for productions by the renowned **Polski Teatr Tańca** dance group.

Theatre

Teatr Polski (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 852 5628; www.teatr-polski.pl; ul 27 Grudnia 8/10) The Polish Theatre is Poznań's main repertory stage, with a sound reputation and plenty of classics such as Chekhov and Kafka on the programme, alongside newer Polish works.

Teatr Biuro Podróży (☎ 0605 217 668; www.teatrbiuropodrozy.ipoznan.pl) At the more avant-garde end of the scale, the Travel Agency Theatre is an innovative theatre group that has gained international acclaim for its spectacular new work and imaginative rejigging of the classics. The theatre has no fixed venue (contact the group for location info).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Poznań's **airport** (off Map p374; ☎ 061 849 2343; www.airport-poznan.com.pl; ul Bukowska 285) is in the western suburb of Ławica, 7km from the centre. There are flights from Poznań to Warsaw (four to five daily) via LOT; Barcelona (three weekly) on Ryanair; Bristol (three weekly) via Ryanair; Copenhagen (daily) via SAS; Dortmund (three weekly) on Wizz Air; Dublin (five weekly) via Ryanair or Aer Lingus; East Midlands (three weekly) on Ryanair; Frankfurt (daily) on LOT; Liverpool

(three weekly) via Ryanair; London (twice daily) on Ryanair or Wizz Air; Munich (four daily) via LOT or Lufthansa; and Stockholm (six weekly) on Wizz Air.

Bus

The bus terminal (Map pp376-7) is about 750m east of the train station. Buses run half-hourly to Kórnik (6.30zł, 40 minutes) and every couple of hours to Rogalin (6.30zł, one hour) on weekdays, but only twice daily on weekends. You can also get to Kórnik by hourly suburban buses from ul Św Marcin. Buses to Gniezno (10.50zł, 1½ hours) depart at least hourly and go via either Kostrzyn or Pobiedziska; the latter pass Lake Lednica (6.30zł). On longer routes, you could use buses to get to Kalisz (20zł, 2½ hours, 12 daily) and Zielona Góra (22zł, 2¾ hours, seven daily), as they run more frequently than trains.

Train

Poznań is a busy railway hub. From **Poznań Główny train station** (Map p374) there are about 20 trains to Warsaw daily (InterCity/fast 89zł/46zł, three to four hours). Equally frequent services run to Wrocław (35zł, 2½ hours) and Szczecin (38zł, 2½ hours), and there are 10 to 12 direct trains to Kraków (50zł, seven hours).

Trains to Gdańsk (46zł, 4¾ hours, seven daily) and Toruń (33zł, 2½ hours, five daily) all pass through Gniezno (16zł, 45 minutes, hourly). Six trains depart from Zielona Góra daily (31zł to 53zł, 2½ hours). There are also five daily trains to Wolsztyn (14zł, 1¾ hours), including one steam train (see boxed text, p389).

HAVE BIKE, WILL TRAVEL

Since communism fell and took its travel restrictions with it, Poles have been making up for lost time, journeying to more far-flung locales each year. But they'd have to put in some serious trekking to catch up with their compatriot Kazimierz Nowak.

In 1931, this Poznań resident fetched up in Tripoli, Libya, as a press correspondent, covering the Italian military campaign there. When his colleagues returned to Europe, however, Nowak stayed behind. He had a dream: to travel the entire length of Africa by bicycle.

On 4 November 1931 he set off, passing through Egypt before heading south. On his journey, he often shared stories with locals around their campfires, and cast a critical eye on colonial settlers from Europe. He also took photographs, which he sold to Polish and German newspapers to supplement his funds.

Nowak reached Cape Town in May 1934. Then, amazingly, he turned his bike around and rode the entire length of the continent again, on a western route this time. In November 1936, five years after his odyssey had begun, he reached the Mediterranean at Algiers. He had covered 40,000km on bicycle and foot along the way.

Returning to Poznań, Nowak wrote a book about his exploits and gave ethnographic lectures at the Apollo Cinema, while planning a new expedition in Asia. It was not to be: on 13 October 1937 Kazimierz Nowak died of malaria, no doubt contracted on his epic trek. The great traveller was gone, but not forgotten – nowadays you can see a **plaque** (Map p374) commemorating his journey, with a map of the route, on the far wall of the concourse at Poznań Główny train station.

Seven international trains run to Berlin daily (113zł), including three EuroCity services taking just three hours. There are also direct trains to Cologne, Kyiv and Moscow.

Tickets and couchette reservations are handled by the train station, travel agencies and the **PKP office** (Map pp376-7; ☎ 061 863 1290; Al Niepodległości 8a).

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Poznań's airport is accessible via city buses 59, 77 and 78 (2.60zł, 25 minutes), which all run into town as far as Rondo Kaponiera, near the train station (the stop's called Bałtyk). A taxi should cost around 20zł to 30zł (15 minutes).

Public Transport

Poznań's public-transport system uses both timed and distance-based tickets. Timed tickets cost 1.30zł for a 10-minute ride, 2.60zł for half an hour, 3.90zł for up to one hour, and 5.20zł for 1½ hours. Approximate journey times are posted at stops. Distance-based tickets for buses cost 1.90zł for a ride of up to 10 stops and 3.20zł for any longer trip. A day ticket for all transport costs 11.40zł (and is far less complicated to work out!).

AROUND POZNAŃ

KÓRNIK pop 6900

The town of Kórnik, 20km southeast of Poznań, is proof that mad German kings didn't have a monopoly on eccentric castle design. Its unconventional **castle** was built by the powerful Górk family in the 15th century. Nowadays it's more like a mansion than a castle; anyone who's visited a stately home in the English countryside will experience *déjà vu* (it even has tasteful tea rooms outside the main gate).

Its present-day appearance dates from the mid-19th century, when its owner, Tytus Działyński, gave the castle a somewhat outlandish mock-Gothic character, partly based on a design by German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. The building now looks as though two halves of completely different castles were spliced together, perhaps by force, and provides some interesting photos from varying angles.

The interior, too, was extensively (though more consistently) remodelled to provide a plush family home and accommodate the owner's vast art collection. On the 1st floor a spectacular Moorish hall was created (clearly influenced by the Alhambra in Granada) as a memorable setting for the display of ar-

mour and military accessories. The collection was expanded by Działyński's son Jan and his nephew Władysław Zamoyski; the latter donated the castle and its contents to the state in 1924.

The castle luckily survived the war and, miraculously, so did its contents. Part of it is now open as a **museum** (☎ 061 817 0081; ul Zamkowa 5; adult/concession 9/5zł; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). You can wander through its fully furnished and decorated 19th-century interiors, dotted with items collected by the family. The collection is well presented in a surprisingly light-filled space, and includes some intriguing pieces like elaborately designed furniture, medieval weaponry and centuries-old books, including a copy of Copernicus' masterwork, *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*. Make sure you don the slippers handed out at the entrance – scuff marks are not appreciated on the original wooden floors.

