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 30th December 2023

21 days
 Duration

Poland
 Destination

Level 2 - Moderate
 Activity

Exploring Poland | Poland Small Group Tour

Sep 30 2023 to Oct 20 2023

Exploring Poland | Small Group Tour

Take a trip through Polish history with Odyssey Traveller's **Exploring Poland** small group tour. This tour, especially designed for mature and senior travellers, begins and ends in Warsaw, the capital and largest city of this central European country, with multiple stops in small towns with big histories.

We will view the grand monuments of Warsaw and Krakow and trace the path of the Vistula River, visiting the towns of Kazimierz Dolny with



its Renaissance architecture, Baranow Sandomierski with its grand 16th century castle, Wieliczka with its [UNESCO World Heritage](#) labyrinthine salt mine, and other places that shaped the heart and soul of Poland. We will also take time to visit the homes and learn more about the life of Polish luminaries such as Frédéric Chopin and Nicolaus Copernicus.

A united Kingdom of Poland in the mid-1500s formed one of the largest countries in Europe, and was noteworthy as well for adopting the continent's first written national constitution in 1791. Partitioned after the wars of the 17th century, Poland was restored as a nation in 1918. The second World War and the Holocaust would ravage Poland and inflict untold misery on its people, many of whom were forced to migrate to other countries. Poland would rise again into a regional power in the 21st century. Every year, it welcomes many travellers eager to know more about its history and see its natural beauty.

You can learn more about [Poland](#) with our country profile where all other tour departures are listed as well. For more details of this tour, click the 'Top 5' or 'Itinerary' buttons above! If you're keen to experience this tour, [please call](#) or [send an email](#). Or, to book, simply fill in the form on the right-hand side of this page.

Odyssey Traveller regularly offers [tours](#) designed for the active senior or mature traveller to enjoy in a small group holiday and learning environment. We also publish articles to provide more information to both loyal and prospective participants. Articles of possible interest is this [two-part](#) post filled with travelling tips for seniors, an article providing [some advice for the over-50s with respect to life, exercise & travel](#), and an important article about [practising responsible travel](#).

Highlights

1. Explore the historic centre of old Warsaw and enjoy an evening concert.
2. Take a two-hour canal tour of the Elblag Canal, famous for its ingenious system of using inclined planes to move vessels between two lakes.
3. Walk through the subterranean salt mines of Wieliczka, a unique and world-class attraction that holds UNESCO World Heritage status.
4. View the monuments of Krakow and visit the Kazimierz district, the historical centre of Jewish life in the city.
5. Admire the medieval castles and watchtowers comprising the Eagle's Nests Trail, a chain of strongholds built to protect Krakow.

Itinerary

Day 1

Locations: Warsaw

Overview:

After arriving in Warsaw we will make our way individually to the hotel. In the evening we will meet together as a group for orientation and a welcome dinner.

Day 2

Locations: Warsaw

Overview:

This morning, we set off on a half-day tour of historic Warsaw.

Warsaw is the capital and largest city of Poland. It's motto *Contemnit procellas* ("It defies the storms") is testament to the city's perseverance, rising several times from the ashes after being destroyed by wars and invading armies.

On our tour we will visit the Old Town area with its impressive medieval architecture. This historic centre of Warsaw, 85% of which was

destroyed by Nazi troops in 1944, has been designated a World Heritage Site following its meticulous restoration after World War II. UNESCO calls it “an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century.”

It is also the site of the Royal Castle Square, a popular meeting place for travellers and locals alike. It marks the beginning of the Royal Route towards the south, a former communication route. We will visit the Royal Castle, along with the iconic Old Town Market Square. We will take a look at the Frédéric Chopin monument in Royal Lazienki Park—a large bronze statue honouring the world-famous Polish composer.

The afternoon is set aside for leisure, before we meet again for an evening concert at the National Opera or National Philharmonic—pending programming and availability.

Day 3

Locations: Warsaw

Overview:

Today, we will experience the lavish baroque interiors of the Royal Wilanow Palace and Park, summer residence of John III, who ruled Poland in the 17th century.

