

Poland

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Wawel Hill** Experience the beauty and history of Kraków's magnificent castle, the home and burial place of Polish kings for centuries (p878)
- **Gdańsk** Soak up the cosmopolitan vibe of the historic port city and taking a dip in the Baltic at nearby seaside towns (p891)
- **Wrocław** Get into the bar, club and restaurant scene of this lively student city (p887)
- **Warsaw Rising Museum** Discover Warsaw's tragic wartime history via this modern museum's audiovisual exhibits (p875)
- **Off-the-beaten track** Enjoy the skiing or hiking life in the southern Tatra Mountains (p883)

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 312,685 sq km (roughly the size of France)
- **ATMs** Widespread
- **Budget** From around 100zł per day in Warsaw
- **Capital** Warsaw
- **Country Code** ☎ 048
- **Famous for** Chopin, Copernicus, Marie Curie, Solidarity, vodka
- **Head of State** President Lech Kaczyński
- **Language** Polish
- **Money** złoty (zł); A\$1=2.33zł; CA\$1 = 2.72zł; €1=3.87zł; ¥100 = 2.70zł; NZ\$1 = 1.96zł; UK£1=5.56zł; US\$1=3.09zł
- **Phrases** *Dzień dobry* (good morning), *Ile to kosztuje?* (how much is it?), *dziękuję* (thank you)



- **Population** 38 million
- **Time** GMT/UTC + 1
- **Visas** Not required for EU citizens; US, Canadian, New Zealand and Australian citizens do not need visas for stays of less than 90 days.

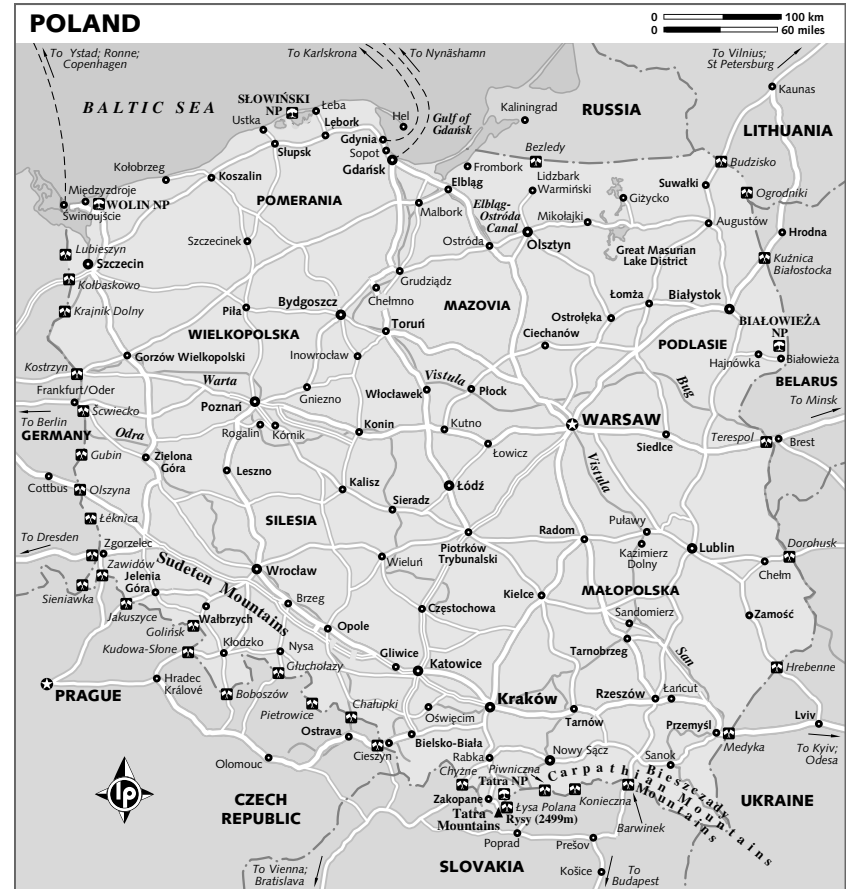
TRAVEL HINTS

Hotel weekend rates are often less expensive. It's also worth asking if a hotel has cheaper rooms than the posted rate.

ROAMING POLAND

From Warsaw, head to Kraków. Take a day trip to Zakopane, before continuing to Wrocław. Finish up at seaside Gdańsk.

A flat, fertile nation in the centre of Europe, often surrounded by conquest-happy empires, can expect life to be turbulent at times. And that's been the experience of Poland, as it's grappled with centuries of war, invasion and foreign occupation. Nothing, however, has succeeded in suppressing the Poles' strong sense of nationhood and cultural identity, as exemplified by the ancient royal capital of Kraków, with its breathtaking castle, and bustling Warsaw, with the painstaking postwar reconstruction of its devastated Old Town.



Away from these major centres, regional cities such as urbane Gdańsk, cultured Wrocław and lively Poznań exude a cosmopolitan energy that's a heady mix of old and new. Poland's landscape is also diverse, from its northern sandy beaches to its magnificent southern mountains.

Poland is still good value for travellers, with an inexpensive transport system that makes it easy to get around. As Poland continues to reconcile its new-found European identity with its hard-won political and cultural freedoms, it's a fascinating time to visit this beautiful country.

HISTORY

Poland's history started in the early Middle Ages with the Polonians (People of the Plains). Mieszko I, Duke of the Polonians, adopted Christianity in 966 and embarked on a successful campaign of conquest.

Encroachment from Germanic peoples led to the relocation of the royal capital from Poznań to Kraków in 1038. However, the kingdom prospered under Kazimierz III 'the Great'

(1333–70). Soon after, Poland and Lithuania were united as the largest state in Europe, stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

The 18th century was a period of disaster and decline. Russia, Prussia and Austria repeatedly divided Polish territory between them; by 1795, Poland had vanished from the map of Europe. Finally, upon the end of WWI the old imperial powers dissolved, and a sovereign Polish state was restored.

On 1 September 1939, a Nazi blitzkrieg rained down from the west; soon after, the Soviets invaded Poland from the east. The Germans then used Poland as a base for invading the Soviet Union. By the time the Nazi regime was finally ousted at the end of WWII, six million Poles had died, including the country's three million Jews, who were brutally annihilated in death camps.

After WWII, Poland endured four decades of Soviet-dominated communist rule. Finally, in 1990 Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa became Poland's first postwar democratically elected president.

The postcommunist transition brought radical changes, but within a decade Poland had rebuilt the foundations of a market economy. Poland joined the EU in May 2004.

In the 2005 elections, the nation swung sharply to centre-right parties, underlined by the presidential election victory of Lech Kaczyński, well known for his social conservatism. In a bizarre twist of political fate, Kaczyński's identical twin brother Jarosław was appointed as Prime Minister in July 2006.

THE CULTURE

Due to Nazi genocide and the forced resettlements that followed WWII, Poland became an ethnically homogeneous country. Some 98% of the population are ethnic Poles.

Poles are friendly and polite, but not overly formal. The way of life in large urban centres increasingly resembles Western styles and manners. In the countryside, however, a more conservative culture dominates, with traditional gender roles, and strong religious convictions and family ties.

When greeting, Polish men are passionate about shaking hands. Polish women, too, often shake hands with men, but the man should always wait for the woman to extend her hand first.

Outside the big towns, knowledge of foreign languages is limited. To polish your Polish, see p24.

ARTS

Poland has inherited a rich literary tradition dating from the 15th century, though its modern voice was shaped during the long period of foreign occupation in the 19th century.

At the turn of the 20th century, the avant-garde 'Young Poland' movement in art and

READING UP

God's Playground: A History of Poland, by Norman Davies, offers an in-depth analysis of Polish history, and his *Rising '44* vividly covers the wartime Warsaw Rising. *Jews in Poland*, by Iwo Cyprian Pogonowski, provides a comprehensive record of Polish-Jewish history. Also of interest is Alan Furst's spy thriller *The Polish Officer*.

literature developed in Kraków. Among its most notable representatives were the writer Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907).

The most famous Polish musician was undoubtedly Frédéric Chopin (1810–49), whose music displays the melancholy and nostalgia that became hallmarks of the national style.

Poland's most renowned painter was Jan Matejko (1838–93), whose monumental historical paintings hang in galleries throughout the country.

Poland has produced several world-famous film directors including Roman Polański, who directed hits such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *Chinatown*; and Krzysztof Kieślowski, best known for the *Three Colours* trilogy.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

The national carrier **LOT** (code L0; www.lot.com) flies to major European cities. Warsaw is also serviced by major European carriers, such as Air France, Alitalia, British Airways, KLM and Lufthansa.

From North America, LOT offers direct flights to Warsaw from Chicago, New York and Toronto.

European discount airlines frequently flying to Poland include Ryanair, Wizz Air, SkyEurope, EasyJet and Centralwings.

A range of carriers fly into Kraków. Aside from connecting to Warsaw, LOT offers direct flights to Kraków from Frankfurt, Munich, Paris, Vienna and Tel Aviv. In summer, LOT also flies directly to/from Chicago (April to October) and New York (June to September). There are direct flights to and from London via British Airways, Centralwings (April to October), easyJet, Sky Europe and Ryanair.

Dublin is serviced by Ryanair (May to October), Sky Europe and Aer Lingus.

Boat

Polferries (www.polferries.pl) Runs between Gdańsk and Nynäshamn (18 hours) in Sweden. Also operates from Świnoujście to Ystad (9½ hours, daily) in Sweden; Rønne (six hours, Saturday) in Denmark; and Copenhagen (10½ to 11 hours, five weekly).

Stena Line (www.stenaline.com) Between Gdynia and Karlskrona (11 hours) in Sweden.

Unity Line (www.unityline.pl) From Świnoujście to Ystad (eight hours).

Any travel agency in Scandinavia will sell tickets for these services. In Poland, inquire at **Orbis Travel** (☎ 022-827 72 65; ul Bracka 16) in Warsaw, or its branches in other cities.

Bus

International bus services are cheaper than trains, but not as comfortable or fast.

The Polish national bus company **PKS** (☎ 022-652 23 21; www.pekaesbus.com.pl) runs dozens of buses each week from Warsaw to all major cities in Germany.

From Warsaw, **Eurolines** (☎ 032-351 20 20; www.eurolinespolska.pl) operates regular buses to and from Amsterdam (20 hours, five weekly), Cologne (20½ hours, one daily), London (26 hours, four weekly), Paris (26 hours, one daily), Rome (28 hours, four weekly) and Vienna (13 hours, five weekly).

Eurolines also has four weekly services (more in summer) from Paris to Białystok, via Poznań and Warsaw; and three weekly from Paris to Kraków, via Wrocław and Częstochowa.

Other Eurolines routes include Stuttgart to Warsaw, Munich to Kraków via Wrocław, Prague to Warsaw via Wrocław, Rome to Gdańsk, and Barcelona to Warsaw.

Eurolines also runs links to eastern cities such as Minsk, Brest, Vilnius, Tallinn and Riga. Check the website for times and prices.

From Przemyśl, buses run to Lviv (95km) in Ukraine six times a day.

Train

Domestic trains in Poland are significantly cheaper than international services, so you'll save money if you buy a ticket to a Polish border destination, then take a local train.

Several trains serve the Warsaw–Berlin route every day (via Frankfurt/Oder and Poznań), including EuroCity express

services (six hours, three daily). There are also connections between Warsaw and Cologne, Dresden, Frankfurt-am-Main and Leipzig; between Kraków and Berlin, via Wrocław; and between Gdańsk and Berlin, via Szczecin.

Trains to/from Prague serve Warsaw (nine to 10 hours, two daily), Wrocław (seven hours, one daily) and Kraków (8½ hours, one daily). To/from Vienna, trains connect with Warsaw (eight to nine hours, three daily) and Kraków (7½ hours, one daily).

Note that some international trains to/from Poland have become notorious for theft. Keep a grip on your bags, particularly on the Berlin–Warsaw, Prague–Warsaw and Prague–Kraków overnight trains, and on any train travelling to/from Gdańsk. If possible, sleep in a compartment with others.

Trains travel between Budapest and Warsaw (14 hours, one daily) via Bratislava. The train between Budapest and Kraków (11 hours, one daily) follows a different route through Košice in eastern Slovakia.

Warsaw has direct train links with Kyiv (Ukraine), Minsk (Belarus), and Moscow. There are also trains running between Gdańsk and Kaliningrad (five hours, one daily) in Russia.

Trains run daily from Kraków via Przemyśl to Lviv in Ukraine (9 hours).

BORDER CROSSINGS

Belarus (south to north) Terespol and Kuźnica Białostocka

Czech Republic (west to east) Porajów, Zawidów, Jakuszyce, Lubawka, Kudowa-Ślone, Boboszyń, Glucholazy, Pietrowice, Chałupki and Cieszyn

Germany (north to south) Lubieszyn, Kołbaskowo, Krajnik Dolny, Osinów Dolny, Kostrzyn, Ślubice, Świecko, Gubin, Olszyna, Łeknica, Zgorzelec and Sieniawka

Lithuania (east to west) Ogrodniki and Budzisko

Russia, Kaliningrad (west to east) Gronowo and Bezledy

Slovakia (west to east) Chyżne, Chochołów, Łysa Polana, Niedzica, Piwniczna, Konieczna and Barwinek

Ukraine (south to north) Medyka, Hrebenne, Dorohusk and Zosin

Remember that you might need transit visas for the countries you'll be passing through.

GETTING AROUND

Bus

Buses can be useful on short routes and through the southern mountains; but usually trains are quicker and more comfortable, and private minibuses are quicker and more direct.

Most buses are operated by the state bus company **PKS** (☎ 022-652 23 21; Dworzec Zachodnia PKS station), which provides two kinds of service from its bus terminals (*dworzec autobusowy* PKS): ordinary buses (marked in black on timetables), and fast buses (marked in red), which ignore minor stops.

Tickets for buses are usually bought at the terminal, but sometimes can be purchased from drivers.

Car & Motorcycle

To drive a car into Poland, EU citizens need their driving licence, while other nationalities must obtain an International Driver's Licence in their home country. Vehicle registration papers and liability insurance are also required. Major international car rental companies, such as **Avis** (www.avis.pl), **Hertz** (www.hertz.pl) and **Europcar** (www.europcar.com.pl), are represented in larger cities and have smaller offices at airports. Prices are comparable to full-price rental in Western Europe.