Behind the castle is a large, English-style park known as the **Arboretum** (☎ 061 817 0033; adult/concession 3.50/2.50zł; 🕒 9am-6pm), which was laid out during the castle's reconstruction, and stocked with exotic species of trees and shrubs from Europe's leading nurseries. Today the Arboretum is run by a scientific research institute and has some 2500 plant species and varieties; the best times to visit are May to June and September to October, when the greatest number of specimens come into flower.

Some of the castle's outbuildings are also used for exhibitions. **Galeria Klaudynówka** (adult/concession 2/1zł; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), a servants' house from 1791, displays contemporary paintings, while the **powozownia** (coach house; admission free; 🕒 11am-4pm Tue-Sun), on the opposite side of the road, holds three London coaches, brought from Paris by Jan Działyński in 1856.

Getting There & Away

There's frequent bus transport from Poznań to Kórnik (6.30zł, 40 minutes). You can either take the PKS bus from the central bus terminal (departing every half-hour or so) or go by suburban bus from ul Św Marcin (hourly). Both deposit you at the Rynek in Kórnik, a three-minute walk from the castle. Follow the road as it veers to the right past the town hall and becomes ul Zamkowa.

If you plan to continue on to Rogalin (4.30zł, 25 minutes), there are approximately two buses a day from Monday to

Friday (check the timetable before visiting the castle).

ROGALIN pop 800

The tiny village of Rogalin, 12km west of Kórnik, was the seat of yet another Polish aristocratic clan, the Raczyński family, who built a **palace** here in the closing decades of the 18th century, and lived in it until WWII. Plundered but not damaged during WWII, the palace was taken over by the state. In 1991, Count Edward Raczyński, who had been Polish ambassador to Britain at the outbreak of WWII and a leading figure in the Polish government in exile, reaffirmed the use of the palace as a branch of Poznań's **National Museum** (☎ 061 813 8030; adult/concession 8/5.50zł, free Wed; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sat & 10am-6pm Sun May-Sep, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Jan-Apr, Oct & Nov).

Less visited than Kórnik's castle and much more Germanic in its appearance, the Rogalin palace consists of a massive, two-storey, baroque central structure and two modest symmetrical wings linked to the main body by curving galleries, forming a giant horseshoe around a vast forecourt. Within the main house, you can peruse art and furniture from the different ages of the mansion, and also an exact replica of the London study of Count Raczyński.

Just beyond the left wing is the **Gallery of Painting** (Galeria Obrazów), an adapted greenhouse displaying Polish and European canvases from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Polish collection includes some first-class work, with Jacek Malczewski best represented. The dominant work, though, is Jan Matejko's *Joan of Arc*.

In the **coach house**, near the front courtyard, are a dozen old coaches, including Poznań's last horse-drawn cab, and a restaurant.

Opposite the main house is a small French garden, which leads into the larger **English landscaped park**, originally laid out in primeval oak forest. Not much of the park's design can be deciphered today, but the ancient oak trees are still here, some of them centuries old. The three most imposing specimens have been fenced off and baptised with the names Lech, Czech and Rus, after the legendary founders of the Polish, Czech and Russian nations.

One more place to see is the **chapel**, on the eastern outskirts of the village, built in the 1820s to serve as a mausoleum for the

Raczyński family. It's a replica of the Roman temple known as the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, southern France.

Getting There & Away

There are several buses from Poznań to Rogalin (6.30zł, one hour), going by various routes. Buses back to Poznań pass through every couple of hours until late afternoon.

WIELKOPOLSKA NATIONAL PARK

Just a few kilometres southwest of Poznań's administrative boundaries is the 76-sq-km **Wielkopolska National Park** (Wielkopolski Park Narodowy; ☎ 061 813 2206; www.wielkopolskipn.pl). About 80% of the park is forest – pine and oak being the dominant species – and its postglacial lakes give it a certain charm.

Hiking is the main attraction here, and a good point to start your stroll is the town of Mosina (21km from Poznań), which is served regularly by both train and bus from Poznań. From Mosina, follow the blue-marked trail heading northwest to Osowa Góra (3km). Once you reach small Lake Kociołek, switch to the red trail, which winds southwestwards. After passing another miniature lake, the trail reaches Lake Góreckie, the most beautiful body of water in the park. The trail then skirts the eastern part of the lake and turns northeast to bring you to the town of Puszczykowo, from where trains and buses can take you back to Poznań. It's about a 17km walk altogether, through the most attractive area of the park.

If you want to do more walking, there are four more trails to choose from. Get a copy of the TopMapa *Wielkopolski Park Narodowy* map (scale 1:35,000), which has all the details.

Accommodation is available in Puszczykowo and Mosina, if you decide on a longer stay. The two towns sit conveniently on the eastern edge of the park, just 4km apart on the Poznań–Wrocław railway line. There are regular slow trains from Poznań Główny to Puszczykowo (4zł, 15 minutes) and Mosina (4.50zł, 25 minutes).

MORASKO

Great balls of fire! Just 10km from the centre of Poznań is the **Morasko Meteorite Reserve** (Reserwat Meteoryt Morasko), one of just two registered impact sites in Europe. The idea of flaming space rock crash-landing in the peaceful forest here may seem bizarre, but

that's exactly what happened roughly 10,000 years ago, and eight craters are still clearly visible, some filled with water. The largest is over 100m across and 13m in depth, and while it's overgrown enough not to look like the surface of the moon, the extent of the dent is still pretty impressive.

To get here you can catch tram 12, 14, 15 or 16 from the train station to the Oslede Sobieskiego tram terminus and follow the 4km walking trail, or change at Szymanowskiego for bus 88 to Morasko village.

THE PIAST ROUTE

The Piast Route (Szlak Piastowski) is a popular tourist trail, winding from Poznań to Kruszwica. It weaves together a selection of sites related to Poland's early history, along with other historic curios like the Iron-Age village of Biskupin. Following the route is a great way to gain insights into the formative years of the nation.

LAKE LEDNICA

Lake Lednica, 30km east of Poznań, is the first important point on the Piast Route. The 7km-long elongated postglacial lake has four islands.

The largest, Ostrów Lednicki, was one of the major settlements of the first Piasts. In the 10th century a stronghold was built here, along with a stone palace and a church, and the route between Poznań and Gniezno ran across two wooden bridges linking the island to the lake's western and eastern shores.

The settlement was overrun by the Bohemians and destroyed in 1038, and though the church and the defensive ramparts were rebuilt, the island never regained its importance. Between the 12th and 14th centuries a large part of it was used as a graveyard. Some 2000 tombs have been found here, making the site the largest cemetery from that period discovered in Central Europe.