Later, we will tour the estate Zelazowa Wola, birthplace of Frédéric Chopin. Chopin, born in 1810, was a pianist and composer who created several pieces for the solo piano that had tremendous influence on the Romantic era of music.

Zelazowa Wola used to belong to the Skarbek family, and the Chopins came to live in the left wing of the Skarbek manor when Chopin's father was employed as a tutor. As international interest in Chopin developed, important renovations were initiated on the estate, beginning in 1926. An obelisk bearing the composer's effigy in bas relief was unveiled. The interior of the manor house was rebuilt in 1948, and in 2010 the grounds were revamped, making it one of the most beautiful parks in Europe. We will visit the house and enjoy a concert in the village, before returning to our hotel in Warsaw.

Day 4

Locations: Warsaw - Kazimierz Dolny - Sandomierz

Overview:

Today we depart Warsaw and head to the small town of Kazimierz Dolny. On arrival, we will explore this city located on the picturesque banks of the Vistula River. Named after the Polish prince Casimir the Just, Kazimierz Dolny is a popular summer retreat, especially among artists and the residents of nearby Warsaw. The Renaissance buildings of the Market Square overlook the ruins of a Gothic castle, sure to delight lovers of architecture. Lanes radiating from the square are filled with art galleries and shops.

We then continue on to Sandomierz, one of Poland's oldest towns. Inhabited since the Neolithic times, it was an important capital of a duchy in the 12th century, and suffered damage from repeat Tartar invasions in the 13th century. The town is considered to have the finest examples of Gothic and Renaissance urban architecture.

We will do some guided sightseeing before retiring to our hotel for the evening, where we will enjoy a group dinner.

Day 5

Locations: Sandomierz - Baranow Sandomierski - Lezajsk - Lancut

Overview:

We set off today for Baranow Sandomierski, a small town in southern Poland where a grand and memorable residence can be found. Baranow Sandomierski Castle is one of the country's most important Mannerist structures. Completed in the 16th century, the castle used to be the residence of the Lubomirski family and now serves as a historic museum. The Lubomirski family grew prosperous from the salt trade, with several Polish princes among its family members.

We proceed to Lezajsk, a town famous for its basilica and its 17th century pipe organ, lavishly decorated and standing 15 metres high. We have the opportunity to appreciate this magnificent instrument in concert, before we continue our journey to Lancut.

In Lancut, we will view the 17th century Lancut Castle, which was reconstructed in the French Baroque style. It is surrounded by

fortifications and magnificent parks, while its interior plays host to exhibitions of paintings, sculpture, china, tapestries, and historic furniture.

Many visitors are attracted to Lancut for its Museum of Carriages. Also located on castle grounds, this features an extraordinary collection of horse-drawn carriages, or “britzkas”, chaises, and hunter’s- and mail-coaches.

We have a group dinner in Lancut, where will stay overnight.

Day 6

Locations: Lancut - Zakopane

Overview:

We depart Lancut for Zakopane, stopping en route for a tour of the Wooden Churches of Southern Malopolska. These churches are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list and are the best preserved wooden Gothic churches characteristic of the region and time period. They were built using what is called the horizontal log technique, common in eastern and northern Europe during the Middle Ages and offering an alternative to stone structures.

We continue on to Zakopane in time for a group dinner and live folk music. We will spend two nights at our accommodation here.

Day 7

Locations: Zakopane

Overview:

Today, we explore Zakopane, a popular resort town in the south of Poland. Famed for skiing during the winter months and mountain climbing and hiking in summer, we get a sense of its heights with a leisurely cable-car ride to the top of Mt. Gubalowka.

Day 8

Locations: Zakopane - Wieliczka - Krakow

Overview:

Today, we depart the adventure-fueled Zakopane for a different pace in Krakow. Along the way, we will visit the Salt Mine in Wieliczka, a unique and world-class attraction that holds UNESCO World Heritage status. This subterranean salt mine is distributed across nine levels, providing a labyrinth of tunnels and chambers that members of the public can explore.

It is located just 14 km southeast from the city of Krakow, where we retire for dinner and accommodation for the night.