Car theft is a problem in Poland, so consider paying for guarded parking. Poland's roadside assistance number is ☎ 981.

Train

Trains will be your main means of transport, especially for long distances. They are cheap, reliable and rarely overcrowded.

InterCity trains operate on major routes out of Warsaw, including Gdańsk, Kraków, Wrocław and Poznań. They only stop at major cities and are the fastest way to travel.

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Ambulance ☎ 999
- Fire ☎ 998
- Police ☎ 997 (☎ 112 from mobile phones)

Express trains (*pociąg ekspresowy*) are also quick, as are the similar but cheaper TLK trains (*pociąg TLK*). Fast trains (*pociąg pospieszny*) are a bit slower and cheaper still. Slow passenger trains (*pociąg osobowy*) should be used only for short trips.

Most trains offer two classes: 2nd (*druga klasa*) and 1st (*pierwsza klasa*), which is 50% more expensive.

WARSAW (WARSZAWA)

☎ 022 / pop 1.69 million

Poles and visitors alike agree: Warsaw is different. As the business centre of Poland, it's fast-paced and relatively expensive, with an excellent array of entertainment options.

The city's tumultuous past is reflected in its present-day appearance. The beautiful Old Town district was devastated in WWII but reconstructed with unerring accuracy, and is the most attractive part of the city. The nearby Royal Way, with its historic buildings and nearby parks, is also a pleasant area in which to linger. Other districts feature communist-era concrete blocks and are less agreeable.

ORIENTATION

The area west of the Vistula River includes the city centre, including the historic Old Town. Almost all tourist attractions and facilities are located in this zone.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

American Bookstore (☎ 827 48 52; ul Nowy Świat 61) Lonely Planet titles, English publications and maps.

EMPIK Megastore (☎ 551 44 86; Galeria Centrum (ul Marszałkowska 116/122); Royal Way (ul Nowy Świat 15/17) Foreign books, newspapers and magazines.

Internet Access

Expect to pay around 9zł to 10zł per hour in Warsaw.

Casablanca (☎ 828 14 47; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; ☎ 9am-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-2am Sat; 10am-midnight Sun)

Internet Café (☎ 826 60 62; ul Nowy Świat 18/20; ☎ 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun)

Medical Services

Apteka Grabowskiego (☎ 825 69 86; Warszawa Centralna train station) An all-night pharmacy.

Hospital of the Ministry of Internal Affairs & Administration (☎ 602 15 78; ul Wołoska 137) A hospital preferred by government officials and diplomats.

Money

Foreign-exchange offices (*kantors*) and ATMs are plentiful in the city centre.

American Express (Marriott Hotel, al Jerolimskie 65/79)

Bank Pekao (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 1)

PKO Bank (plac Bankowy 2)

Post

Main post office (ul Świętokrzyska 31/33; ☎ 24hr)

Telephone

There are numerous public telephone booths all around the city. Phonecards are available from street kiosks and post offices.

Tourist Information

Each tourist office provides free city maps and booklets (look out for *Warsaw in Short* and the *Visitor*), and helps book hotel rooms.

Tourist office (☎ 9431; www.warsaw.tour.pl) Royal Way (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 39; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-Apr); Airport (arrivals hall; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr); Warszawa Centralna train station (main hall; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr)

Warsaw Tourist Card (1/3 days 35/65zł) Gives free or discounted access to attractions and public transport.

Warsaw Tourist Information Centre (☎ 635 18 81; www.wcit.waw.pl; pl Zamkowy 1/13; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 11am-6pm Sun) In the Old Town.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Old Town

Plac Zamkowy (Castle Sq) is the main gateway to the Old Town. All the buildings here were superbly rebuilt from their foundations after WWII. Within the square stands the **Monument to Sigismund III Vasa**, who moved the capital from Kraków to Warsaw.

On the square is the massive 13th-century **Royal Castle** (☎ 657 21 70; plac Zamkowy 4; adult/child 18yr/12zł; free Sun; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun, closed Mon Oct-Apr), featuring sumptuously decorated rooms including the Senators' Antechamber, with its landscapes of 18th-century Warsaw by Bernardo Bellotto (Canaletto's nephew).

From the castle, walk down ul Świętojańska to the magnificent **Rynek Starego Miasta** (Old Town Market Sq).

Off the square is the **Warsaw Historical Museum** (☎ 635 16 25; Rynek Starego Miasta 42; adult/child

GETTING INTO TOWN

Bus 175 leaves every 10 to 15 minutes from the airport to the Old Town, via ul Nowy Świat and the Warszawa Centralna train station. If you arrive in the wee hours, night bus 611 links the airport with Warszawa Centralna every 30 minutes.

The taxi fare between the airport and the city centre is about 30zł to 35zł. Beware unmarked 'Mafia' cabs, which charge astronomical rates.

If arriving by train, Warszawa Centralna train station is in the city centre. If you arrive by bus at Dworzec Zachodnia PKS station, hop on a train from the adjoining Warszawa Zachodnia station into the centre. From the Dworzec PKS Stadion, catch a train from the Stadion train station.

6yr/3zł; free Sun; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue & Thu, 10am-3.30pm Wed & Fri, 10.30am-4.30pm Sat & Sun). At noon it shows an English-language film depicting the wartime destruction of the city.

Walk west for one block to the **Barbican**, part of the medieval city walls. North along ul Freta is the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Museum** (☎ 831 80 92; ul Freta 16; adult/child 6/3zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun), with displays about the great scientist and her discoveries regarding radioactivity.

Heading southwest, you'll reach the **Monument to the Warsaw Rising** (cnr ul Długa & ul Miodowa). This striking set of statuary honours the heroic Polish revolt against German rule in 1944.

Royal Way (Szlak Królewski)

This 4km route connects the Old Town with the modern city centre, and is served by bus 180.

Just south of the Royal Castle is the ornate 15th-century **St Anne's Church** (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 68; ☎ daylight hr), with impressive views from its **tower** (adult/child 3/2zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun).

About 300m further south are the **Saxon Gardens**. At the entrance is the poignant **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier**, though it's not open to the public. Be here at noon on Sunday to see the **Changing of the Guard**.

Back along the Royal Way is the 17th-century **Church of the Holy Cross** (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 3; ☎ erratic). Chopin's heart is preserved in the second pillar on the left-hand

CENTRAL WARSAW

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side of the main nave. It was brought from Paris, where he died of tuberculosis aged only 39. If you want to know more, head along ul Tamka towards the river to the small **Chopin Museum** (☎ 827 54 71; ul Okólnik 1; adult/child 10/5zł, free Wed; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, Wed & Fri, noon-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 10am-2pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, noon-6pm Thu Oct-Apr). On show are letters, hand-written musical scores and his last piano.

East of the junction of ul Nowy Świat and al Jerolimskie is the **National Museum** (☎ 621 10 31; al Jerolimskie 3; adult/child museum 12/7zł, incl temporary exhibitions 19/12zł, museum only free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 10am-6pm Thu), with an impressive collection of Greek and Egyptian antiquities, Coptic frescoes, medieval woodcarvings and Polish paintings; look out for the surrealistic fantasies of Jacek Malczewski.

Warsaw Rising Museum

This impressive **museum** (☎ 626 95 06; ul Grzybowska 79; adult/child 4/2zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed, Fri-Sun, 10am-8pm Thu) commemorates Warsaw's insurrection against its Nazi occupiers in 1944, which ended in the destruction of much of the city and its population. The moving story of the Rising is retold via photographs, exhibits and audiovisual displays, with captions in English. Catch tram 8, 12, 22 or 24 west from al Jerolimskie.

Jewish Warsaw

The suburbs northwest of the Palace of Culture and Science were once predominantly inhabited by Jewish Poles. During WWII the Nazis established a Jewish ghetto in the area, but razed it after crushing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943. Roman Polański's moving 2002 film *The Pianist* was set here.

The **Warsaw Ghetto Monument** (cnr ul Anielewicza & ul Zamenhofa) remembers the Nazis' victims via pictorial plaques. The nearby **Pawiak Prison Museum** (☎ 831 13 17; ul Dzielna 24/26; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed, 9am-4pm Thu & Sat, 10am-5pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sun) was a Gestapo prison during the Nazi occupation. Moving exhibits include letters and other personal items.

The most striking remainder is Europe's largest **Jewish Cemetery** (ul Okopowa 49/51; admission 4zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1pm Fri, 9am-4pm Sun). Founded in 1806, it has over 100,000 grave-stones. Visitors must wear a head covering to enter, and it's accessible from the Old Town on bus 180.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Warsaw Summer Jazz Days (July) Presents innovative jazz from across the globe.

Mozart Festival (June/July) Annual celebration of the great composer's work.

International Street Art Festival (July) Offers edgy theatre, film and art installations.

Warsaw Autumn Festival of Contemporary Music (September) Poland's largest event focuses on new music from home and abroad.

SLEEPING

Not surprisingly, Warsaw is the most expensive Polish city for accommodation, though there are several reasonably priced hostels around town.

Camping 123 (☎ 823 37 48; ul Warszawskiej 1920/15/17; per tent & per person 12zł; ☎) Set in extensive grounds near the Dworzec Zachodnia bus station. Cabins (40zł per person) are also available and there's a tennis court nearby.

Smolna Youth Hostel No 2 (☎ /fax 827 89 52; ul Smolna 30; dm 36zł, s/d 65/120zł) These basic budget digs have a reasonable amount of space, the bathrooms are clean, and there's a kitchen. Note the midnight curfew, and dorms separated by gender.

Hostel Helvetia (☎ 826 71 08; www.hostel-helvetia.pl; ul Kopernika 36/40; dm 45zł, s/d 110/150zł; ☎) Bright hostel with an attractive combined lounge and kitchen area. Dorms have lockers available, and the hostel hires out bikes. Enter from the street behind, ul Sewerynow.

Nathan's Villa Hostel (☎ 622 29 46; www.nathansvilla.com; ul Piękna 24/26; dm 45zł, s/d 130/160zł; ☎) A sunlit courtyard leads to well-organised dorms and comfortable private rooms. The kitchen is well set-up, and there's a free laundry and book exchange.

Oki Doki (☎ 826 51 12; www.okidoki.pl; plac Dąbrowskiego 3; dm 45zł, s/d 110/145zł) Each dorm is decorated thematically using the brightest paints available; try the red 'Communist'. The hostel also has a bar, free washing machine and kitchen, and hires out bikes.

Hostel Kanonia (☎ 635 06 76; www.kanonia.pl; ul Jezuicka 2; dm 55zł, s/d 140/180zł; ☎) Housed in a historic building in the heart of the Old Town. Some rooms have picturesque views onto the cobblestone streets, and there's a dining room with basic kitchen facilities.

Hostel Praski (☎ 818 49 89; www.praski.pl; al Solidarności 61; s 147-210zł, d 160-230zł) The rooms of this inexpensive hotel have attractive high ceilings and comfortable beds. Red carpets

add old-fashioned charm, and some rooms have views of Praski Park.

Premiere Classe (☎ 624 08 00; ul Towarowa 2; d from 179zł; ☒ (♿)) Rooms are quite small but they are bright, and neatly set up with modern furnishings. Friendly staff are a definite bonus. Guests can use the restaurant, bar and fitness centre in the neighbouring sister hotels.

City Apartments (☎ 825 39 12; www.hotelinwarsaw.pl; ul Nowowiejska 1/3; apt from €60-120) Has a range of apartments on offer, from the Old Town to the city centre. They all have kitchen facilities; though, as always, you won't find every utensil you need.

EATING

Warsaw's eateries cover diverse cuisines and price ranges; a good selection can be found in the Old Town and around ul Nowy Świat.

Vega (☎ 828 64 28; ul Nowy Świat 52; soups 5zł, mains 5-20zł; ☒ (♿) 11am-8pm) Cheap vegetarian food within a courtyard. Try the *naleceniki* – crepes wrapped around a variety of fillings. As the name suggests, there's also a good number of vegan menu items.

Bar Pod Barbakanem (☎ 831 47 37; ul Mostowa 27/29; mains 8-12zł; ☒ (♿) 8am-5pm) A former milk bar that survived the fall of the Iron Curtain and continues to serve cheap, unpretentious food. Fill up while peering through the lace curtains at the passing tourist hordes.

Dziki Ryż (☎ 621 50 15; ul Hoża 54; mains 18-25zł; ☒ (♿) 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun) This hidden gem, with Japanese newspapers plastering the walls, serves Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Thai cuisine, though the curries have been toned down for Polish palates.

Zgoda Grill Bar (☎ 827 99 34; ul Zgoda 4; mains 18-35zł; ☒ (♿) 10am-11pm) Informal place serving up cheap, tasty local standards. If you're not in the mood for Polish, there are Turkish, Italian and Mexican places just along the street.

Podwale Piwna Kompania (☎ 635 63 14; ul Podwale 25; mains 21-55zł; ☒ (♿) 11-1am) The menu at 'The Company of Beer' features lots of grilled items and dishes such as roast duck, Wiener schnitzel, pork ribs and roasted pork knuckle. There's a courtyard as well.

Most convenient for groceries are the **MarcPol Supermarket** (plac Defilad) in front of the Palace of Culture and Science building, and the **Albert Supermarket** (ul Marszałkowska 104/122) in Galeria Centrum.

DRINKING & CLUBBING

There's no shortage of good bars and clubs in Warsaw. Explore ul Mazowiecka, ul Sienkiewiczza and the area around ul Nowy Świat for more venues.

Sense (☎ 826 65 70; ul Nowy Świat 19; ☒ (♿) noon-1am Mon-Thu, noon-3am Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) A very modern, mellow bar. Comfortable banquettes sit beneath strings of cube-shaped lights, and some drinks are measured in a 'Palace of Culture' (a tall scientific beaker).

Paparazzi (☎ 828 42 19; ul Mazowiecka 12; ☒ (♿) noon-1am) Big, roomy venue where you can sip a bewildering array of cocktails under blown-up photos of Hollywood stars. There's comfortable seating around the central bar, and it has a good line in inexpensive bar food.

Pub Harenda (☎ 826 29 00; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; ☒ (♿) 9am-3am) Though it's often crowded, this is a friendly, atmospheric place – the front section feels like a wood cabin out in the forest. There's dance music on weekends.