Sights

On the lakeshore facing the island of Ostrów Lednicki is the **Museum of the First Piasts** (Muzeum Pierwszych Piastów; ☎ 061 427 5010; ul Dziekanowice 32, Lednogóra; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sat & 10am–5pm Sun Apr–Oct, 9am–3pm Tue–Sat & 10am–3pm Sun Nov–Mar). Among the build-

ALL STEAMED UP

Almost everywhere in Europe, the grand age of steam is over. The steam trains that still operate are confined to picturesque tourist railways, functioning as museum pieces on wheels. But not in the town of Wolsztyn, 65km southwest of Poznań.

Thanks partly to the enthusiasm of British trainspotters, PKP still runs regular steam-train services between Poznań Główny and Wolsztyn. Each day between one to three steam trains haul passengers along the route – check at the station for the current timetable (*pociąg parowy* means 'steam train').

In addition to the Poznań services, there's one steam train a day in each direction between Wolsztyn and Leszno, which is also linked directly by rail to Poznań. PKP also operates special one-off steam services throughout the warmer months, including an annual Wolsztyn–Wrocław train.

So where do those train enthusiasts come in? They're the eager customers of the **Wolsztyn Experience** (☎ 068 384 2543; www.wolsztyn.co.uk), a steam-train course that instructs would-be drivers and gives them a chance to actually drive a train on its regular run.

Also, in May each year Wolsztyn is home to the Steam Parade, a festival featuring steam locomotives from across Europe. And if too much steam is never enough, the town also offers a steam-train museum, within its working engine depot south of the train station at ul Fabryczna 1.

ings in the grounds is the oldest windmill in Poland (built in 1585), and an 18th-century granary, which has a display of excavated human remains.

The main exhibition is in the churchlike building, which has two floors of finds from excavations on and around the island. Among the exhibits, most of which date from the 10th and 11th centuries, are weapons, household items and implements, pottery, ornaments, and a dugout canoe, which is one of the very few wooden objects to have survived for almost a millennium.

Between mid-April and October, a small boat takes visitors from the museum's jetty to the island of Ostrów Lednicki, 175m away, where you can see what is left of the palace and the church. The foundations and lower parts of the walls are still in place and this gives a rough idea of how big the complex was.

Each May, the medieval atmosphere gets turned up to 11 at the **International Festival of Early Medieval Culture** (☎ 061 427 5040), with numerous historically themed events involving costumes and axes.

Two kilometres south of the museum, also on the lakeshore, is the **Wielkopolska Ethnographic Park** (Wielkopolski Park Etnograficzny; ☎ 061 427 5040; Dziekanowice; adult/concession 6/3zł; ☎ 9am–6pm Tue–Sat & 10am–5pm Sun Apr–Oct, 9am–3pm Tue–Sat & 10am–3pm Sun Nov–Mar). It's on the eastern side of the lake, 500m north of the Poznań–Gniezno road. The skansen features a good

selection of 19th-century rural architecture from Wielkopolska in a village setting.

A combined ticket covering entry to the museum and the skansen costs 10zł for adults and 5zł concession.

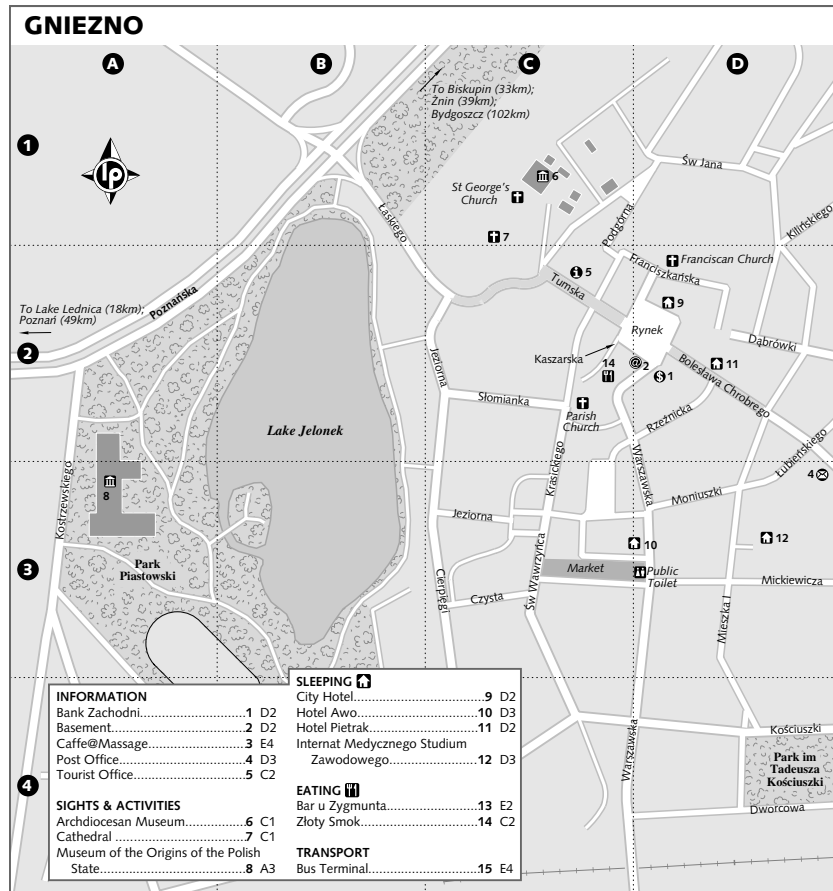
Getting There & Away

The lake lies on the Poznań–Gniezno road and there's a regular bus service between the two cities – up to 12 daily to/from Poznań (6.30zł) and to/from Gniezno (4.30zł). From whichever end you start, take the bus that runs via Pobiedziska, not via Kostrzyn. Coming from Poznań, you'll see three old windmills on the hill to the left of the road; stay on the bus for another 2.5km and get off at the turn-off to Komorowo (the bus stop is just by the turn-off). From here it is about a five-minute walk to the skansen, then you need to walk for another 2km along a sealed road to the museum.

GNIEZNO

pop 70,000

Appearances can be deceptive – on first glance at the relaxed centre of Gniezno (*gnyez-no*), you'd never guess the huge part it played in the founding of Poland. Its Old Town, attractively renovated on the 1000th anniversary (in 2000) of the establishment of the city's historic bishopric, is a charming collection of winding streets and colourful, slope-roofed buildings centred on a pleasant cobblestone square and the city's famous cathedral.



It may be slow-paced now, but in its day Gniezno has been both a royal and a religious seat. It is also considered to be the cradle of the Polish state, as it was here that the various tribes of the region were first united as Poles in the 10th century. Its historic cathedral is well worth a visit, and it is also a great place to catch your breath after the hustle of Poznań.