Day 9

Locations: Krakow

Overview:

Krakow in the south of Poland lies on both sides of the Vistula River. Krakow's Old Town has been a World Heritage Site since 1978. Today we will go on a tour of the city, visiting Wawel, an architectural complex on the river's left bank sitting about 228 metres above sea level. Among the most famous monuments in the complex is the Royal Castle, where kings of Poland have been crowned since 1320.

We will walk around Old Town and view the iconic Florianska and Barbican Gates, the remains of the city's ancient defences; the market square and the Krakow Cloth Hall (Sukiennice), once the major centre of international trade; and the St Mary's Church, a Gothic brick edifice striking for its two towers of different heights.

We will also visit the Kazimierz district, south of Old Town. It was historically the centre of Jewish life in Krakow before it was destroyed in World War II. Jewish culture has since rebounded in the district, and here we will listen to traditional klezmer music (music built upon eastern European music in the Jewish tradition) either in concert or during dinner.

Day 10

Locations: Krakow

Overview:

Today is set aside to be spent at our leisure. You may use this time to rest, or consider optional activities such as a visit to the Oscar Schindler's Factory Museum, or a tour of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum.

Day 11

Locations: Krakow - Czestochowa - Wroclaw

Overview:

Today we will take a drive to the limestone cliff Pieskowa Skala. Pieskowa Skala, famous for its well-preserved 14th century castle, is in the valley of the Pradnik River, and we will be treated to charming views of this castle and the Ojców National Park that surrounds it. Ojców National Park is Poland's smallest national park, but is very biodiverse and packed with sights such as its famed rock formations.

We will experience the Eagle's Nests Trail, a chain of 25 medieval castles and watchtowers between Krakow and Czestochowa. They were called "eagle's nests" because the defensive strongholds were constructed on top of limestone cliffs in order to protect Krakow, the former capital. We will take a closer look at the ruins of Ogrodzieniec Castle.

We will then drive to Czestochowa and visit the Jasna Gora Monastery, a pilgrimage destination and home of the image of the Black Madonna, said to be miraculous. From here we drive to Wroclaw for dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 12

Locations: Wroclaw

Overview:

Wroclaw in western Poland has a history stretching back a thousand years and has been part of various kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Poland, Kingdom of Hungary, the Habsburg Monarchy, Prussia, and

Germany. We will have a day of sightseeing in this historically rich city, visiting its Old Town with the colourful tenement houses and Town Hall on the Market Square.

We will also visit the beautiful Aula Leopoldina, a Baroque Hall in the University of Wroclaw, named after the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I; and Panorama Raclawicka (Racklawice Panorama), a circular panorama from the 19th century depicting the Battle of Racklawice, one of the first Polish battles in the people's uprising against Russia.

Day 13

Locations: Wroclaw

Overview:

From Wroclaw we will venture out to tour the timber-framed Churches of Peace in Swidnica, a World Heritage Site and erected during the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 that ended the European wars of religion. We will be provided an audio guide for this tour.

We will then see the Ksiaz Castle, which sits on a wooded hilltop. Owned by many families through the years, it became the seat of the Hochberg family in the 16th century until it was seized by the Nazis in the 1940s to serve as the residence of Adolf Hitler.

We return to Wroclaw for the night.

Day 14

Locations: Wroclaw - Poznan

Overview:

Today we will depart Wroclaw and travel to Poznan, a city in west-central Poland. En route we will visit the Kornik Castle in the town of the same name. The castle was built in the 14th century and rebuilt in the 19th century in neo-Gothic style. The castle houses a collection of furniture, paintings, sculptures, and armaments, and is surrounded by a beautiful park.

We will continue on to Poznan and enjoy a half-day tour, including a visit to the first and oldest Polish cathedral, the 10th century Archcathedral Basilica of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Day 15

Locations: Poznan - Gniezno - Torun

Overview:

Today we will push on to Gniezno, about 50 km east of Poznan, for some sightseeing. Gniezno is regarded to be Poland's first capital and has plenty of historic monuments and medieval art for us to view and appreciate.