Enklawa (☎ 827 31 51; ul Mazowiecka 12; ☒ (♿) 9pm-3am Wed-Sat) Funky red-and-orange space with comfy seating, mirrored ceilings, two bars and room to dance. Wednesday night is 'old school' night, with music from the '70s to '90s.

Foksal 19 (☎ 829 29 55; ul Foksal 19; ☒ (♿) 5pm-1am Mon-Thu, bar 5pm-3am Fri & Sat, nightclub 11pm-5am Fri & Sat) Downstairs is a backlit bar, subdued golden lighting and comfy couches. Upstairs is the blue-lit nightclub, with DJs playing a variety of sounds.

Coffee Heaven (☎ 828 20 57; ul Nowy Świat 46; ☒ (♿) 7.30am-10pm Mon-Thu, 7.30am-10.30pm Fri, 8am-10pm Sat & Sun) If you're after something non-alcoholic, this is a comfy place to enjoy a cappuccino and a muffin.

ENTERTAINMENT

To discover what's on, check out the *Visitor* and the comprehensive *Warsaw in Your Pocket*, available from tourist offices.

Teatr Ateneum (☎ 625 73 30; ul Jaracza 2) leans towards contemporary Polish-language productions. **Teatr Wielki** (☎ 692 02 00; www.teatrwielki.pl; plac Teatralny 1) hosts opera and ballet. **Filharmonia Narodowa** (☎ 551 71 11; ul Jasna 5) is the venue for classical music concerts.

Free jazz concerts also take place in the Old Town's Old Market Sq on Saturdays at 7pm in July and August.

Catch a film at the central **Kino Atlantic** (☎ 827 08 94; ul Chmielna 33) or **Kino Relax** (☎ 828 38 88; ul Żłota 8).

SHOPPING

Stadion Market (al Jerolimskie; ☒ (♿) dawn-around noon) A huge bazaar within a former stadium in the suburb of Praga – beware of pickpockets.

Galeria Centrum (ul Marszałkowska 104/122) This is a central modern shopping mall.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Frederic Chopin Airport (code WAW; www.lotnisko-chopina.pl) is more commonly called Okęcie Airport. Flights can be booked at the **LOT office** (☎ 95 72; www.lot.com; al Jerolimskie 65/79). See p870 for details on air travel to Warsaw.

Bus

Warsaw has two major bus terminals for PKS buses. **Dworzec Zachodnia** (Western Bus Station; al Jerolimskie 144) handles domestic buses heading south, north and west of the capital, including six daily to Częstochowa (30zł), seven to Gdańsk (50zł), four to Kraków (39zł), eight to Toruń (35zł), three to Wrocław (46zł), and three to Zakopane (54zł).

Dworzec Stadion (Stadium Bus Station; ul Sokola 1) handles domestic buses to the east and southeast, including 20 daily to Lublin (25zł), and 12 to Zamość (37zł).

Polski Express (☎ 844 55 55; www.polskiexpress.pl) sells tickets from a kiosk along al Jana Pawła II, next to Warszawa Centralna train station. Its buses travel to Częstochowa (50zł, two daily), Gdańsk (72zł, two daily), Kraków (67zł, one daily), Lublin (34zł, seven daily) and Toruń (48zł, 12 daily).

International buses depart from and arrive at Dworzec Zachodnia or, occasionally, outside Warszawa Centralna.

Train

The train station that most travellers will use is **Warszawa Centralna** (Warsaw Central; al Jerolimskie 54). However, it's not always where trains start or finish, so make sure you get on or off promptly; and guard your belongings against pickpocketing and theft at all times.

GETTING AROUND

Public Transport

The standard ticket (2.40zł) is valid for one ride only on a bus, tram, trolleybus or metro train travelling anywhere in the city. Warsaw is the only place in Poland where holders of International Student Identity Cards (ISIC) get a public-transport discount (48%).

Tickets are also available for 60/90 minutes (3.60/4.50zł), one day (7.20zł), three days (12zł), one week (24zł), and one month (66zł). Buy tickets from kiosks (including those marked RUCH) before boarding, and validate them on board.

Taxi

Taxis are a quick and easy way to get around. Beware of unauthorised 'Mafia' taxis parked in front of top-end hotels, at the airport, outside Warszawa Centralna train station and in the vicinity of most tourist sights.

MAŁOPOLSKA

Małopolska (literally 'lesser Poland') is a historic region covering all of southeastern Poland, from the Carpathian Mountains along the nation's southern borders, to the Lublin Uplands further north. Its biggest attraction is the former royal capital, Kraków, and the majestic Tatra Mountains to the city's south.

KRAKÓW

☎ 012 / pop 758,000

A city founded upon the defeat of a dragon (by either the legendary Prince Krak or a humble but clever shoemaker, depending on which story you believe) is off to a promising start when it comes to attracting visitors. As it was the royal capital of Poland until 1596, Kraków is packed with beautiful historic buildings and streetscapes. The city's centrepiece is the stunning Wawel Castle and Cathedral.

Just outside the Old Town lies Kazimierz, the former Jewish quarter, its silent synagogues reflecting the tragedy of the recent past. The district's tiny streets and low-rise architecture make it an interesting place to explore.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet Café U Luisa (☎ 617 02 22; Rynek Główny 13; per hr 4zł; ☒ (♿) 10am-10pm)

Klub Garinet (☎ 423 22 33; ul Floriańska 18; per hr 4zł; ☒ (♿) 9am-midnight)

MONEY

Foreign-exchange offices and ATMs are common. Most foreign-exchange offices close on

Sunday, and areas near Rynek Główny and the main train station offer poor exchange rates.

Bank Pekao (Rynek Główny 32)

POST

Main post office (ul Westerplatte 20; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat, 9am-11am Sun)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Two free magazines, *Welcome to Craców & Malopolska* and *Visitor: Kraków & Zakopane*, are available at tourist offices. The *Kraków in Your Pocket* booklet is also very useful.

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 421 77 87; www.karnet.krakow.pl; ul Św Jana 2; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) City-run agency giving assistance to visitors.

Malopolska Tourism Information Centre (☎ 421 77 06; www.mcit.pl; Rynek Główny 1/3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat Oct-Mar) In the centre of the Main Market Square.

Tourist office (☎ 433 73 10; Rynek Główny 1; ☎ 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Mar) In the Town Hall Tower.

Tourist office (☎ 432 01 10; ul Szpitalna 25; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun)

Tourist office (☎ 422 04 71; ul Józefa 7; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) Located in Kazimierz.

Sights & Activities OLD TOWN

The Old Town is focussed on the **Rynek Główny** (Main Market Sq), Europe's largest medieval town square (200m by 200m). At its centre is the 16th-century Renaissance **Cloth Hall** (Sukiennice), housing a large souvenir market and the **Gallery of 19th-Century Polish Painting** (☎ 422 11 66; adult/child 8 yr/5zł, free Sun; ☎ 10am-3.30pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-6pm Wed & Fri), with famous works by Jan Matejko.

The huge main altarpiece of the 14th-century **St Mary's Church** (Rynek Główny 4; adult/child 4/2zł; ☎ 11.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-6pm Sun) is the finest Gothic sculpture in Poland, and is opened ceremoniously each day at noon.

The **Historical Museum of Kraków** (☎ 422 15 04; Rynek Główny 35; adult/child 5 yr/3.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed, Fri-Sun, 10am-5pm Thu, free Sat) has paintings, documents and oddments relating to the city.

From St Mary's Church, walk up (north-east) ul Floriańska to the 14th-century **Florian Gate**. Beyond it is the **Barbican** (adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Apr-Oct), a defensive bastion built in 1498. Nearby, the **Czartoryski Museum** (☎ 422

GETTING INTO TOWN

Bus 192 leaves regularly from the airport to Kraków's Old Town, from 5am to 11pm. You can buy tickets (2.50zł) from the airport newsagency upstairs. Purchase an extra ticket for each bag larger than hand luggage.

The taxi fare between the airport and the city centre is about 50zł, but avoid unmarked unofficial cabs, which charge like wounded bulls.

If arriving by train, walk out of the train station, then through the nearby road underpass and you're in the Old Town. The main bus station is on the other side of the tracks from the train station, connected by another underpass.

55 66; ul Św Jana 19; adult/child 9/6zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue & Thu, 10am-7pm Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun, free Thu) features an impressive collection of European art, including Leonardo da Vinci's *Lady with an Ermine*.

South of Rynek Główny, along ul Grodzka, is the early 17th-century Jesuit **Church of SS Peter & Paul** (ul Grodzka 64; ☎ dawn-dusk), Poland's first baroque church.

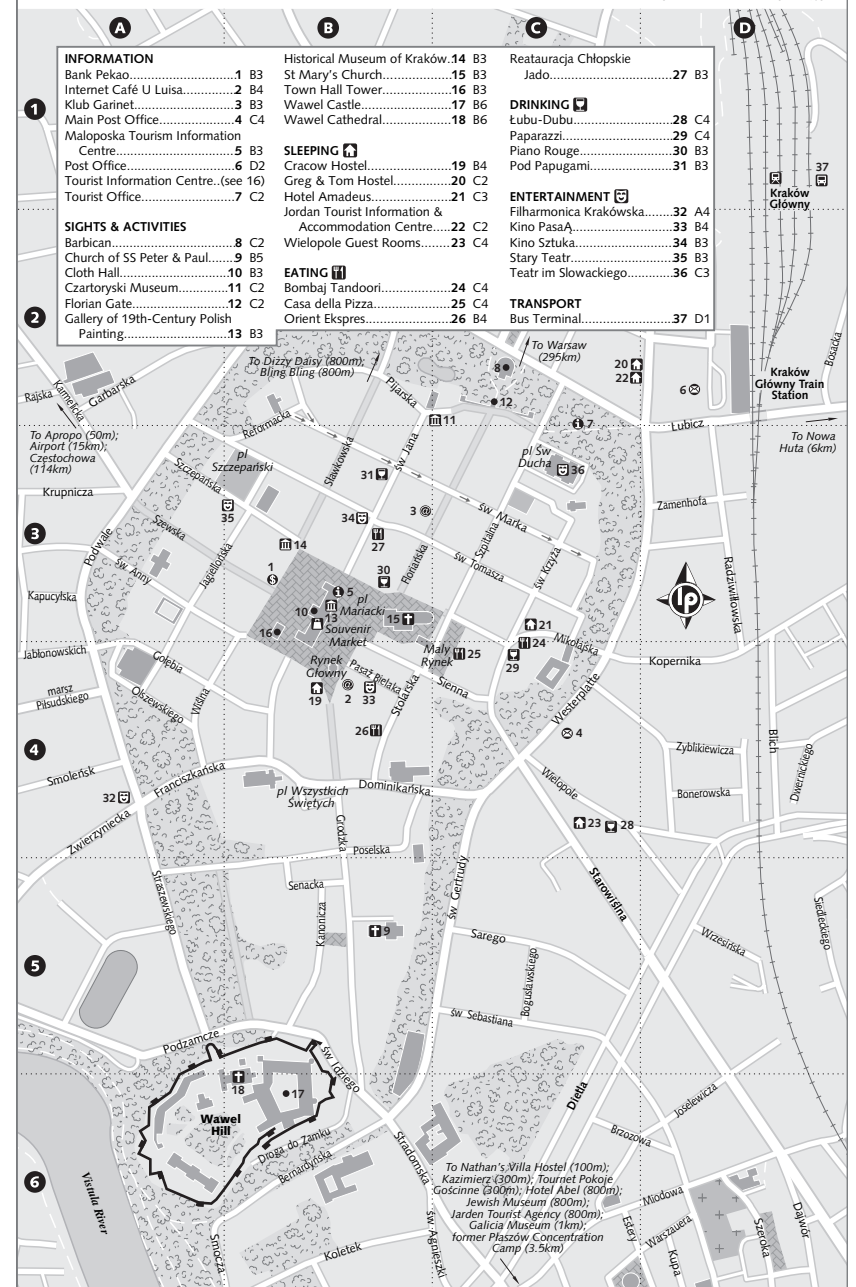
WAWEL HILL

Wawel Hill (admission grounds free; ☎ 6am-8pm May-Sep, 6am-5pm Oct-Apr) is Kraków's main draw for tourists, and its castle and cathedral are iconic symbols of Poland. There are several attractions within the castle, each requiring a separate ticket.

Within the magnificent **Wawel Castle** (☎ 422 51 55; www.wawel.krakow.pl) are the **State Rooms** (adult/child 14/8zł; free Mon; ☎ 9.30am-noon Mon, 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) and the **Royal Private Apartments** (adult/child 18/13zł; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Tue & Fri, 9.30am-3pm Wed, Thu & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). Entry to the latter is only allowed on a guided tour. If you want to hire a guide who speaks English, French or German, contact the onsite **guides office** (☎ 429 33 36).

The 14th-century **Wawel Cathedral** (adult/child 10/5zł; ☎ 9am-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 12.15-3.45pm Sun) was long the coronation and burial place of Polish royalty, and houses **Royal Tombs**, including that of King Kazimierz the Great. The **bell tower** of the golden-domed **Sigismund Chapel** (1539) contains the country's largest bell (11 tonnes).

KRAKÓW - OLD TOWN & WAWEL



KAZIMIERZ

Founded by King Kazimierz the Great in 1335, Kazimierz later became home to Jews fleeing persecution from all corners of Europe.

During WWII the Nazis relocated Jews to a walled ghetto in Podgórze, just south of the Vistula River. They were exterminated in the nearby **Płaszów Concentration Camp**, as portrayed in Steven Spielberg's haunting film *Schindler's List*. If you want to learn more, **Jarden Tourist Agency** (☎ 429 71 66; www.jarden.pl; ul Szeroka 2; tours 35-65zł) runs related tours.

The eastern Jewish quarter is dotted with synagogues. The 15th-century **Old Synagogue** houses the **Jewish Museum** (☎ 422 09 62; ul Szeroka 24; admission 6zł; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon, 9am-4pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-5pm Fri), with exhibitions on Jewish traditions.