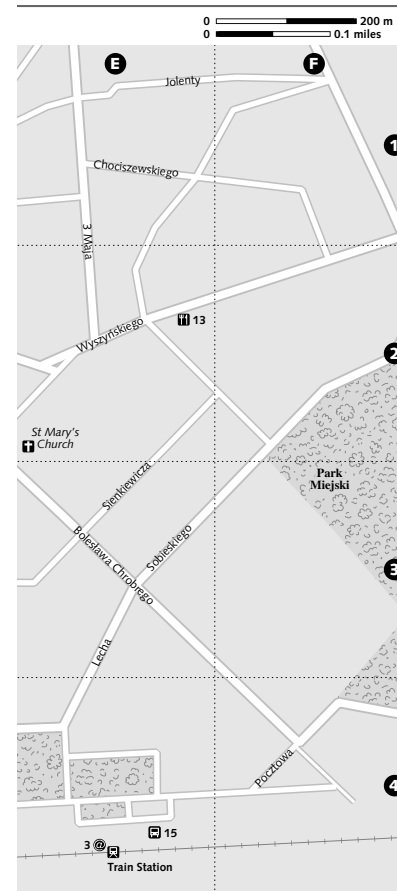
History

Legend has it that Gniezno was founded by the mythical Lech, the grandson of the original legendary Piast and the grandfather of Mieszko I. While hunting in the area, young Lech found the *gniazdo* (nest) of a white eagle, giving the town its name and the na-

tion its emblem (the man himself had to settle for having a beer named after him).

In historical terms, Gniezno was already fortified with wood and earth ramparts by the end of the 8th century, and had regular trade links with commercial centres far outside the region. In a key development, Duke Mieszko I is thought to have been baptised here in 966, thus raising the autonomous region of Wielkopolska from obscurity to the rank of Christianised nations.

Despite this, Mieszko seems to have favoured Poznań as a city, and some historians have argued that Gniezno was never officially Wielkopolska's capital – the first cathedral was, after all, built in Poznań, and the ruler was buried there.



Gniezno came to the fore again in the year 1000, when the archbishopric was established here, and then Gniezno's position was further strengthened in 1025 when Bolesław Chrobry was crowned in the local cathedral as the first Polish king. Only 13 years later, the Bohemians invaded, devastating the entire region. This prompted the Poles to shift their seat of power to the more secure Kraków, though kings were still crowned in Gniezno until the end of the 13th century.

The town retained its status as the seat of the Church of Poland and is still the formal ecclesiastical capital, despite the fact that the archbishops are only occasional guests these days.

Information

Bank Zachodni (Rynek 4)

Basement (☎ 0607 538684; Rynek 5; per hr 2zł; ☎ 9am–11pm) Internet access.

Caffe@Massage (☎ 061 633 4365; ul Dworcowa 7; per hr 2.50zł; ☎ 7.30am–9.30pm) Internet access (and massage!) at the train station.

Post office (ul Bolesława Chrobrego 36)

Tourist office (☎ 061 428 4100; ul Tumska 12; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat, 10am–2pm Sun May–Sep, 8am–4pm Mon–Fri Oct–Apr)

Sights

CATHEDRAL

Gniezno's history and character are inextricably intertwined with its **cathedral** (☎ 061 424 3820; ☎ 9am–5.30pm Mon–Sat, 1–5.45pm Sun), an imposing, double-towered, brick Gothic structure. The present church, which you may recognise from a common 2zł postage stamp, was constructed after the 1331 destruction of the previous Romanesque cathedral by the Teutonic Knights (see boxed text, p451). It changed a lot in later periods: chapels sprouted all around it, and the interior was redecorated in successive styles. After considerable damage in WWII, it was rebuilt according to the original Gothic structure.

Aside from its historic value, the cathedral's interior has an unusually soothing atmosphere, perhaps due to its relatively compact size and graceful curves. It's a good place to sit and contemplate.

Its focal point is the elaborate silver **sarcophagus of St Adalbert**, which is in the chancel. The baroque coffin was the work of Peter van der Rennen and was made in 1662 in Gdańsk. It's topped with the semi-reclining figure of the saint, who looks remarkably lively considering his unfortunate demise.

Adalbert was a Bohemian bishop who passed through Gniezno in 997, on a missionary trip to convert the Prussians, a heathen Baltic tribe inhabiting what is now Masuria in northeastern Poland. The pagans were less than enthusiastic about accepting the new faith and terminated the bishop's efforts by cutting off his head. Bolesław Chrobry recovered the bishop's body, paying its weight in gold, then buried it in Gniezno's cathedral in 999. In the same year, Pope Sylvester canonised the martyr. This contributed to Gniezno's elevation to an archbishopric a year later, and also led to the placing of several important memorials to the saint in the church.

One example is the pair of Romanesque **bronze doors** from about 1175, in the back of the right-hand (southern) aisle, at the entrance from the porch. Undeniably one of the best examples of Romanesque art in Europe, the doors depict, in bas-relief, 18 scenes from the life of St Adalbert.

Framing the doors is the exquisite 15th-century **Gothic portal** with the scene of the Last Judgement in its tympanum. In the opposite porch, right across the nave, is another elaborate **Gothic portal**, dating from the same period, this one with the scene of the Crucifixion in its tympanum.

The nearby entrance in the back wall of the church leads downstairs to the **basement**, where the relics of the previous Romanesque cathedral can be seen, along with the Gothic tombstones of the bishops.

Also on this back wall are two carved tombstones. To the left is the red-marble **tomb of Primate Zbigniew Oleśnicki**, attributed to Veit Stoss, and to the right is the late-15th-century bronze **tomb of Archbishop Jakub** from Sienna. Also note an expressive wooden crucifix from around 1440, placed high on the rood beam at the entrance to the chancel.

All along the aisles and the ambulatory are **chapels**, built from the 15th to 18th centuries, and separated from the aisles by decorative wrought-iron screens. There are 17 screens in all, ranging in style from Gothic and Renaissance to baroque, and constituting one of the most beautiful collections of its kind to be gathered in a single church in Poland. Inside the chapels are some fine tombstones, altarpieces, paintings and wall decorations – well worth a closer look.

One interesting modern artwork sits in the body of the church: a **statue of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński**, the Polish primate credited with persuading the Soviets to relax their antireligious stance during the communist era. The panelled piece shows various scenes from the cardinal's eventful life and career.

You can look around the interior free of charge, except for the **tower** (adult/concession 3/2zł; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm Mon–Sat, 1–6pm Sun), and the **bronze doors and basement** (adult/concession 2/1.50zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1–5.45pm Sun), the latter two visited with a guide. English- or German-speaking guides may be available for 45-minute cathedral tours at around 80zł per group – enquire at the office in the porch opposite the doors. There are also machines scattered through

the cathedral's interior, which produce commentaries on items of interest once you pop in a 1zł coin. As you walk around, take a peek through the occasional gratings set in the floor, which give views into the foundations of the building.