In the afternoon, we will stroll around Torun. We will have a guided tour of its Old Town with unique examples of Gothic architecture seen in its churches, burgher's houses (a "burgher" being the rank of a prosperous citizen in medieval Europe), and defensive walls.

Renaissance-era mathematician and astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus, who proposed the heliocentric (Sun-centred) model of the solar system, was born in Torun, and we will visit the sites connected to his life, including his statue in the market square and his House Museum.

We will stay in Torun for dinner and for the night.

Day 16

Locations: Torun - Gdansk

Overview:

From Torun we will travel to Gdansk, a port city on the Baltic coast of the country. Along the way we will stop to visit the Castle of the Teutonic Order in Malbork. The 13th-century fortified monastery was built originally by the Teutonic Knights, a German Roman Catholic religious and military order, and has been restored several times, resulting in the imposing brick structure we have today.

We arrive in Gdansk and stay for the night.

Day 17

Locations: Gdansk

Overview:

Today we will be exploring the port city of Gdansk, which sits at the mouth of the Vistula River on the Baltic Sea. We will walk through its

historic Old Town, down Długa Street flanked with architectural wonders, and see Neptun Fountain depicting Neptune the god of the sea, and Artus Court, named after the legendary King Arthur and which was the centre of social life in the 14th century.

We will then drive to Oliwa to visit the Oliwa Cathedral, which with a length of 107 meters is the longest church in Poland. It houses a pipe organ, built from 1763 to 1788. We will have a chance to hear this wondrous instrument in a 20-minute concerto while inside the cathedral.

From Oliwa, before returning to Gdansk, we will stop for a relaxing time in Sopot. Sopot is a seaside resort and a major health spa destination. Here, we can walk down Sopot's wooden pier, flanked by quaint cafes and stretching out into the Bay of Gdansk. At more than 500 metres, this is the longest pier in Europe.

Day 18

Locations: Gdansk - Ostroda - Olsztyn - Mikolajki

Overview:

From Gdansk we will push on to Ostroda for a two-hour canal tour of the Elblag Canal, which connects Ostroda to the Baltic coast. The Elblag Canal is famous for its ingenious system of inclined planes built to move vessels over a particularly difficult portion (due to a difference in water levels) between Lake Drużno and Lake Jeziorak. It is hailed as one of the most outstanding hydrotechnical solutions in the world.

From there, we move to a sightseeing tour in Olsztyn in northeastern Poland, and end the day in Mikolajki.

Day 19

Locations: Mikolajki

Overview:

We will have a day of sightseeing, visiting the Swieta Lipka Basilica, a Jesuit monastic complex considered the most beautiful Baroque construction in Poland, and the Wolf's Lair, the ruins of Adolf Hitler's war headquarters, his first Eastern Front military headquarters in World War II. We will also visit Reszel Castle, which like the castle in Malbork

was built by the Teutonic Order.

Day 20

Locations: Mikolajki - Ruciane-Nida - Warsaw

Overview:

Today we will go on a boat trip to Ruciane-Nida across the picturesque Masurian Lakes. After this relaxing cruise, we will head back to Warsaw, and enjoy a dinner to say farewell to the group.

Day 21

Locations: Warsaw

Overview:

The end of breakfast marks the end of the tour and our services.

Inclusions / Exclusions

What's included in our Tour

- 20 nights accommodation.
- 20 breakfasts and lunches and dinner as outlined in the itinerary.
- Applicable entry fees and services of local guides.
- Transport and field trips as indicated.
- Touring by comfortable and modern coach.
- Services of a tour leader.
- Service charges and gratuities.
- Detailed tour information booklet.

What's not included in our Tour

- Return international airfare and departure taxes.
- Comprehensive international travel insurance.

- Items of a personal nature, such as telephone calls and laundry.
- Meals not specified in the itinerary.

Level 2 - Moderate

Participants must be able to carry their own luggage, climb and descend stairs, be in good health, mobile and able to participate in 3-5 hours of physical activity per day, the equivalent of walking/hiking up to 8 kilometres on uneven ground.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any requests for further information about this tour or any others offered by Odyssey Travel.