Not far away, the **Galicja Museum** (☎ 421 68 42; www.galicjajewishmuseum.org; ul Dajwór 18; adult/child 7/5zł; ☎ 9am-8pm) displays modern-day photographic traces of southeastern Poland's once thriving Jewish community.

Sleeping

Kraków is unquestionably Poland's major tourist destination, with prices to match. Booking ahead is recommended.

Cracow Hostel (☎ 429 11 06; www.cracowhostel.com; Rynek Główny 18; dm 45-60zł; ☎) Budget accommodation perched high above the Rynek, with an amazing view of St Mary's Church from the lounge. There's also a kitchen and washing machine.

Greg & Tom Hostel (☎ 422 41 00; www.gregtomhostel.com; ul Pawia 12; dm 50zł, d/tr 120/150; ☎) Well-run hostel spread over two locations, with friendly staff, clean rooms and laundry facilities. Note the private rooms are above a (seemingly peaceful) massage parlour.

Nathans Villa Hostel (☎ 422 35 45; www.nathansvilla.com; ul Św Agnieszki 1; dm/d from 50/160zł; ☎ ☎)

SPLURGE

Hotel Amadeus (☎ 429 60 70; www.hotel-amadeus.pl; ul Mikołajska 20; s/d/ste €156/166/240; ☎) Everything about this hotel screams 'class' – or rather, speaks it softly in a well-modulated tone. Rooms are tastefully furnished, and there's a sauna, a fitness centre and an accomplished restaurant. While hanging around the foyer, you can check out photos of famous guests.

Comfy rooms, sparkling bathrooms, free laundry and a friendly atmosphere are on tap here. In-house entertainment includes a cellar bar, mini-cinema and pool table.

Dizzy Daisy (☎ 292 01 71; www.hostel.pl; ul Pędzichów 9; dm/d/tr 60/160/210zł; ☎) A modern chain-hostel with great facilities and light, clean rooms, frequented by an international crowd of party people. Laundry and kitchen available.

Jordan Tourist Information & Accommodation Centre (☎ 422 60 91; www.jordan.krakow.pl; ul Pawia 8; s/d around 110/130zł; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun) This agency offers decent rooms around town.

Apropo (☎ 0506 102 924; www.apropo.info; ul Karmelicka 36; d/tr 150/225zł) Set of comfortable rooms within a fully renovated old apartment, with access to shared bathrooms, a light-filled kitchen and laundry facilities. It's not far from the Old Town.

Tournet Pokoje Gościnne (☎ 292 00 88; www.accommodation.krakow.pl; ul Miodowa 7; s/d/tr from 140/180/220zł) This is a neat pension in Kazimierz, offering simple but comfortable and quiet rooms. The bathrooms are tiny, however.

Hotel Abel (☎ 411 87 36; www.hotelabel.pl; ul Józefa 30; s/d/tr 170/230/260zł) Reflects the character of Kazimierz in its polished wooden staircase, arched brickwork and age-worn tiles. A good base for exploring the historic Jewish neighbourhood.

Wielopole Guest Rooms (☎ 422 14 75; www.wielopole.pl; ul Wielopole 3; s/d from 190/280zł; ☎) Simple modern rooms on the eastern edge of the Old Town, with narrow beds but spotless bathrooms. Breakfast is only included for stays of two nights or more.

Eating

Kraków is a food paradise, tightly packed with restaurants serving a wide range of international cuisines. There are lots of cheap takeaway places on ul Grodzka.

Restauracja Chłopskie Jadło (☎ 429 51 57; ul Św Jana 3; mains 12-80zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Arranged as an old country inn with wooden benches and traditional music, and serving tasty Polish food. Try the sour soup (*żur*) with sausage and egg.

Bombaj Tandoori (☎ 422 37 97; ul Mikołajska 11; mains 11-32zł; ☎ noon-11pm) This is the best curry house in Kraków, with a lengthy menu of Indian standards. The 85zł four-person set menu is excellent value, and there's also a takeaway and local delivery service.

Casa della Pizza (☎ 421 64 98; Mały Rynek 2; mains 12-32zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) An unpretentious place away from the bulk of the tourist traffic, with a menu of pizzas and pasta. The downstairs bar section serves Middle Eastern food.

Orient Ekspres (☎ 422 66 72; ul Stolarska 13; mains 15-48zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) Hercule Poirot might be surprised to find this elegant eatery here, well off the route of its railway namesake. The food is mainly Polish, accompanied by wine by the glass.

Momo (☎ 0609 685 775; ul Dietla 49; mains 4-12zł; ☎ 11am-8pm) Vegans breathe easy – the majority of the menu here is completely animal-free. This Indian-styled eatery serves up soups, stuffed crepes and rice dishes. The Tibetan dumplings are a treat worth ordering.

Drinking & Clubbing

There are hundreds of pubs and bars in Kraków's Old Town, many housed in ancient vaulted cellars. Kazimierz also has a lively bar scene, centred on plac Nowy and its surrounding streets.

Paparażki (☎ 429 45 97; ul Mikołajska 9; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Fri, 4pm-4am Sat & Sun) This is a bright, modern place, with black-and-white press photos covering the walls. The drinks menu includes cocktails like the Polish Express, built around vanilla vodka.

Le Scandale (☎ 430 68 55; plac Nowy 9; ☎ 8am-3am) Smooth Kazimierz drinking hole with low black leather couches, ambient lighting and a gleaming well-stocked bar. Full of mellow drinkers sampling the extensive cocktail list.

Pod Papugami (☎ 422 82 99; ul Św Jana 18; ☎ 1pm-2am Mon-Sat, 3pm-2am Sun) A vaguely 'Irish' cellar pub decorated with old motorcycles. A good place to hide from inclement weather, with its pool table and tunnel-like maze of rooms.

Piano Rouge (☎ 431 03 33; Rynek Główny 46; ☎ noon-3am) A sumptuous cellar venue decked out with billowing lengths of colourful silk, hosting live jazz nightly from Wednesday to Sunday.

Łubu-Dubu (☎ 423 05 21; ul Wielopole 15; ☎ 4pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat) This grungy upstairs joint features garish colours and a collection of objects from 1970s Poland. A series of rooms creates spaces for talking or dancing.

Alchemia (☎ 421 22 00; ul Estery 5; ☎ 9am-3am) In Kazimierz, Alchemia exudes a shabby-is-the-new-cool look and hosts regular live music gigs and theatrical events through the week.

Entertainment

The monthly Polish-English booklet, *Karnet* (3zł), lists almost every event in the city.

Stary Teatr (☎ 422 40 40; www.stary-teatr.pl; ul Jagiellońska 5) The best-known venue offers quality theatre.

Teatr im Słowackiego (☎ 422 40 22; plac Św Duchy 1) Built in 1893, this theatre focusses on Polish classics and large productions.

Filharmonia Krakowska (☎ 422 94 77; ul Zwierzyniecka 1) Hosts one of the best orchestras in the country; concerts are usually held on Friday and Saturday.

Two central cinemas are **Kino Sztuka** (☎ 421 41 99; cnr Św Tomusza & ul Św Jana), and the tiny **Kino Paź** (☎ 422 77 13; Rynek Główny 9).

Getting There & Away

See p870 for information on flights to/from Kraków.

The modern main **bus terminal** (ul Bosacka 18) is conveniently located on the other side of the main train station from the Old Town.

Kraków Główny train station (plac Dworcowy), on the northeastern outskirts of the Old Town, handles all international trains and most domestic rail services.

Each day from Kraków, 10 fast trains head to Warsaw (43zł, 2½ hours). There are also 10 fast trains daily to Wrocław (41zł, 3¾ hours), six to Poznań (48zł, six hours), two to Lublin (44zł, five hours), and eight to Gdańsk (101zł, 7¼ hours).

OŚWIĘCIM (AUSCHWITZ) & BIRKENAU

☎ 033 / pop 48,000

Few place names have more impact than Auschwitz, which is seared into public consciousness as the location of history's most extensive experiment in genocide. Every year hundreds of thousands visit Oświęcim (*osh-fyen-cheem*) to learn about the infamous Nazi death camp's history, and to pay respect to the dead.

Established within disused army barracks in 1940, Auschwitz was expanded into the largest centre for the extermination of European Jews. Two more camps were subsequently established: Birkenau (Brzezinka), also known as Auschwitz II; and Monowitz (Monowice). In the course of their operation, between one and 1.5 million people were murdered in these death factories.

Many of Auschwitz's original buildings remain, serving as a bleak document of the

camp's history. A dozen surviving prison blocks house sections of the **State Museum Auschwitz-Birkenau** (☎ 844 81 00; www.auschwitz.org.pl; admission free; ☞ 8am-7pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm May & Sep, 8am-5pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Mar & Nov, 8am-3pm Dec-Feb).

An English-language tour (26zł per person, 3½ hours) of Auschwitz and Birkenau leaves at 11am daily, with others starting at 10am, 1pm and 3pm if there's enough demand.

About every half-hour, the cinema in the **Visitors' Centre** at the entrance to the camp shows a 15-minute documentary film (3.50zł) about the liberation of the camp by Soviet troops on 27 January 1945.

Some basic explanations in Polish, English and Hebrew are provided on site, but you'll understand more if you buy the *Auschwitz Birkenau Guide Book* (translated into about 15 languages) from the Visitors' Centre.

Birkenau (admission free; ☞ 8am-7pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm May & Sep, 8am-5pm Apr & Oct, 8am-4pm Mar & Nov, 8am-3pm Dec-Feb) was actually where the murder of huge numbers of Jews took place. Although much of the camp was destroyed by retreating Nazis, the size of the place provides some idea of the scale of this heinous crime.

Getting There & Away

From Kraków, most convenient are the 16 buses (8zł, 1½ hours) per day to Oświęcim which depart from the bus station, four of which terminate at the museum. For the others, get off at the final stop, 200m from the Auschwitz entrance.

Every half-hour from 11.30am to 4.30pm between 15 April and 31 October, buses run between the visitors centres at Auschwitz and Birkenau (operating later to 5.30pm in May and September, and 6.30pm from June to August). Otherwise, follow the signs for an easy walk (3km) between both places.

CZÊSTOCHOWA

☎ 034 / pop 260,000

Czêstochowa (chen-sto-ho-vah), 114km northwest of Kraków, is an attractive pilgrimage town, dominated by the graceful Jasna Góra monastery atop a hill at its centre. The monastery, founded in 1382, is the home of the Black Madonna. In 1430 a group of Hussites stole the holy icon, slashed it and broke it into three pieces. Legend has it that the monks cleaned the retrieved panel with the aid of a spring that rose miraculously from

the ground. Though the picture was restored, the scars on the Virgin's face were retained in memory of the miracle.

From the train station, and adjacent bus terminal, turn right (north) up al Wolności to the main thoroughfare, al Najświętszej Marii Panny (simplified to al NMP). At the western end of this broad avenue is the monastery. Along the way is the **tourist office** (☎ 368 22 60; al NMP 65; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) and several banks and *kantors*.

The **Paulite Monastery on Jasna Góra** (☎ 365 38 88; www.jasnagora.pl; admission free; ☞ dawn-dusk) retains the appearance of a hill-top fortress. The 106m-high **tower** (☞ 8am-4pm Apr-Nov) is the tallest historic church tower in Poland. The baroque church below is beautifully decorated. The image of the Black Madonna is on the high altar of the adjacent chapel, entered from the left of the church aisle. It's hard to see, so a copy is on display in the **Knights' Hall** (Sala Rycerska) in the monastery. Note that the Madonna is sometimes concealed by a silver cover; if so, check with the on-site information office for the next scheduled uncovering. It's quite an event, as priests file in, music plays and the image slowly emerges.

The major **Marian feasts** at Jasna Góra are 3 May, 16 July, 15 August, 26 August, 8 September, 12 September and 8 December. On these days the monastery is packed with pilgrims.

The **youth hostel** (☎ 324 31 21; ul Jasnogórska 84/90; dm 20-36zł; ☞ Jul-Aug), two blocks north of the tourist office, has modest facilities. **Dom Pielgrzyma** (☎ 324 70 11; ul Wyszynskiego 1/31; dm/s/d from 23/70/100zł) is a huge place behind the monastery, offering quiet and comfortable rooms. Plenty of **eateries** can be found near Dom Pielgrzyma and along al NMP.

From the **bus terminal** (al Wolności 45) nine daily buses go to Kraków (14zł to 34zł), five travel to Wrocław (21zł to 29zł), eight head for Zakopane (30zł to 41zł) and seven depart for Warsaw (30zł to 46zł). From the **train station** (al Wolności 21) services run to Warsaw (38zł, 3½ hours, five daily), Gdańsk (55zł, nine hours, three daily), Kraków (29zł, two hours, four daily) and Wrocław (32zł, three hours, two daily).

ZAKOPANE

☎ 018 / pop 30,000

Zakopane is Poland's major winter sports centre, located at the foot of the Tatra Mountains. It may resemble a tourist trap, with its overcommercialised, overpriced exterior, but

it also has a relaxed, laid-back vibe that makes it a great place to chill out in for a few days, even if you don't want to ski or hike.

The **tourist office** (☎ 201 22 11; ul Kościuszki 17; ☞ 8am-8pm Jun-Sep, 9am-6pm Oct-May) is helpful. Several foreign-exchange offices and banks line the main streets. The **main post office** (ul Krupówki) is centrally located. **Widmo** (☎ 206 43 77; ul Galicy 6; per hr 4.50zł; ☞ 7.30am-midnight Mon-Fri, 9am-midnight Sat & Sun) is a convenient place to surf the internet.

Centrum Przewodnictwa Tatrzańskiego (Tatra Guide Centre; ☎ 206 37 99; ul Chałubińskiego 42/44; ☞ 9am-3pm) is able to arrange English- and German-speaking mountain guides.

Mt Gubałówka (1120m) has great views over the Tatras. A **funicular** (one-way adult/child 8/6zł; return 14/10zł; ☞ 9am-9pm May-Sep, 8am-7pm Oct-Apr) covers the 1388m-long route in less than five minutes, climbing 300m from its base station just north of ul Krupówki.

Sleeping

Accommodation prices fluctuate considerably between low season and high season (December to February, and July to August). Rates for high season are listed in reviews. Always book in advance, especially on weekends.

Given the abundance of private rooms and decent hostels, few travellers stay in hotels.