MUSEUMS

The **Museum of the Origins of the Polish State** (Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego; ☎ 061 426 4641; ul Kostrzewskiego 1; adult/concession 5.50/3.50zł; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sun), on the far side of Lake Jelonek, illustrates Gniezno's pivotal role in Polish history. The permanent collection contains archaeological finds and works of art related to the development of the Polish nation from pre-Slavic times to the end of the Piast dynasty. The museum also runs an audiovisual presentation about Poland under the Piasts (English soundtrack available).

North of the cathedral behind St George's Church (Kościół Św Jerzego), the **Archdiocesan Museum** (Muzeum Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej; ☎ 061 426 3778; ul Kolegiaty 2; adult/concession 4/3zł; ☎ 9am–5.30pm Mon–Sat, 9am–4pm Sun) holds a collection of sacral sculpture and painting, liturgical fabrics, coffin portraits and votive offerings.

Sleeping

Internat Medycznego Studium Zawodowego (☎ 061 426 3409; ul Mieszka I 27; s/d 30/60zł; 📍) Gniezno's medical college rents out 24 double rooms to the general public. The rooms are quiet, neat and excellent value. One bathroom is shared between four adjacent rooms. The Internat is at the back of the Medical School (Zespół Szkół Medycznych) compound.

City Hotel (☎ 061 425 3535; Rynek 15; s/d 80/90zł) This hotel doesn't make much effort to live up to its prestigious position on the Rynek – inside its rooms, you'll find sofa beds and a dodgy green-brown colour scheme. But the price is right, the rooms and the café look out onto the square, and you can't get much closer to the cathedral. Enter via the City Bar.

Hotel Awo (☎ 061 426 1197; www.hotel-awo.pl; ul Warszawska 32; s/d/tr/q/ste 150/190/230/280/300zł; 📍) A midrange place with neat, clean rooms, a pleasant courtyard with a beer garden, and a restaurant and nightclub on the premises. It's right by the city market, making it potentially noisy for south-facing rooms.

Hotel Pietrak (☎ 061 426 1497; www.pietrak.pl; ul Bolesława Chrobrego 3; s/d/ste 180/210/250zł; 📍) Located in two 18th-century burgh-

ers' houses, just shy of the Rynek, the Pietrak provides the best facilities in town, including a fitness centre with a spa. The restaurant (mains 8zł to 45zł) serves up quality food, and operates a colourful beer garden in the street during summer.

Eating

Bar u Zygmunta (☎ 061 426 3774; ul Wyszyńskiego 20; mains 2–7zł; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat) In the more modern part of town, this self-service cafeteria has a good claim to being the cheapest budget eatery in the central area, and has a fine grasp of classic milk-bar standards.

Złoty Smok (☎ 061 426 7804; ul Kaszarska 1; mains 13–23zł; ☎ 11am–2am) The Golden Dragon is a pretty standard Chinese restaurant, but stands out as the most adventurous eating choice in the town centre. It's popular with locals, and the menu has a dash of authenticity thanks to the Vietnamese chef.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses travel to Poznań (10.50zł, 1½ hours) from the bus terminal at least hourly; if you want to stop at Lake Lednica (4.30zł, 35 minutes), take one that goes via Pobiedziska (up to 12 daily). There are six daily buses running to Żnin (8zł, one hour), where you can change for the narrow-gauge train to Biskupin.

TRAIN

Trains run regularly throughout the day to Poznań (16zł, 45 minutes). There are also departures to Bydgoszcz (28zł, 1½ hours, six daily), Toruń (24zł, 1½ hours, six daily), Gdańsk (43zł, 4½ hours, seven daily) and Wrocław (38zł, 3¾ hours, seven daily).

ŻNIN

pop 14,000

This sleepy town, 39km north of Gniezno, is well off the international tourist trail, with only a handful of buildings of historical interest. However, as it's the terminus of a narrow-gauge tourist railway that links a bundle of disparate sights, it's a worthwhile day-trip from Gniezno.

Sights & Activities

The town's **Pałuki Lands Museum** (Muzeum Ziemi Pałuckiej; ☎ 052 302 0293; Plac Wolności 1; adult/concession 5/3zł; ☎ 9am–4pm Tue–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat & Sun) is housed within the town hall and the nearby

15th-century Gothic tower, located across the canal to the west of the bus station. It displays historical and ethnographic exhibits related to the town and the historical Pałuki region around it. If religious art is your thing, you can also visit the **Sacred Art Museum** (Muzeum Sztuki Sakralnej; ☎ 052 302 8344; ul 700-lecia 24; adult/concession 5/3zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Tue–Fri), south of the bus station.

Then step aboard a train running along the **Żnin District Railway** (Żnińska Kolej Powiatowa; ☎ 052 302 0492; www.paluki.pl/ciuchcia; ul Potockiego 4; one-way/return 9/17zł), a narrow-gauge line that was opened in 1894 to carry sugar beets to the local sugar factory, and which also functioned as public transport. The passenger service was cancelled in 1962, but the line lives on as a tourist attraction. You'll find the station across the park east of the bus terminal.

Once the train leaves the dinky narrow-gauge station at Żnin, it trundles very slowly through a succession of low green hills covered with crops, pausing briefly at a stop serving the village of Wenecja before reaching the **Wenecja Narrow Gauge Railway Museum** (Muzeum Kolei Wąskotorowej w Wenecji; ☎ 052 302 5150; adult/concession 5/3zł; ☎ 9am–6pm May–Oct, 10am–2pm Nov–Apr), a showcase of narrow little engines, carriages, and their associated memorabilia. Across the rails from the museum are the **ruins** of a 14th-century castle.

The next stop on the line is the Archaeological Reserve at Biskupin (see p394); then the train finally reaches the village of Gąsawa. The main sight of interest here is **St Nicholas' Church** (Kościół Św Mikołaja; ☎ 052 302 5030; ul Żnińska 1; admission free), a 17th-century wooden structure with an unusual mix of architectural styles: Gothic, baroque, neoclassicist and more modern additions all jostling together. When the church was renovated in 1999, the workers discovered original frescoes that had been covered up by a mixture of reeds and plaster. The paintings depict saints and other Biblical figures, and have been gradually revealed by ongoing 'excavation'.

If you take an early train from Żnin, it's perfectly possible to stop off at the railway museum, Biskupin and Gąsawa, then return to Żnin by the last train of the day.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From the bus station on ul Towarowa in the centre of town, buses run every hour or two

between Żnin and Gniezno (8zł, one hour). There are twice-hourly buses to Gąsawa (3.40zł, 25 minutes), though only eight of these run through Biskupin (3.40zł, 20 minutes, Monday to Friday). Seven services a day head to Poznań (16.30zł, 2¼ hours), passing through Gniezno. There are hourly services to Bydgoszcz (9zł, one hour), and one bus a day to Toruń (11.60zł, 1½ hours).