Some travel agencies in Zakopane can arrange private rooms, but in the peak season they may not want to offer anything for less than a three night stay. Expect a double room (singles are rarely offered) to cost about 70zł in the peak season in the town centre, and about 50zł for somewhere further out from town.

Locals offering private rooms may approach you at the bus or train stations; alternatively, just look out for signs posted in front of private homes – *noclegi* and *pokoje* both mean 'rooms available'.

Youth Hostel Szarotka (☎ 201 36 18; www.szarotka.pts.republika.pl; ul Nowotarska 45; dm 35zł, d 90zł; ☞) This friendly, homely place gets packed out in the high season. There's a kitchen and washing machine on site; bed linen costs 5zł extra.

Carlton (☎ 201 44 15; www.carlton.pl; ul Grunwaldzka 11; s/d/tr 90/180/270zł; ☞) Good value *penzion* in a grand old house, featuring light-filled rooms with modern furniture. There's an impressive shared balcony, and a big comfy lounge lined with potted plants.

Eating

The main street, ul Krupówki, is lined with all sorts of eateries.

Rodos (ul Krupówki 6; mains 13-29zł; ☞ 9am-10pm) This Greek eatery provides a good range of kebabs, gyros and pasta dishes, in a space decorated with Mediterranean scenes and the odd off-theme prop from the Middle East.

Stek Chalupa (☎ 201 59 18; ul Krupówki 33; mains 16-36zł; ☞ 11am-11pm) This big friendly barn of a place has waiters in traditional garb. The menu heavily features meat dishes, particularly steaks, though there are vegetarian choices among the salads and *pierogi* (dumplings).

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (ul Chramcówki), PKS fast buses run to Kraków every 45 to 60 minutes (13zł, 2½ hours). Private companies Trans Frej and Szwagropol also run buses (15zł) at the same frequency. They leave from a stop along ul Kościuszki in Zakopane, and from the bus terminal in Kraków.

The **train station** (ul Chramcówki) has services to Kraków (19zł, 3½ hours) every two hours or so. Between one and three trains a day go to Czêstochowa, Gdańsk, Lublin and Poznań, and five head to Warsaw.

TATRA MOUNTAINS

☎ 018

The Tatras, 100km south of Kraków, is the highest range of the Carpathian Mountains, stretching across the Polish-Slovak border. A quarter is in Poland and is mostly part of the Tatra National Park (about 212 sq km).

The **able-car trip** (adult/child return 30/20zł; ☞ 7am-9pm Jul-Aug, 7.30am-5pm Mar-Jun & Sep-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Feb) from Kuźnice (3km south of Zakopane) to the summit of Mt Kasprowy Wierch (1985m) is a classic tourist experience enjoyed by Poles and foreigners alike. At the end of the trip, you can get off and stand with one foot in Poland and the other in Slovakia. Another popular destination is the emerald-green **Lake Morskie Oko** (Eye of the Sea), among the loveliest in the Tatras.

If you're doing any hiking in the Tatras, get a copy of the *Tatrzański Park Narodowy* map (1:25,000), which shows all hiking trails in the area.

Zakopane boasts four major ski areas, and **Mt Kasprowy Wierch** and **Mt Gubałówka** offer the best conditions and most challenging slopes. The ski season extends until early May.

Tourists are not allowed to take their own cars into the park; you must walk in, take the cable car or use an official vehicle owned by the park or a hotel-hostel.

Camping isn't allowed, but eight PTTK (Polish Tourists Association) mountain refuges and hostels provide simple accommodation. Check availability at the **Dom Turysty PTTK** (☎ 206 32 81; ul Zaruskiego 5) in Zakopane.

LUBLIN

☎ 081 / pop 358,000

Lublin is an impressive city with attractive historic streetscapes, and a lively nightlife vibe resulting from its sizable number of students. It's also remembered for an important moment in Polish history: in 1569 the Lublin Union was signed here, uniting Poland and Lithuania. Today its beautifully preserved Old Town is an attractive blend of Gothic, Renaissance and baroque architecture.

Information

Bank Pekao (ul Królewska 1; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 64)

LOIT Tourist Information Centre (☎ 532 44 12; www.lublin.pl; ul Jezuicka 1/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Oct-Apr) Has helpful English-speaking staff, and lots of free brochures and maps.

Main post office (ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 50)
www.café (☎ 442 35 80; Rynek 8, 3rd fl; ☎ 10am-10pm) Internet café.

Sights

The compact historic quarter is centred on the **Rynek**, the market square surrounding the neoclassical **Old Town Hall** (1781). The **Historical Museum of Lublin** (☎ 532 60 01; plac Łokietka 3; adult/child 3.50/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun), displaying documents and photos, is inside the 14th-century **Kraków Gate**, a remnant of medieval fortifications.

For an expansive view of the Old Town, climb to the top of the **Trinitarian Tower** (1819), which houses the **Religious Art Museum** (☎ 743 64 33; plac Katedralny; adult/child 5/3zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar). Nearby is the 16th-century **cathedral** (plac Katedralny; ☎ dawn-dusk) and its impressive baroque frescoes.

The substantial 14th-century **castle**, standing on a hill northeast of the Old Town, has a dark history. During the Nazi occupation, over 100,000 people passed through its doors before being deported to the death camps.

Its major occupant is now the **Lublin Museum** (☎ 532 50 01; www.zamek-lublin.pl; ul Zamkowa 9; adult/child 6.50/4.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun). On display are paintings, silverware, porcelain, woodcarvings and weaponry, mostly labelled only in Polish. Check out the alleged 'devil's paw-print' on the 17th-century table in the foyer, linked to an intriguing local legend.

At the castle's eastern end, accessible via the museum, is the gorgeous 14th-century **Chapel of the Holy Trinity** (adult/child 6.50/4.50zł, incl museum 10/6zł; ☎ 9am-3.45pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4.45pm Sun). Its interior is covered with polychrome Russo-Byzantine frescoes painted in 1418 – possibly the finest medieval wall paintings in Poland.

MAJDANEK

About 4km southeast is the **State Museum of Majdanek** (☎ 744 26 40; admission free; ☎ 8am-6pm May-Sep, 8am-3pm Oct-Apr). It commemorates one of the largest Nazi death camps, where some 235,000 people were massacred. Barracks, guard towers and barbed wire fences remain in place; even more chilling are the crematorium and gas chambers.

Trolleybus 156 from near Bank Pekao on ul Królewska goes to the entrance of Majdanek.

Sleeping

Camping Marina (☎ 745 69 10; fax 744 10 70; ul Krężnicka 6; camp sites per tent 8zł, cabins from 55zł; ☎ May-Sep) This camping ground is located on a lake about 8km south of the Old Town – take bus 17, 20 or 21 from the train station to Stadion Sygnał, and then catch bus 25.

Youth Hostel (☎ /fax 533 06 28; ul Długosza 6; dm/d/tr 19/50/75zł) Simple rooms are decorated with potted plants, and there's a kitchen and a pleasant courtyard area with seating. It's 50m up a lane off ul Długosza; bed linen costs 6zł extra.

Wojewódzki Ośrodek Metodyczny (☎ 532 92 41; www.wodn.lublin.pl; ul Dominikańska 5; dm 45zł) In an atmospheric old building, offering rooms with between two and five beds. Look for the sign 'Wojewódzki Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli'.

Dom Nauczyciela (☎ 533 82 85; www.oupislublin.republika.pl; ul Akademicka 4; s/d/tr from 90/106/189zł) Value-packed accommodation in the heart of the university quarter, west of the Old Town. Rooms are clean, with good bathrooms. There are bars and eateries nearby.

Motel PZM (☎ 533 42 32; ul Prusa 8; s/d from 120/160zł; ☎) The PZM is housed in an uninspiring concrete pile, but it's handy for the bus station. The rooms have been renovated, with new furniture and freshly tiled bathrooms.

Hotel Waksman (☎ 532 54 54; www.waksman.pl; ul Grodzka 19; s/d 180/200zł, ste from 240zł; ☎) Small gem within the Old Town, containing elegantly appointed rooms and an attractive lounge with tapestries on the walls. One room has a waterbed.

Eating & Drinking

Pizzeria Acerna (☎ 532 45 31, Rynek 2; mains 10-24zł; ☎ 11am-10pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 11am-midnight Fri & Sat) The Acerna is a popular eatery on the main square, serving cheap pizzas and pasta in its subterranean dining area.

Pueblo Desperados (☎ 534 61 79, Rynek 5; mains 10-27zł; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Thu, 9am-midnight Fri & Sat, 10am-midnight Sun) Takes a reasonable stab at Mexican cuisine in its tiny sombrero-decorated premises. Presents Tex-Mex favourites, and so-called Mexican pizzas.

Kawiarnia Szeroka 28 (☎ 534 61 09; ul Grodzka 21; mains 15-40zł; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri-Sun) An evocative place with timber bench seating, offering Jewish and Polish cuisine. There are regular live *klezmer* bands in the evenings (15zł extra) playing traditional Jewish music.

Chmielewska (☎ 743 72 96; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 8; ☎ 10am-10pm) Charming old-fashioned café that looks like it dropped in from a bygone century. The menu is full of classic Polish cakes, and a wide selection of coffee, tea and alcoholic drinks.

There's a supermarket close to the bus terminal.

Getting There & Away

From the **bus terminal** (al Tysiąciecia), opposite the castle, services head to Kraków (38zł to 46zł, two daily) and Zamość (13zł, 12 daily). From the same terminal, Polski Express offers seven daily buses to Warsaw (34zł, three hours).

Private minibuses to a variety of destinations, including Warsaw (30zł), leave from bus stops north and west of the bus terminal.

Lublin Główny train station (plac Dworcowy) is 1.2km south of the Old Town and accessible by bus 1 or 13. Services go to Warsaw (32zł, 2½ hours, at least 12 daily) and two fast trains travel to Kraków (46zł, five hours).

ZAMOŚĆ

☎ 084 / pop 67,000

While most Polish cities date from the Middle Ages, Zamość (*zah-moshch*) is pure Renaissance. It was founded in 1580 by nobleman Jan Zamoyski and designed by an Italian architect, and was intended to become a prosperous trading settlement. The splendid architecture of Zamość's Old Town escaped destruction in WWII, and was added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 1992.

Information

Bank Pekao (ul Grodzka 2)

K@fejka Internetowa (☎ 639 29 32; Rynek Wielki 10; per hr 3zł)

Main post office (ul Kościuszki) Near the cathedral
Tourist Information Centre (☎ 639 22 92; Rynek Wielki 13; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Oct-Apr)

Sights

Rynek Wielki is an impressive Italianate Renaissance square, dominated by the lofty, pink **Town Hall** and surrounded by colourful arcaded burghers' houses. The **Museum of Zamość** (☎ 638 64 94; ul Ormiańska 30; adult/child 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) is based in two of the loveliest buildings on the Rynek and houses interesting displays, paintings, folk costumes and archaeological finds.

Southwest of the square is the mighty 16th-century **cathedral** (ul Kolegiacka; ☎ dawn-dusk, except during services), which holds the tomb of Zamoyski.

Before WWII, Jewish citizens accounted for 45% of the town's population. The most significant Jewish architectural relic is the Renaissance **synagogue** (☎ 0608 409 055; ul Perca 14; admission 2zł; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun May-Sep, by appointment Oct-Apr). It's awaiting transformation into a museum, but you can visit and see its original wall and ceiling decoration.

On the eastern edge of the Old Town is the antiquated **Hala Targowa** (Market Hall; ul Lukasińskiego 2; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun), which houses a foreign-exchange office as well as numerous little shops. Behind it is the best surviving **bastion** from the original wall that encircled Zamość.

Sleeping & Eating

Youth Hostel (☎ 627 91 25; ul Zamoyskiego 4; dm 12-16zł) This hostel is in a school about 1.5km east of the Old Town and not far from the

bus terminal. It's a pretty basic place but it's functional, and very cheap. Open in July and August only.

Pokoje Goecinne OSIR (☎ 638 60 11; ul Królowej Jadwigi 8; dm 23.50zł, s/d/tr 90/125/150zł; ☒) Located in a sprawling sporting complex a 15-minute walk west of the Old Town. Rooms are plainly furnished but clean, although the bathrooms fall short of the ideal.

Hotel Arkadia (☎ 638 65 07; www.arkadia.zamosc.pl; Rynek Wielki 9; s/d/tr 100/150/180zł) With just seven rooms, this is a compact place with a pool table and restaurant. It's shabby but charming, with an unbeatable position on the market square.

Hotel Jubilat (☎ 638 64 01; hoteljubilat@hoga.pl; ul Kardynała Wyszyńskiego 52; s/d 134/173zł; ☒) A reasonable, if slightly drab, place to spend the night, right beside the bus station. It's a long way from anywhere else.

Bar Asia (☎ 639 23 04; ul Staszica 10; mains 5-8zł; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-4pm Sat) For hungry but broke travellers, this cafeteria-style place serves cheap and tasty Polish food, including several variants of *pierogi*.

Restauracja Muzealna (☎ 638 73 00; ul Ormiańska 30; mains 8-18zł; ☒ 11am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-9pm Sun) Atmospheric cellar restaurant below the main square, serving a better class of Polish cuisine at reasonable prices. Has a well-stocked bar.

There are also a few cheap fast-food joints in the Hala Targowa.

Getting There & Away

Buses are more convenient and quicker than trains. The **bus terminal** (ul Hrubieszowska) is 2km east of the Old Town and linked by frequent city buses. Daily, one or two fast buses go to Kraków (40zł, four hours), four to Warsaw (37zł, five hours) and nine to Lublin (13zł, two hours).

Quicker and cheaper are the minibuses that travel every 30 minutes between Lublin and Zamość (10zł, 1½ hours). They leave from the minibus stand opposite the bus terminal in Zamość, and from a disorganised corner northwest of the bus terminal in Lublin. Check the changeable timetable for departures to other destinations, including Warsaw and Kraków.

From the train station, about 1km southwest of the Old Town, several slow trains head to Lublin (about four hours), and one plods along to Warsaw (six hours).

SILESIA (ŚLĄSK)

Silesia has a history of ethnic and political flux, having been governed by Polish, Bohemian, Austrian and German rulers. Nowadays Upper Silesia is the nation's industrial heart, while Lower Silesia is a fertile farming region. Along the region's southwestern edge run the Sudeten Mountains.

The main urban centre, Wrocław, is a beautiful historic city with lively nightlife, and the Sudeten Mountains draw hikers and other nature lovers.

WROCLAW

☎ 071 / pop 639,000

The beautiful Old Town of Wrocław (*vrots-wahf*) is a gracious mix of Gothic and baroque styles, and its large student population ensures a healthy number of restaurants, bars and nightclubs.

Wrocław has been traded back and forth between various rulers over the centuries, having begun life in the year 1000. In the 1740s it passed to Prussia. Upon its return to Poland in 1945, Wrocław was a shell of its former self, having sustained massive damage in WWII. Sensitive restoration has since returned the historic centre to its former splendour.

Information

Bank Pekao (ul Oławska 2)

Main post office (Rynek 28; ☒ 6.30am-8.30pm)

Tourist office (☎ 344 11 11; www.wroclaw.pl; Rynek 14; ☒ 9am-9pm May-Sep, 9am-8pm Oct-Apr)

W Sercu Miasta (☎ 342 46 75; ul Przejście Żelaznicze; per hr 5zł; ☒ 24hr) Internet café down a laneway in the middle of the Rynek.

Sights

Wrocław's pride and joy is the giant **Panorama of Radawicka** (☎ 344 23 44; ul Purkyńskiego 11; adult/child 20/15zł; ☒ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun May-Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr). It's a 360-degree painting of a 1794 battle, in which the Polish peasant army, led by Tadeusz Kościuszko, defeated Russian forces intent on partitioning Poland. Created for the centenary of the battle in 1894, the painting is an immense 114m long and 15m high. Obligatory tours (with audio in English, French, German, Spanish, Russian and other languages) run every 30 minutes from 9am to 4.30pm in summer, 10am to 3pm in winter.

The ticket also allows entry to the National Museum on the same day.

Located nearby, the **National Museum** (☎ 343 88 39; plac Powstańców Warszawy 5; adult/child 15/10zł, free Sat; ☒ 9am-4pm Wed-Fri & Sun, 10am-6pm Sat) exhibits Silesian medieval art, and a fine collection of modern Polish painting.

In the centre of the Old Town is the attractive **Rynek** (Market Sq). The beautiful **Town Hall** (built from 1327 to 1504) on the southern side plays host to the **Townpeople Art Museum** (☎ 347 16 90; adult/child 7/5zł, free Wed; ☒ 11am-5pm Wed-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun), with stately rooms on show, and exhibits featuring the art of gold and the stories of famous Wrocław inhabitants.

In the northwestern corner of the Rynek, behind two small houses linked by a baroque gate, is the monumental 14th-century **St Elizabeth's Church** (ul Elżbiety 1; admission 5zł; ☒ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun May-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun Nov-Apr) with its 83m-high tower, which you can climb for city views.

North of the river is Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island), a picturesque area full of churches. Here you'll find the Gothic **Cathedral of St John the Baptist** (plac Katedralny; ☒ 10am-8pm except during services). Uniquely, there's a lift to whisk you to the top of the **tower** (adult/child 4/3zł; ☒ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) for superb views. Nearby are the charming **Botanical Gardens** (☎ 322 59 57; ul Sienkiewicza 23; adult/child 7/5zł; ☒ 8am-6pm), where you can chill out among the chestnut trees and tulips.

Sleeping

Camping Nr 267 Śleza (☎ 372 55 11; ul Na Grobli 16/18; camp site per person/tent 14/3zł; d/tr bungalows 60/90zł) On the bank of the Odra, 2km east of the Old Town. Take tram 5 to plac Wróblewskiego from the train station and walk about 1km further east.

MDK Youth Hostel (☎ 343 88 56; mdkkopernik.wp.pl; ul Kofłataja 20; dm from 22zł, d from 29zł) This is a basic, tidy place, located in a grand mustard-coloured building. Some dorms are huge and beds are packed close together.

Stranger Hostel (☎ 344 12 06; www.thestrangerhostel.com; ul Kofłataja 16; dm 50zł; ☒ ☒) A tatty old staircase leads to attractive dorms with ornate lamps and decorative ceilings. Guests have access to a kitchen, washing machine, games console and DVD projector.

Bursa Nauczycielska (☎ 344 37 81; ul Kotlarska 42; s/d/q 50/90/104zł) A basic but clean hostel with

shared bathrooms, located just one block northeast of the Rynek. There's a lot of brown in the colour scheme, but the rooms are quite cosy.

Hotel Europejski (☎ 343 10 71; www.odratourist.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 88; s/d 195/205zł; ☒) Very handy for the train station. The pricier 'renovated' rooms are large and comfortable, though the décor's a bit dated.

Hotel Monopol (☎ 343 70 41; www.orbis.pl; ul Modrzewskiej 2; s 122-182zł, d 164-264zł; ☒) Adolf Hitler was once a frequent visitor, but Marlene Dietrich and Pablo Picasso stayed here too. It's an attractive Old World hotel, and the buffet breakfast makes it good value.

Eating & Drinking

Bazyliia (plac Uniwersytecki; mains 4-9zł; ☒ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-8pm Sat) Bustling student café with huge plate-glass windows. The menu has Polish standards such as *bigos* (cabbage and meat stew) and *goląbki* (cabbage rolls), and a decent range of salads and other vegetable dishes.

Bar Wegetariański Vega (☎ 344 39 34; Rynek 1/2; mains 5-12zł; ☒ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) This is a cheap cafeteria in the centre of the Rynek, offering vegetarian dishes in a light green space. There is a good choice of soups and crepes.

Mexico Bar (☎ 346 02 92; ul Rzeźnicza 34; mains 11-39zł; ☒ noon-midnight) Compact, warmly lit restaurant featuring sombreros, back-lit masks and a chandelier made of beer bottles. All the Tex-Mex standards are on the menu, but book ahead at weekends.

Pub Guinness (☎ 344 60 15; plac Solny 5; ☒ noon-2am) A lively, fairly authentic Irish pub. The ground floor bar buzzes with student and traveller groups getting together, and there's a restaurant and beer cellar as well.

PRL (☎ 342 55 26; Rynek Ratusz 10; ☒ noon-3am) The dictatorship of the proletariat is alive and well in this venue inspired by communist nostalgia. Disco lights play over a bust of Lenin, and 'red menace' memorabilia is scattered through the maze of rooms.

Entertainment

Check out the (free and in English) bimonthly, the *Visitor*, for details of what's on in this important cultural centre.

Teatr Polski (☎ 316 07 77; ul Zapolskiej 3) Theatrical venue staging classic Polish and foreign drama.

Filharmonia (☎ 342 2001; www.filharmonia.wroclaw.pl; ul Piłsudskiego 19) Hosts concerts of classical music, mostly Friday and Saturday nights.

Kino Helios (☎ 781 55 70; www.heliosnet.pl; ul Kazimierza Wielkiego 19a) Modern multiplex screening English-language films.

Getting There & Away

If you're travelling to/from Wrocław at the weekend, you'll be in competition with thousands of itinerant university students, so book your ticket as soon as possible.

The **bus terminal** (ul Sucha 11) is south of the main train station. Several PKS buses go daily to Warsaw (37zł, five hours), Poznań (22zł to 35zł, 2½ hours) and Częstochowa (22zł, three hours).

The **Wrocław Główny train station** (ul Piłsudskiego 105) is a historical monument in itself. Every day, fast trains to Kraków depart every one or two hours (42zł, 3½ hours), and several Inter-City and express trains (88zł, six hours) go to Warsaw. Wrocław is also regularly linked by train to Poznań (32zł, 3½ hours), Częstochowa (32zł, 3½ hours, four daily), and Lublin (52zł, 9½ hours, two daily).

WIELKOPOLSKA

Wielkopolska (Greater Poland) is the region where Poland came to life in the Middle Ages. The region's historic significance didn't save it from international conflict, however, and the region became part of Prussia in 1793. The battles of WWII later caused widespread destruction throughout the area, though Poznań has since been restored to its prominent economic role.

POZNAŃ

☎ 061 / pop 577,000

No one could accuse Poznań of being too sleepy. As a centre for business, education and tourism, it's a vibrant city with a wide choice of attractions. From 968 to 1038 Poznań was the de facto capital of Poland, and it's always been important as a trading town. The city has several interesting museums, and a range of lively bars, clubs and restaurants.

Information

Internet Café Bajt (☎ 853 18 08; ul Zamkowa 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 24hr) Off the main square.

Bank Pekao (ul Św Marcin 52/56)

Main post office (ul Kościuszki 77; ☎ 7am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun)

Tourist office (☎ 852 61 56; Stary Rynek 59; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat May-Sep, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr)

Sights

If you're in the attractive **Stary Rynek** (Old Market Sq), look aloft. Every noon two metal goats above the Renaissance **Town Hall** clock butt their horns together 12 times, in accordance with an old legend. Inside the building, the **Poznań Historical Museum** (☎ 852 56 13; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon & Tue, 11am-6pm Wed, 9am-6pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sun) displays splendid period interiors.

Nearby is the **Museum of Musical Instruments** (☎ 852 08 57; Stary Rynek 45/47; adult/child 5.50/3.50zł, free Sat; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun). The **Archaeological Museum** (☎ 852 82 51; ul Wodna 27; adult/child 6/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) contains Egyptian mummies and displays on the prehistory of western Poland.

The 17th-century **Franciscan Church** (ul Franciszkańska 2; ☎ 8am-8pm), one block west of the Rynek, has an ornate baroque interior, complete with wall paintings and rich stucco work.

The nearby **National Museum: Paintings & Sculpture Gallery** (☎ 856 80 00; al Marcinkowskiego 9; adult/child 10/6zł, free Sat; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue, 9am-5pm Wed, 10am-4pm Thu, 10am-5pm Fri & Sat, 10am-3pm Sun) displays mainly 19th- and 20th-century Polish paintings.

In a park in the new city centre, the moving **Monument to the Victims of June 1956** commemorates the dead and injured of the massive 1956 strike by the city's industrial workers. Next door in the Cultural Centre, there's more detail in the **Museum of Poznań June 1956** (☎ 852 94 64; ul Św Marcin 80/82; adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed or by arrangement).

Sleeping

During Poznań's regular trade fairs (see p896), accommodation rates increase dramatically. A room may also be difficult to find, so it pays to book ahead. Prices given here are for outside the fair periods.

Youth Hostel No 3 (☎ 866 40 40; ul Berwińskiego 2/3; dm 25zł) This is a 15-minute walk southwest of the train station along ul Głogowska, adjacent to Park Wilsona. It's a basic 'no frills' option, and there's a 10pm curfew.

Biuro Zakwaterowania Przemysław (☎ 866 35 60; www.przemyslaw.com.pl; ul Głogowska 16; s/d from 43/65zł, apt from 150zł; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Accommodation agency near the train station; rates for weekends and stays of more than three nights are cheaper.

Mini Hotelik (☎ 863 14 16; al Niepodległości 8a; s/d from 54/107zł) Like it says on the label, this is a small place in an old building between the train station and the Old Town. It's basic but clean, with colourfully painted chambers. Enter from ul Taylora.

Hotel Lech (☎ 853 01 51; www.hotel-lech.poznan.pl; ul Św Marcin 74; s/d 162/244zł) Hotel Lech has standard three-star décor, but rooms are relatively spacious and the bathrooms are modern. Flash your ISIC card for a discount.

Hotel Rzymiski (☎ 852 81 21; www.rzymiskihotel.com.pl; al Marcinkowskiego 22; s/d 210/270zł) Offers the amenities of three-star comfort, and overlooks plac Wolności. The brown-décor rooms aren't as grand as the elegant façade suggests, but they're a decent size.

Hotel Stare Miasto (☎ 663 62 42; www.hotelstaremiasto.pl; ul Rybaki 36; s/d 195/295zł; ☎ 10am-11pm) Elegant 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.

Eating

Bar Vegetariański (☎ 821 12 55; ul Wrocławska 21; mains from 5zł; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 11am-3pm Sat) Cheap vegetarian place in a cellar off the main road, bedecked with plant life about its walls.

Pod Aniołem (☎ 852 98 54; ul Wrocławska 4; mains 16-28zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Mon-Sat, 1pm-midnight Sun) Pleasant pub with arched brick ceilings and candle-lit tables, serving a range of cheap and filling Polish fare.

Sioux (☎ 851 62 86; Stary Rynek 93; mains 22-58zł; ☎ noon-11pm) Cowboy-themed place, with bizarrely named dishes such as 'Marinated Fist of Dancer with Wolves' (pork steak).

Tapas Bar (☎ 852 85 32; Stary Rynek 60; mains 28-45zł; ☎ noon-midnight) Atmospheric place dishing up authentic tapas and Spanish wine. Most tapas dishes are 16zł to 18zł, so forget the mains and share with friends.

Drinking & Clubbing

Proletariat (☎ 851 32 15; ul Wrocławska 9; ☎ 1pm-2am Mon-Sat, 3pm-2am Sun) A small red communist-nostalgia bar. Play 'spot the communist leader' while sipping a local boutique beer.

Room 55 (☎ 855 32 24; Stary Rynek 80/82; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) Features mel-low red couches, with a mezzanine area for observing the beautiful people.

Lizard King (☎ 855 04 72; Stary Rynek 86; ☎ noon-2am) Friendly crowds sit drinking and eating in this split-level space. There's live music later in the week, which usually starts from about 9pm.

Czarna Owca (☎ 853 07 92; ul Jaskółca 13; ☎ noon-2am Mon-Fri, 5pm-2am Sat) This is a popular nightclub with DJs every night playing a mix of genres including R&B, house, pop and rock.

Entertainment

Teatr Wielki (☎ 852 82 91; ul Fredry 9) is the venue for opera and ballet, while **Filharmonia** (☎ 852 47 08; ul Św Marcin 81) offers classical concerts at least every Friday night.

Getting There & Away

The **bus terminal** (ul Towarowa 17) is located about 600m east of the train station. From the busy **train station** (ul Dworcowa 1) services travel to Kraków (48zł, 6½ hours, 11 daily), Gdańsk (43zł, five hours, seven daily), Toruń (30zł, 3½ hours, three daily) and Wrocław (32zł, 3½ hours, 15 daily). Over 20 train services a day head to Warsaw, including eight InterCity services (86zł, three hours).