TRAIN

The narrow-gauge tourist train operates from May to September, from Żnin to Gąsawa (one-way/return 9zł/17zł, one hour), passing Biskupin on the way (40 minutes). Five trains depart from Żnin daily between 9am and 2.40pm (in July and August there's an extra departure at 4pm), then make the return journey from Gąsawa. In Żnin, the station is 150m east of the bus station; in Gąsawa it's 700m southwest of the Rynek on the Gniezno road.

BISKUPIN

Forget static museum displays in dimly lit rooms – Biskupin's recreated Iron Age town site, with its wooden palisades, thatched roofs and costumed historical re-enactors, is a stimulating way to learn about the distant pre-Polish past.

The fortified lake town was built about 2700 years ago by a tribe of the Lusatian culture, then accidentally rediscovered in 1933 by a school teacher who noticed some wooden stakes poking out of the lake. The town's remnants were then unearthed from beneath a thick layer of turf. It is the only known surviving Iron Age town in Poland, and proves that the region was already inhabited by well-organised social groups more than 1600 years before the Polish state was born.

Sights & Activities

The Iron Age town is situated within the **Archaeological Reserve** (Rezerwat Archeologiczny; ☎ 052 302 5420; www.biskupin.pl; adult/concession 7/5zł; ☎ 8am–6pm, closes at dusk in winter). You can just wander through the grounds, but it's also possible to hire an electronic audio tour for 15zł, or organise an English-speaking guide in advance for 80zł. The ticket office also sells some publications about the site in English.

Once past the gate, follow the path to the **museum**, which presents finds excavated on and

around the island, together with background information (there's some English signage) about the place and the people. There's also a model of the town as it once looked.

The **Iron Age town** lies further along, on the peninsula in the northern end of the park. The gateway, a fragment of the defensive wall and two rows of houses have been reconstructed to give some idea of what the town once looked like. The interiors of a few houses have been fitted out as they may have been 2700 years ago. Within the thatched structures you'll find various stalls selling hand-crafted arrows, jewellery and replica coins, and a man in period garb giving hatchet-throwing demonstrations out front. From the wharf near the gateway, a **pleasure boat** (trips 5zł) departs several times a day for a short trip around the lake.

In September each year, an **archaeological festival** is held at the reserve. In addition to demonstrations of ancient cultures including dance, handcrafts and food, it's an annual excuse to stage rousing re-enactments of battles between Germanic and Slavic tribes, providing a colourful (and photogenic) spectacle.

Getting There & Away

BUS

From the bus stop at the entrance to the Archaeological Reserve, buses run every hour or two north to Żnin (3.40zł, 20 minutes, Monday to Friday) and south to Gąsawa (2.60zł, five minutes, Monday to Friday). From either of these places, regular buses go to Gniezno (8zł, one hour). If you miss your bus, Gąsawa is an easy 2km walk away.

TRAIN

See the Żnin Getting There & Away section (left) for details of the narrow-gauge tourist train that passes through Biskupin from May to September. The station is right by the entrance to the reserve.

STRZELNO

pop 6100

Strzelno (*stshel-no*) boasts two of the best Romanesque churches in the region and a museum. It's a good side trip for architecture buffs and church-art fans.

Sights

Strzelno's attractions are all next to each other, 200m east of the Rynek.

IRON LIFE

The Iron Age settlement of Biskupin was built around 740–730 BC, taking just a few years to be constructed. Following a highly organised plan, the island was encircled by a 6m-high barricade consisting of a wooden framework filled with earth and sand. The island's shores were then reinforced with a palisade of about 20,000 oak stakes that were driven into the lake bottom, which served as a breakwater and an obstacle for potential invaders. The only access to the town was through a gateway topped with a watchtower and connected to the lake shore by a 250m-long bridge.

Within the defensive walls, 13 parallel rows of houses were laid out with streets between them, and encircled by a street running inside the ramparts. More than 100 houses were built, each inhabited by one family of seven to 10 members. The total population of the settlement was about 800 to 1000 people, which probably constituted a big city for its inhabitants. The town was essentially self-sufficient but also benefited from nearby trade routes.

Around 400 BC the town was destroyed, most likely by the Scythians, and was never rebuilt. This was essentially because of climatic changes, which caused the lake's level to rise, making the island uninhabitable. The remains of the wooden structure were preserved in mud and silt for 2300 years. Early in the 20th century the water level began to drop and the island re-emerged, eventually turning into a peninsula, as it is today.

A lot of effort was put into reconstructing the houses and the ramparts when the town was rediscovered, and the results haven't just impressed the steady trickle of tourists who come here. The authenticity and location of the site have made it a favourite with Polish filmmakers, and Biskupin has already appeared in Jerzy Hoffman's historical epics *Stara Baśń* (2003) and *Ogniem i Mieczem* (1999), as well as the TV series *Sagala*. In a small way, the Iron Age is back.

Built of red stone in around 1150, **St Procopius' Church** (Kościół Św Prokopa; ☎ 052 318 9281; Plac Św Wojciecha; adult/concession 2/1.50zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1.30–5pm Sun) has preserved its austere Romanesque form remarkably well, even though its upper part was rebuilt in brick after damage in the 18th century. The interior, almost free of decoration, looks admirably authentic. By the entrance is the original 12th-century font.

Built a decade or two after its neighbour, the larger **Church of the Holy Trinity** (Kościół Św Trójcy; ☎ 052 318 9281; Plac Św Wojciecha; adult/concession 3/2.50zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1.30–5pm Sun) acquired a Gothic vault in the 14th century and a baroque façade four centuries later. The interior is a remarkably harmonious composition of baroque furnishings, Gothic vaulting and four original Romanesque columns. These columns, revealed only during postwar restoration, are the most precious treasure of the church, particularly the two with elaborate figurative designs. There are 18 figures carved in each column; those on the left-hand column personify vices, while those on the right are virtues.

The door at the head of the right-hand aisle leads to St Barbara's Chapel, its fine palmlike

vault resting on yet another delicately carved Romanesque pillar.

Next door, the **museum** (☎ 052 318 9281; Plac Św Wojciecha; adult/concession 2/1.50zł; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1.30–5pm Sun) presents some architectural remains (including a Romanesque portal with a tympanum depicting the scene of the Teaching of Christ) and archaeological finds.

Getting There & Away

The bus terminal is at the western end of town, and has regular services to Gniezno (8.50zł, 50 minutes).

KRUSZWICA

pop 9400

Set on the northern end of Lake Gopło, Kruszwica (*kroosh-fee-tshah*) existed from at least the 8th century as a fortified village of the Goplanie, one of the Slav tribes living in the area. The Goplanie were eventually wiped out by the Polanie, forerunners of the medieval Poles, who made considerably more of a mark on history.

Today Kruszwica is an undistinguished, small industrial town notable for its remnants of the Piast legacy and a few strange legends about the region's early days (see boxed text, p396).