POMERANIA (POMORZE)

Pomerania stretches along the Baltic coast, containing the historic port city of Gdańsk at its eastern extreme. The region's sandy coastline is a popular destination for holiday-makers in summer. The attractive Gothic city of Toruń lies inland, within a belt of forests and lakes.

TORUŃ

☎ 056 / pop 211,000

The first thing to strike you about Toruń is its massive red-brick churches. Toruń is also famous as the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus, who revolutionised the field of astronomy in 1543 by asserting that the Earth travelled around the sun. He's a figure you will not be able to escape – you can even buy gingerbread men in his likeness.

Toruń was fortunate to escape major damage in WWII, and as a result is the best-preserved Gothic town in Poland.

Information

Ksero Uniwersytecki (☎ 621 92 79; ul Franciszkańska 5; per hr 3zł; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat)

PKO Bank (ul Szeroka)

Main post office (Rynek Staromiejski; ☎ 7am-9pm)

Tourist office (☎ 621 09 31; www.it.torun.pl; Rynek Staromiejski 25; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon & Sat, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9am-1pm Sun May-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon & Sat, 9am-6pm Tue-Fri Sep-Apr)

Sights

The starting point for any exploration is the **Rynek Staromiejski** (Old Town Square). The **Regional Museum** (☎ 622 70 38; www.muzeum.torun.pl; Rynek Staromiejski 1; adult/child 10/6zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr) sits within the massive 14th-century **Old Town Hall**, featuring a fine collection of Polish art, medieval stained-glass and religious paintings. Climb the 40m-high **tower** (adult/child 10/6zł; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr, 10am-7pm Tue-Sun May-Sep) for great views.

In front of the Town Hall is an elegant **statue** of Copernicus. Look for other interesting items of statuary around the square, including a dog and umbrella from a famous Polish comic strip, and a fabled violinist who saved Toruń from a plague of frogs.

Just off the northwestern corner of the square is the late 13th-century **St Mary's Church** (ul Panny Marii; ☎ dawn-dusk), a Gothic building with magnificent 15th-century stalls.

In 1473, Copernicus was born in the brick Gothic house that now contains the dry **Museum of Copernicus** (☎ 622 70 38; ul Kopernika 15/17; adult/child 10/7zł; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-Apr), with replicas of the great astronomer's instruments.

East of the city centre are the ruins of the **Teutonic Castle** (☎ 622 70 39; ul Przedzamcze; adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 9am-8pm), destroyed in 1454 by angry townsfolk protesting against the Teutonic Knights' oppressive regime.

Sleeping

Budget lodgings are a distance from the Old Town, but in summer additional student accommodation opens its doors to travellers. Check with the tourist office for updated details.

Schronisko Turystyczne Fort IV (☎ 655 82 36; www.fort.torun.pl; ul Chrobrego 86; dm 17-23zł) Atmospheric

located in an old Prussian fort, with long brick corridors built to withstand sieges, leading to barrack-like dorms. Catch bus 14 from the main train station.

Youth Hostel (☎ 659 61 84; ul Św Józefa 22/24; dm 20zł) Offers plain but bright facilities, 1.6km northwest of the centre. Catch bus 11 from the main train station or Old Town. Reception closes between 10am and 5pm daily, and there's a 10pm curfew.

Hotel Pod Orłem (☎ 622 50 24; www.hotel.torun.pl; ul Mostowa 17; s/d 110/140zł, apt 200zł; ☎) Great value hotel, although the rooms are smallish, and some contain poky bathrooms. The corridors are fun with their jumble of framed pop-art images and old photos.

Hotel Polonia (☎ 657 18 00; www.polonia.torun.pl; plac Teatralny 5; s/d 150/180zł) The Polonia has smart, attractively furnished rooms with soothing green tones, high ceilings and good bathrooms, in a restored 19th-century building a short walk from the main square.

Hotel Retman (☎ 657 44 60; www.hotelretman.pl; ul Rabińska 15; s/d 160/210zł) Relatively new accommodation, offering spacious, atmospheric rooms with red carpet and solid timber furniture. Downstairs there is a good pub and restaurant.

Eating & Drinking

Bar Mleczny Pod Arkadami (☎ 622 24 28; ul Różana 1; mains 3-8zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Classic milk bar with low-cost dishes and a take-away window serving super-cheap *zapiékanki* (toasted rolls with cheese, mushrooms and ketchup) and sweet waffles.

Pizzeria Verona (☎ 622 04 80; ul Chełmińska 11; mains 7-26zł; ☎ 11am-midnight) Browse the big pizza menu, with a few pasta and salad options, in a great cellar location with fairy lights, wicker lampshades and candles in old wine bottles. Don't attempt to descend the precipitous stairs if you've had a few too many beers.

Sultan (☎ 621 06 07; ul Mostowa 7; mains 8-12zł; ☎ 11am-midnight Sun-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat) Middle Eastern cuisine in a cheerful venue decorated with colourful lanterns and Arabic script. The menu contains kebabs and gyros, along with soups and salads.

Gospoda Pod Modrym Fartuchem (☎ 622 26 26; Rynek Nowomiejski 8; mains 16-29zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) Folksy 15th-century pub serving Polish dishes on the New Town Square, once visited by Polish kings and Napoleon.

Piwnica Artystyczna Pod Aniołem (☎ 622 70 39; Rynek Staromiejski 1), set in a spacious cellar in the Old Town Hall, is a bar offering occasional live music.

Piwnica Ratusz (☎ 621 02 92; Rynek Staromiejski 1) Nearby, this is another great place for a drink.

Jazz God (☎ 652 13 08; ul Rabińska 17; ☎ 5pm-2am Sun-Thu, 5pm-4am Fri & Sat) A lively cellar bar with rock DJs every night from 9pm. On Sundays it has live jazz around 8pm.

Entertainment

Teatr im Horzycy (☎ 622 52 22; plac Teatralny 1) presents theatre performances, while **Dwór Artusa** (☎ 655 49 29; Artus Court; Rynek Staromiejski 6) offers classical music.

Cinema City (☎ 664 64 64; ul Czerwona Droga 1; tickets 15zł) shows current movie releases.

Getting There & Away

The **bus terminal** (ul Dąbrowskiego) is about 1km north of the Old Town. **Polski Express** (ul Mickiewicza) has 12 services a day to Warsaw (48zł, four hours).

The main **Toruń Główny train station** (al Podgórska) is on the opposite side of the Vistula River and linked to the Old Town by bus 22 and 27. Some trains stop and finish at the more convenient **Toruń Miasto** train station, about 500m east of the New Town.

From Toruń Główny station there are fast train services to the following:

Poznań (30zł, 3½ hours, six daily)

Gdańsk (36zł, five hours, nine daily)

Kraków (50zł, 6½ hours, six daily)

Wrocław (43zł, 4½ hours, two daily)

Warsaw (40zł, four hours, seven daily)

GDAŃSK

☎ 058 / pop 462,000

Gdańsk is a lively, attractive city with a distinctive historic centre and access to the attractions of the Baltic Sea. It's also a pivotal place in Polish history. After being tussled over by Germans and Poles for centuries, Gdańsk suffered immense damage in WWII. In the 1980s, it achieved international fame as the home of the Solidarity trade union, whose rise paralleled the fall of communism in Europe.

Information

Jazz 'n' Java (☎ 305 36 16; ul Tkacka 17/18; per hr 5zł; ☎ 10am-10pm) Internet café.

Bank Pekao (ul Garnarska 23)

Main post office (ul Długa 22; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat)

PTTK office (☎ 301 13 43; www.pttk-gdansk.pl; ul Długa 45; ☎ 9am-5pm) This tourist office is opposite the main town hall.

Sights

MAIN TOWN

Ul Długa (Long Street) and Długi Targ (Long Market) form the historic **Royal Way**. Polish kings traditionally paraded through the **Upland Gate** (built in the 1770s on a 15th-century gate), onward through the **Golden Gate** (1614), and proceeded east to the Renaissance **Green Gate** (1568).

Outside the Gothic town hall is **Neptune's Fountain** (1633). Nearby, the **Golden House** (1618) has a strikingly rich façade.

North of the Green Gate is the 14th-century **St Mary's Gate**, through which lies picturesque **ul Mariacka** (St Mary's St), lined with 17th-century burgher houses and amber shops.

At the end of ul Mariacka is the gigantic 14th-century **St Mary's Church** (adult/child 2/1zł; ☎ 8am-8pm, except during services). Watch little figures troop out at noon from its 14m-high astronomical clock, which is adorned with zodiacal signs. Climb the 405 steps of the **tower** (adult/child 3/1.50zł) for a giddy view over the town.

Further north along the waterfront, the **Central Maritime Museum** (☎ 301 86 11; ul Ołowianka 9-13; 1 section 6zł, all 4 sections 14zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun) offers a fascinating insight into Gdańsk's seafaring past. It includes the museum-ship *Soldek*, built just after WWII.

OLD TOWN

Almost totally destroyed in 1945, the Old Town has never been completely rebuilt. However, among its gems are **St Catherine's Church** (ul Wielkie Młyny; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat), Gdańsk's oldest church (begun in the 1220s). Opposite the church is the **Great Mill** (ul Wielkie Młyny) which was built by the Teutonic Knights in around 1350. It used to produce 200 tonnes of flour per day and continued to operate until 1945.

The soaring **Monument to the Shipyard Workers** (plac Solidarności), erected in 1980, stands at the entrance to the Gdańsk Shipyards to the north. Down the street is the evocative **Roads to Freedom Exhibition** (Solidarity Museum; ☎ 769 29 20; ul Doki 1; adult/child 6/4zł, free Wed; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun).

OLD SUBURB

The **National Museum** (☎ 301 70 61; ul Toruńska 1; adult/child 9/5zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is famous for its Dutch and Flemish paintings, especially Hans Memling's 15th-century *Last Judgment*.

Sleeping

Youth Hostel (☎ /fax 301 23 13; ul Wałowa 21; dm from 12zł, s/d from 25/50zł; ☎) Old-style hostel on the doorstep of the Gdańsk Shipyards. Rooms are brown and basic, but clean. Smoking and drinking are strictly forbidden, and there's a midnight curfew.

Dom Harcerza (☎ 301 36 21; www.domharcerza.prv.pl; ul Za Murami 2/10; dm 25zł, s/d/tr from 50/100/120zł) The rooms are small but cosy, and the bathrooms are clean at this budget accommodation. There's a charming old-fashioned restaurant on the ground floor.

Baltic Hostel (☎ 721 96 57; www.baltichostel.com; ul 3 Maja 25; dm 35zł, s/d 50/100zł; ☎) This hostel near the train and bus stations has basic rooms with high ceilings. Bathrooms are clean, and there's a homely light-filled lounge area with ceramic fish on the wall.

Targ Rybny (☎ 301 56 27; www.gdanskhostel.com; ul Grodzka 21; dm from 40zł, s/d/tr from 90/140/180zł; ☎) A popular modern hostel in a great central location overlooking the quay. It's a little cramped, but clean and sociable, with a comfy lounge area.

Apartments Poland (☎ 346 98 64; www.apartmentpoland.com; apt from €50) Apartment agency with properties in central Gdańsk. Some are big enough for larger groups. Be aware of the additional electricity charge when checking out, based on a meter reading.

Villa Angela (☎ 302 23 15; www.villaangela.pl; ul Beethowena 12; s/d/tr 175/210/285zł; ☎) Comfortable lodgings west of the centre, with spacious renovated rooms. Catch bus 130, 184 or 384, or night bus N6, from the train station.

Dom Muzyka (☎ 300 92 60; www.dom-muzyka.pl; ul Łąkowa 1/2; s/d from 180/255zł; ☎) Gorgeous white rooms with arched ceilings and quality furniture, within a big yellow-brick building. From July to August, a second wing offers cheaper hostel-style beds.

Eating & Drinking

Bar Mleczny Neptun (☎ 301 49 88; ul Długa 33/34; mains 2-10zł; ☎) 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) A cut above the average milk bar, with

potted plants, lace curtains, decorative tiling and old lamps for décor.

Green Way (☎ 301 41 21; ul Garmcarska 4/6; mains 7-10zł; ☎) 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-7pm Sat & Sun) Popular with local vegetarians, serving everything from soy cutlets to Mexican goulash in a folksy blue-and-yellow space.

Grand Café Rotterdam (☎ 305 45 80; Długi Targ 33/34; mains 12-27zł; ☎) 10am-2am) This Dutch café serves especially good savoury pancakes and seafood dishes.

Surpik Café Ferber (☎ 301 55 66; ul Długa 77/78; mains 14-24zł; ☎) 8am-midnight) It's starting to step from Gdańsk's historic main street into this very modern café, dominated by bright red panels, a suspended ceiling and boxy lighting. The menu of breakfasts, soups and sandwiches is accompanied by many variants of well-made coffee, there are English-language magazines on hand, and even the bathroom is ultra-slick.

Kansai (☎ 324 08 88; ul Ogarna 124/125; mains 22-36zł; ☎) noon-10pm Tue-Sun) Sushi restaurant with waiters dressed in traditional robes. The menu has dishes made from tuna, salmon and butterfish, along with classic California rolls.

U Szkota (☎ 301 49 11; ul Chlebnicka 9/12; ☎) noon-midnight) If you're in the mood to be served by buzz-cut Polish waiters dressed in kilts serving gold-flecked spirits, this Scottish-themed bar is the place to go.

Yesterday (☎ 301 39 24; ul Piwna 50/51; ☎) 6pm-2am) Groovy cellar venue decked out in a 1960s theme. DJs play from 9pm; Tuesday is British music night.

Entertainment

State Baltic Opera Theatre (☎ 763 49 12; www.operabaltycka.pl; al Zwycięstwa 15) In the suburb of Wrzeszcz, not far from the train station at Gdańsk Politechnika.