THE LEGEND OF DUKE POPIEL

Once upon a time, a duke named Popiel lived in the castle of Kruszwica. He was a cruel and despotic ruler but was terrified of being overthrown. To remove any competitors to the throne, he decided to kill all his relatives and leading members of the community.

To put his diabolical plan into effect, the duke organised a great party in the castle, inviting his family and other distinguished guests. Once the initial toasts had been made, a poisonous wine was served to selected invitees, who died in a great deal of pain. Popiel then threw the bodies out of the castle and refused to bury them, as an example to others.

But, as fate would have it, the decomposing corpses attracted thousands of mice, which soon infested the castle. Popiel sought refuge high up in the castle's tower, but the mice cornered him there and devoured him. Since then the tower has been known as the Mouse Tower.

Following Popiel's death, a modest peasant, Piast, was chosen by the people and proclaimed the new ruler. He was the first leader of the Piast dynasty, which ruled Poland for many years and made it great and prosperous. And the mice lived happily (and plumply) ever after...

Sights & Activities

The 32m-high **Mouse Tower** (Mysia Wieża; ☎ 052 351 5303; adult/concession 3.60/2.90zł; 🕒 8am-6pm May-Sep), near the Rynek, is the only remainder of the 14th-century castle built by King Kazimierz III Wielki. You can go to the top for a view over the town and lake. From the foot of this octagonal tower, a **tourist boat** (adult/concession 8.50/7zł) sails several times a day in summer for an hour-long trip around Lake Gopło.

The early-12th-century stone Romanesque **collegiate church** (ul Kolegiacka) was altered in later periods but returned more or less to its original form during postwar restoration. The interior fittings include the 12th-century baptismal font. The church is on the north-eastern outskirts of town, an 800m walk from the Rynek.

Getting There & Away

The main bus stop is on the Rynek. Buses to Strzelno (4zł, 10 minutes) depart every other hour or so. You can take a bus to Inowrocław (4zł, 20 minutes, hourly) for transport further afield.

SOUTHEASTERN WIELKOPOLSKA

KALISZ

pop 109,000
Given how little the average traveller knows about Kalisz (*kah-leesh*), its centre comes as a pleasant surprise, revealing a charming collection of city parks, gently curving streets and simple but harmonious architecture. This provincial city still has the feel

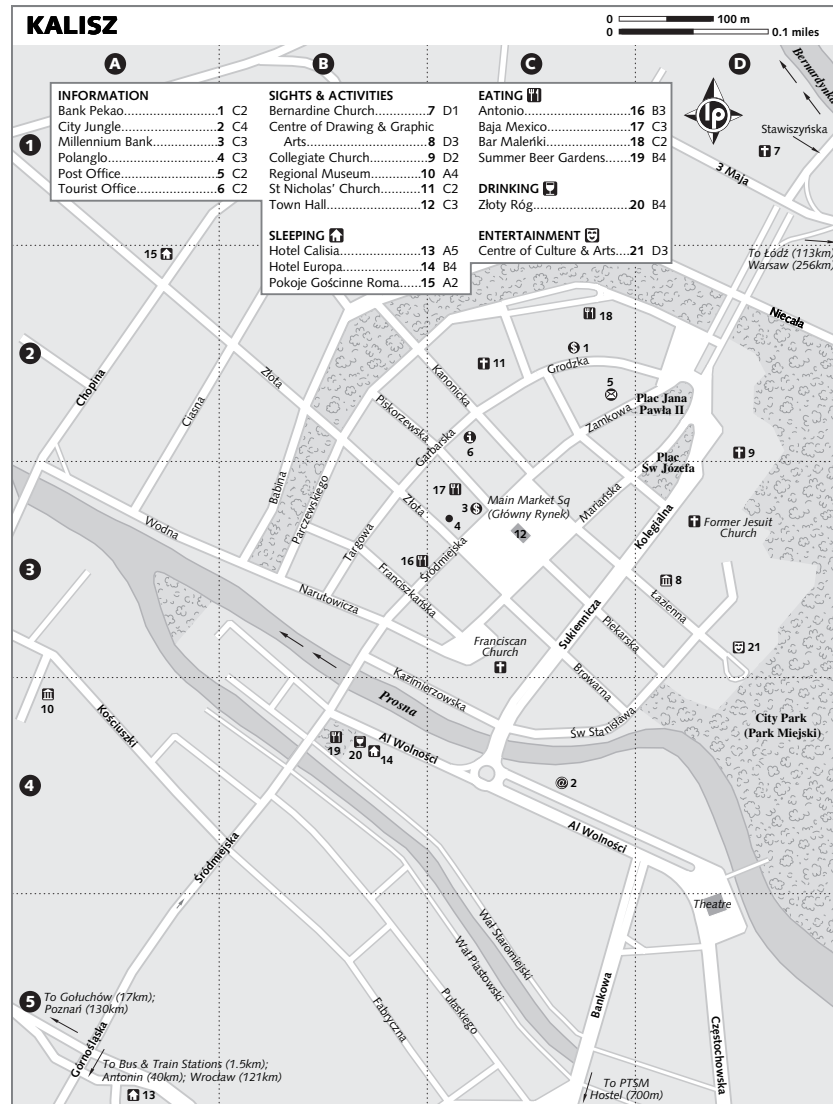
of a small market town, so it's easy to avoid urban stresses while taking full advantage of the city's facilities. Kalisz is also a good point from which to leave the tourist trail and investigate the quieter rural backwaters of Wielkopolska.

History

Kalisz has the longest documented history of any town in Poland: it was mentioned by Claudius Ptolemy in his renowned *Geography* of the 2nd century AD as Calisia, a trading settlement on the Amber Route between the Roman Empire and the Baltic Sea. In the 9th century a stronghold was built in the present-day suburb of Zawodzie. Burnt down in 1233, the town was rebuilt further to the north, in its present location.

During the reign of Kazimierz III Wielki, Kalisz acquired defensive walls with 15 watchtowers and a castle. From the 16th century it began to decline. A huge fire in 1792 left only the churches standing, and almost all the fortifications were taken down in the early 19th century.

The greatest blow to civic pride, sometimes compared to Warsaw's annihilation in 1944, came in WWI – in August 1914 Kalisz was razed to the ground by the invading Germans. Within a month, the population dropped from 70,000 to 5000 and most buildings were reduced to ruins, though the churches once again miraculously escaped destruction. The town was rebuilt on the old street plan, but in a new architectural style. Luckily, given the circumstances, most of the new buildings survived WWII without much damage.



Information

Bank Pekao (ul Grodzka 7)

City Jungle (☎ 062 767 6700; Al Wolności 6; per hr 3zł; 🕒 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) Internet access.

Millennium Bank (Główny Rynek 3)

Polanglo (☎ 062 502 9898; ul Złota 1) Bookshop.

Post office (ul Zamkowa 18/20)

Tourist office (☎ 062 598 2731; www.kalisz.pl; ul Garbarska 2; 🕒 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat)

Sights

The Old Town sits in the angle between the Prosna and Bernardynka Rivers, with a dozen small bridges and the **City Park** (Park Miejski) stretching to the southeast.

4.30pm Sat & Sun) displays ecological exhibits in an old coach house. The collection includes a number of curious *księgi drzewne* (wooden books), boxes shaped like books, which were used to collect seeds and other plant matter.

Another outpost, in the far north of the park, is the **Museum of Forest Techniques** (Muzeum Techniki Leśnej; ☎ 062 761 5046), 750m beyond the castle. It contains tools and machinery used in forestry, but at the time of research was closed, pending an update of the collection.

Seven bison live relatively freely in a large, fenced-off **bison enclosure** (🦌 7am-sunset), west of the park, 500m beyond the forestry techniques museum (follow the Żubry signs).

Sleeping & Eating

Dom Pracy Twórczej (☎ 062 761 5044; ul Borowskiego 2; r 100zł; 📍) If you're taken enough with the estate to want to stay over, this place offers comfortable rooms in a historic building inside the park, just a short amble from the castle beyond the Museum of Forestry's annex. Its restaurant (mains 9zł to 15zł) does a good line in Polish specialties.

Getting There & Away

Suburban bus 12A goes roughly hourly to/from Kalisz (4.40zł, 40 minutes). Get off at the bus stand next to the cemetery, cross the main road, and walk around the church to find the park entrance. About 12 PKS buses run to Poznań daily (15zł, 2¼ hours).

ANTONIN

pop 500

Before WWII, Antonin was the summer residence of the Radziwiłł family, one of the richest and most famous aristocratic clans in Poland. Today it's a small lakeside resort, popular with wedding photographers and a pleasant place for a quick stopover or a slightly longer break.

Sights & Activities

Prince Antoni Radziwiłł gave his name to Antonin, having put it on the map by building his **Hunting Palace** (Pałac Myśliwski; ☎ 062 734 8300; admission free; 🦌 8am-10pm) here from 1822 to 1824. This handsome wooden structure is still the town's showpiece; it was designed by Karl Friedrich Schinkel, one of the outstanding German architects of the period, who was also responsible for numerous monumental buildings in Berlin and Prussia.

The palace has an unusual structure. The main part is a large, octagonal, three-storey hall, called the Chimney Room, with a column in the middle supporting the roof and also functioning as a chimney for the central fireplace. There are four side wings, originally designed as living rooms for the owner and his guests. One such guest, Frédéric Chopin, stayed here a couple of times, performing concerts and composing.

The Centre of Culture & Arts (p399) in Kalisz now runs the palace as a hotel, and there is also a small museum and 'creative work centre' that is available for casual visitors. Regular piano recitals are held here, with special buses laid on from Ostrów Wielkopolski and Kalisz.

The palace is surrounded by a 46-hectare **nature reserve**, which offers some pleasant walks of up to 25km. You can also go **fishing** or **boating**, or take up any number of activities on the lake, which borders the main road.

Festivals & Events

The **Chopin Festival** (☎ 062 765 2500) is a prestigious four-day festival held at the Hunting Palace; in September.

Sleeping & Eating

Lido (☎ 062 734 8191; ul Wrocławska 6; camp sites per person 10zł, cabins 55-90zł, s/d 100/120zł; 📍) If you can't stretch to the palace (or are beaten to it by a bride), the Lido has decent motel rooms and a range of camping, cabin and leisure facilities, all on the lakeside next door to the palace.

Hunting Palace (Pałac Myśliwski; ☎ 062 734 8300; s 140zł, d 180-260zł; 📍) How could you stay anywhere else? This is the most romantic option for miles, even if you're just grabbing a bite in its stylish restaurant in the Chimney Room. Advance booking is recommended; it's invariably swamped with wedding parties on Saturday in summer.

Getting There & Away

The train station is about 1km from the palace, beyond the lake. Three trains run to Poznań daily (18.50zł, 2¼ hours). There are no direct trains to Kalisz – change in Ostrów Wielkopolski.

There are seven daily buses to Wrocław (15zł, two hours), and seven to Kalisz (11zł, one hour). About 10 buses go to Ostrów Wielkopolski (5zł, 30 minutes), from where suburban buses run regularly to Kalisz.

LICHEŃ

pop 1500

Licheń (*lee-hen*) is reputedly Poland's second most visited pilgrimage site after Częstochowa. The pilgrims' destination, a sizable **ecclesiastical complex**, occupies the village's centre and includes three churches, a fairy-tale stone fortress (Golgotha) depicting the Way of the Cross in model tableaux, chapels, grottoes and statues scattered all over the grounds, and more images of the Virgin Mary than you can swing a censer at. About 1.5 million pilgrims pass through here annually, coming to pay tribute to a reputedly miraculous icon of Mary in the main church. (It's tucked away in the high altar if you're interested – follow the queue of people shuffling on all fours.)

The most recent church is the one that instantly grabs your attention. Built to celebrate two millennia of Christianity, the gigantic **Church of Our Lady of Licheń** (Bazylika Matki Bożej Licheńskiej) was begun in 1994, and the monumental building was officially consecrated in 2004.

The resulting building is Poland's largest place of worship, and the golden dome can be spotted from miles away in the flat countryside. The interior is resplendent with gilded ornamentation, chandeliers, paintings, two massive triptychs and no fewer than 50 confessionals.

Beneath the main hall is an underground level containing the round **Golden Chapel**, which is a good-sized church in itself. Completed in

1996, it's crammed full with crystal chandeliers and golden stucco. The floor is of marble, imported from all over the world, forming a multicoloured design. The side rooms down on this level are used for exhibitions on various pious themes.

Give yourself at least half a day for a visit here. There's a lot to see in the basilica and the gardens, and the never-ending influx of pilgrims really adds to the atmosphere. Local guidebooks (some in English) are sold at various locations and have full details of the diverse attractions.

Sleeping

Dom Pielgrzymy Betania (☎ 063 270 8162; www.lichen.pl; ul Klasztorna 4; dm 10-32zł, d 64zł, tr 45-75zł, q 60-100zł) This budget accommodation operated by the church is a cheap and flexible option; its chambers can operate as dorms or private rooms.

Dom Pielgrzymy Arka (☎ 063 270 8162; www.lichen.pl; ul Klasztorna 4; s/d/tr/q 70/130/100/100zł) The main lodging facility is also within the sanctuary. Simple, immaculate rooms for one to 10 people are available to pilgrims and anyone else wanting to sleep over. The complex also has its own chapel, café and restaurant.

Getting There & Away

To get to Licheń you'll need to go via Konin, a fair-sized town, 13km to the southwest, which sits on the busy Poznań–Warsaw rail line. There are hourly buses between Konin and Licheń (6zł, 30 minutes).

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