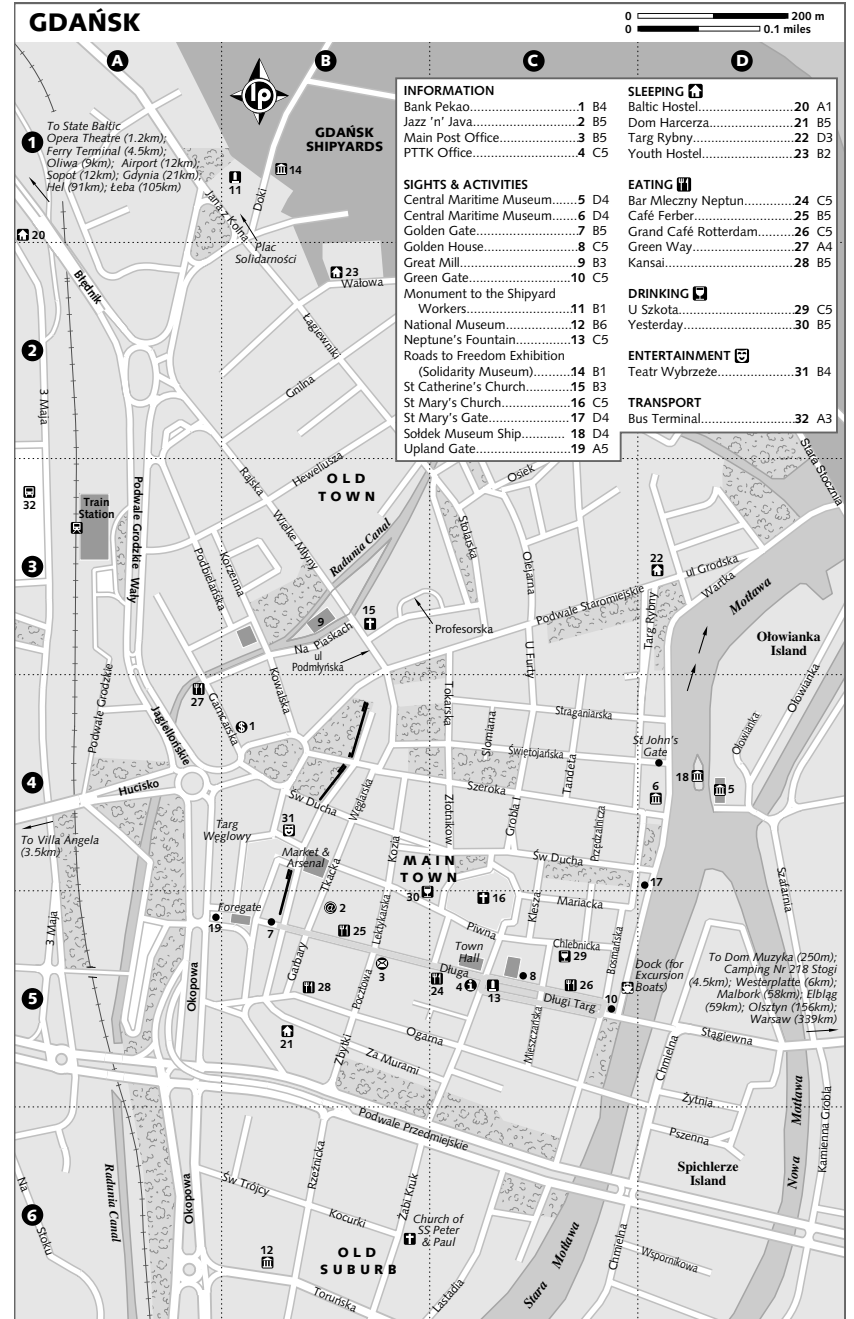
Teatr Wyrzeże (☎ 301 70 21; ul Św Ducha 2) Next to the Arsenal, this is the main city theatre. Classics feature in the repertoire.

Getting There & Away

BUS
The **bus terminal** (ul 3 Maja 12) is behind the main train station. Every day, there are buses to Toruń (27zł, two daily) and Warsaw (50zł, six hours, five daily). Polski Express also offers buses to Warsaw (72zł, two daily).

TRAIN

The city's main train station, **Gdańsk Główny** (ul Podwale Grodzkie 1), is conveniently located on



the western outskirts of the Old Town. Most long-distance trains start or finish at Gdynia, so make sure you get on/off quickly here.

Each day more than 20 trains head to Warsaw, including eight express trains (82zł, 5½ hours) and five InterCity services (90zł, 3½ hours). There are fast trains to Kraków (115zł, eight hours, 13 daily), Poznań (45zł, five hours, seven daily), and Toruń (37zł, three hours, eight daily). Trains also head to Lublin three times a day.

WARMIA & MASURIA

GREAT MASURIAN LAKES

This area southeast of Gdańsk, beyond Olsztyn, has over two-thousand postglacial lakes, surrounded by green hilly landscape. The largest lake is **Lake Śniardwy** (110 sq km). About 200km of canals connect these bodies of water, so the area is a prime destination for yachting and canoeists, as well as those who prefer to hike, fish and mountain-bike.

The detailed *Wielkie Jeziora Mazurskie* map (1:100,000) is essential for anyone exploring the region by water or hiking trail. The *Warmia i Mazury* map (1:300,000), available at regional tourist offices, is perfect for more general use.

Mikołajki (mee-ko-wahy-kee) is a picturesque base for exploring the lakes. The **tourist office** (☎ 421 68 50; www.mikolajki.pl; plac Wolności 3; ☎ 9am-8pm May-Sep) is in the town centre. There are *kantors* and *bankomats* (ATMs) nearby, but nowhere to change travellers cheques or get cash advances.

From the bus terminal, next to the bridge at plac Kościelny, six buses go to Olsztyn each day (13zł, two hours), from where you can connect to major cities. Several daily buses also head northeast to Giżycko (9zł, one hour), and three depart in summer for Warsaw. From the dozy train station, two slow trains shuttle along daily to Olsztyn (14zł), and one fast train heads to Poznań in summer.

The remains of Hitler's wartime headquarters, called the **Wolf's Lair** ('Wolfsschanze' in German), is a local bus ride from Kętrzyn (reached via Giżycko or Olsztyn), about 30km north of Mikołajki. In 1944 a group of high-ranking German officers tried to assassinate Hitler here. The leader of the plot, Claus von Stauffenberg, entered a meeting

with a bomb in his briefcase, and placed it near the dictator. Although the explosion killed and wounded several people, Hitler suffered only minor injuries. Stauffenberg and some 5000 people involved in the plot were subsequently executed. To reach the eerie ruins of the complex, catch one of several daily PKS buses (3.20zł) from Kętrzyn to Węgorzewo (via Radziejewo, not Srokowo) and get off at the entrance.

POLAND DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Camping & Mountain Refuges

Poland has hundreds of camping grounds, and many offer good-value cabins and bungalows. Most open May to September, but some only open their gates between June and August.

PTTK runs a chain of mountain refuges (*schroniska górskie*) for trekkers. The more-isolated refuges are obliged to accept everyone, so can be crowded in the high season. Refuges are normally open all year, but confirm with the nearest PTTK office.

Private Rooms, Hostels and Hotels

Some destinations have agencies – usually called a *biuro zakwaterowania* or *biuro kwatery prywatnych* – which arrange accommodation in private homes. Rooms cost about 70/100zł for singles/doubles. During the high season, home owners also directly approach tourists, and private homes in smaller resorts, and villages have signs outside their gates or doors offering a *pokoje* (room) or *noclegi* (lodging).

Youth hostels (*schroniska młodzieżowe*) in Poland mostly open only in July and August; the year-round hostels have more facilities. These hostels are open to all, with no age limit. Curfews are common.

Privately operated hostels operate in the main cities, geared towards international backpackers. They offer more modern facilities, though prices are higher. These hostels usually offer free use of washing machines, in response to the absence of laundromats in Poland.

A dorm bed can cost anything from 15zł to 50zł per person per night. Single/double rooms, if available, cost from about 80/100zł.

Hotel prices often vary according to season, and are posted at hotel reception desks. Top-end hotels sometimes quote prices in euros, and discounted weekend rates are often available.

Two reliable companies can arrange accommodation over the internet: www.poland4u.com and www.hotelspoland.com.

The following websites might be useful:

Polish Camping and Caravanning Federation

(www.pfcc.info)

Polish Youth Hostels Association (www.ptsm.org.pl)

PTTK (www.pttk.pl) Runs mountain hostels and other budget lodgings.

ACTIVITIES

Hikers can enjoy marked trails across the Tatra and Sudeten Mountains, and the Great Masurian Lakes district. Trails are easy to follow, and detailed maps are available from most larger bookshops. Poland is fairly flat and ideal for cyclists. Zakopane will delight skiers from December and March.

BUSINESS HOURS

Most shops are open from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and until 2pm on Saturday. Supermarkets and larger stores often have longer opening hours. Banks in larger cities are open from about 8am to 5pm weekdays (sometimes until 2pm on Saturday), but have shorter hours in smaller towns. *Kantors* (foreign currency exchange agents) generally follow shop hours.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Poland is relatively safe, but be alert for pick-pockets around major train stations, such as Warszawa Centralna. Robberies have become a problem on night trains, especially on international routes. Try to share a compartment with other people if possible. Watch out too for bogus ticket-inspectors on public transport – ask to see ID if they try to fine you.

Smoking is common in most public places, especially pubs and restaurants.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Embassies & Consulates in Poland

All embassies listed are in Warsaw.

Australia (☎ 022-521 34 44; www.australia.pl; ul Nowogrodzka 11)

Canada (☎ 022-584 31 31; www.canada.pl; ul Matejki 1/5)

France (☎ 022-529 30 00; ul Puławska 17)

Germany (☎ 022-584 17 00; www.ambasadaniemiec.pl; ul D'browiecka 30)

Ireland (☎ 022-849 66 33; www.irelandia.pl; ul Mysia 5)

Netherlands (☎ 022-559 12 00; ul Kawalerii 10)

UK (☎ 022-311 00 00; www.britishebassy.pl; al Róż 1)

USA (☎ 022-504 20 00; www.usinfo.pl; al Ujazdowskie 29/31)

Polish Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Australia (☎ 02-6273 1208; 7 Turrona St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-789 0468; 443 Daly Ave, Ottawa 2, Ontario K1N 6H3)

France (☎ 01 43 17 34 00; 1 Rue de Talleyrand, 75007 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-22 31 30; Lassenstrasse 19-21, 14193 Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-2830855; www.polishembassy.ie; 5 Ailesbury Rd, Ballsbridge, Dublin)

Netherlands (☎ 070-799 01 00; Alexanderstraat 25, 2514 JM The Hague)

UK (☎ 0870-774 27 00; 47 Portland Place, London W1B 1JH)

USA (☎ 202-234 3800; 2640 16th St NW, Washington, DC 20009)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Warsaw

See p875.

Kraków

Organ Music Festival Annual celebration of the music of the pipe organ held in March.

Jewish Culture Festival (www.jewishfestival.pl) Held in June/July.

International Festival of Street Theatre (www.teatrktko.pl) Held in July.

Summer Jazz Festival (www.cracjazz.com) Held in July.

Cręstochowa

The major Marian feasts at Jasna Góra are 3 May, 16 July, 15 August (especially), 26 August, 8 September, 12 September and 8 December.

Wrocław

Musica Polonica Nova Festival (www.musica-polonicanova.pl, in Polish) February

Jazz on the Odra International Festival (www.jnofestival.pl) Held in June.

Wrocław Marathon (www.wroclawmaraton.pl) In April.

Wrocław Non Stop (www.wroclawnonstop.pl) Held in June/July.

Castle Party (www.castleparty.com) Held in July/August.

Wratlavia Cantans (www.wratlavia.art.pl) Held in September.

Poznań

The largest trade fairs take place in January, June, September and October. Cultural events include the St John's Fair (June), an open-air arts and crafts event with live entertainment, and the Malta International Theatre Festival (www.malta-festival.pl; ☞ late June).

Gdańsk

St Dominic's Fair (www.mtgsa.pl) August
International Organ Music Festival (www.gdanskie-organy.com) June to August
International Organ, Choir & Chamber Music Festival (www.gdanskie-organy.com) July to August
International Street & Open-Air Theatre Festival (www.feta.pl) July

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

The Polish gay and lesbian scene is fairly discreet. Warsaw and Kraków are the best places to find bars and clubs.

The best source of information on Warsaw and Kraków is the online **GayGuide.Net** (www.gayguide.net). **Innastrona** (www.innastrona.pl) is also useful. Newsstands and gay bars in Warsaw may also stock copies of *Nowy Men*, a gay listings magazine.

HOLIDAYS

Poland's official public holidays are:

New Year's Day 1 January
Easter Monday March or April
Labour Day 1 May
Constitution Day 3 May
Corpus Christi Thursday in May or June
Assumption Day 15 August
All Saints' Day 1 November
Independence Day 11 November
Christmas 25 and 26 December

INTERNET RESOURCES

InsidePoland (www.insidepoland.com) Current affairs and links.
Poland.pl (www.poland.pl) An excellent place to start surfing.
POLISHWORLD (www.polishworld.com) Directories and travel bookings.

MONEY

The official Polish currency is the złoty (*zwo-ti*), abbreviated to zł. The złoty is divided into 100 groszy, abbreviated as gr.

Exchanging Money

Private foreign-exchange offices – called *kantors* – are *everywhere*. The most widely accepted currencies are the euro, the US dollar and the pound sterling (in that order).

Foreign-exchange offices rarely cash travellers cheques. Not all banks do either, and most charge a commission.

ATMs (*bankomats*) are common in all sizable towns. Banks without an ATM might give cash advances over the counter on credit cards, which are widely accepted.

Tipping isn't common in Poland, but feel free to leave 10% extra for waiters or taxi drivers if you've had good service.

POST

Most cities have several post offices. The *poczta główna* (main post office) has the widest range of facilities.

TELEPHONE

All land-line numbers in Poland have seven digits. To call from abroad, dial the country code ☎ 48, then the two-digit area code (drop the '0'), and then the local number.

Note that it's always necessary to dial both the area code and the local number when making calls inside Poland, even for calls within the local area. The international access code for overseas calls from Poland is ☎ 00.

Most public telephones use magnetic phone-cards, available at post offices and kiosks in units of 15 (9zł), 30 (15zł) and 60 (24zł).

VISAS

EU citizens do not need visas to visit and can stay indefinitely. USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand citizens can stay for up to 90 days without a visa. Other nationals should check with Polish embassies in their countries.

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