Tour Code
PL3

ADVENTURESABROAD

POLAND: Bridging East & West

11 days

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Day 1 Arrive in Krakow

Arrival in Krakow.

Krakow is one of the most beautiful cities in Europe. It was originally the home of the Polish royalty (between 1038 and 1596), before the capital was moved to Warsaw. The cobblestone streets, majestic churches (almost 100!), and old world charm make Krakow an unforgettable destination.

PLEASE NOTE: Our Poland program will operate slightly differently depending on the date selected. Because of closures on certain days of the week, the sightseeing order will vary from Spring to Fall (our overnight points, however, remain the same). This itinerary reflects the order of sightseeing for the immediately upcoming departure; once that trip departs, this itinerary will be updated for the following date.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Krakow: City Walking Tour

Krakow is very compact, and the whole central region with its cobblestone streets is full of well-preserved architecture, Gothic churches and splendid museums. On our sightseeing tour (largely on foot at a leisurely pace) we visit Wawel Hill with the Royal Castle, Market Square, and the 16th century Renaissance Cloth Hall. We continue onward to Jagiellonian University and St Mary's Church with the Wit Stwosz altar. This was designed in 1489 by Wit Stwosz of Nuremburg and is the finest sculptural work in Poland.

We then stroll down the hill from the castle complex and enter the Old Town, one of the most famous old districts in Poland and the centre of Poland's political life from 1038 until King Sigismund III Vasa relocated his court to Warsaw in 1596. The entire medieval old town is among the first sites chosen for the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The district features the centrally located Rynek Glowny, or Main Square, the largest medieval town square of any European city. There is a number of historic landmarks in its vicinity, such as St. Mary's Basilica (Kosciol Mariacki), Church of St. Wojciech (St. Adalbert's), Church of St. Barbara, as well as other national treasures.

While in Krakow, we'll also have a walking visit of Kazimierz, once an independent town governed separately from Krakow until the late middle ages. Later, it became known as the Jewish Quarter of the city and was finally transformed into a center for Krakow's beatnik bars and cafe culture.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Oskar Schindler Museum & Wieliczka Salt Mines

This morning we visit the Oskar Schindler's Factory Museum. The story of Oskar Schindler and his employees is one which has been well-known since the book and film by Thomas Keneally and Steven Spielberg (whose film 'Schindler's List' was shot almost entirely in Krakow). Individual histories of Krakow's wartime inhabitants guide visitors through the exhibit which covers the war of 1939, everyday life under occupation, the fate of the Jews and the city's underground resistance using vast archival documents, photos, radio and film recordings, period artifacts and multimedia.

We'll then break for lunch* after which we'll head to the Wieliczka Salt Mines. On our 5km (3 mile) journey below the earth's surface we will see the salt-formed caves and grottoes, a subterranean lake and a chapel with statues carved from salt. The mines' 11 levels of galleries stretch 300km (186 miles), and some 20,000,000 tonnes (22,000,000 tons) of rock salt were extracted over 700 years. According to local legend, the deposits were discovered in the 13th century by a Hungarian princess named Kinga, whose lost ring was found in a block of salt extracted here.

* Because of the fullness of our day, and because past travellers indicated a desire for some independence for dinner while in Krakow (and an earlier night), we include a light lunch instead of dinner today.

Overnight in Krakow.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 4 Krakow - Oswiecim (Auschwitz) - Czestochowa - Lodz

Our first stop today is the Oswiecim (Auschwitz) and Brzezinka (Birkenau) Nazi concentration camps preserved as memorials to the 1.5 million people of 28 nationalities who perished here, the overwhelming majority of whom were Jewish. Our guided walking tour of the site reveals the compelling history of this region and the very human aspect of this particular historic location.

We continue to Czestochowa, the "spiritual home" of Poland, where pilgrims from every corner of the country come to Jasna Gora (Luminous Mountain) Monastery to revere the image of the Black Madonna, Poland's most important icon. Legend says that the icon was painted by St Luke the Evangelist on a piece of cypress wood from the table used by Mary in Nazareth. The icon was brought from Jerusalem and installed in the monastery around 1384.

We finish our day in Lodz (pronounced: Wooj). A small settlement, that in 1423 was granted civic rights, was thriving at the beginning of the 19th century. Lodz became one of the Europe's biggest and fastest growing textile industry centre. At that time, a new identity of the city - "a promised land" and "a city of many cultures" was created. In Lodz people of different nationalities and religions shared the same dream of a success. Despite the differences they were able to build the city together.

We arrive in time for dinner.

Overnight in Lodz.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Lodz - Warsaw: City Tour

This morning we travel to Warsaw, arriving in time to embark upon a full city tour.

After WWII, a reconstruction campaign by its citizens resulted in today's meticulous restoration of Warsaw's Old Town with its churches, palaces and market-place. It is an outstanding example of a near-total reconstruction of a span of history covering the 13th to the 20th century. Warsaw has shrugged off its dour Eastern Bloc image, and is finally showing its true colours. The vibrant heart of the largest country in "New Europe", Warsaw is now poised to make is presence felt as a business and cultural hub.

We begin our sightseeing with a drive along the Royal Route and a brief orientation drive around the city before beginning our walking tour of the Old Town, a UNESCO protected site. We visit Castle Square, the Uprising Monument, and then drive over to the Praga area for a view of the river. From there go to the Jewish Ghetto area and to Umschlag Platz where we visit the Museum of History of Polish Jews. The museum features a multimedia narrative
exhibition about the vibrant Jewish community that flourished in Poland for a thousand years.

Overnight in Warsaw.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Warsaw Sightseeing - To Torun

Before leaving Warsaw, we'll visit the Warsaw Uprising Museum, dedicated to the Warsaw Uprising of 1944 (we visit today instead of yesterday as the museum is closed for group visits on Sundays). The museum sponsors research into the history of the Uprising, and the history and possessions of the Polish Underground State. It collects and maintains hundreds of artefacts, ranging from weapons used by the insurgents to love letters, in order to present a full picture of the people involved. The museum's stated goals include the creation of an

archive of historical information on the Uprising and the recording of the stories and memories of the still living Uprising participants.

We then continue our journey to the picturesque medieval town of Torun, a beautiful medieval city in northwestern Poland, situated on the Vistula River. Torun's architecture managed to escape bombing, and as such represents one of the only examples of true Gothic architecture in Poland. At warm times of year Torun's old town is full of street cafes and restaurants where you can eat and drink outdoors and enjoy the medieval atmosphere.

Overnight in Torun.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Torun: Nicolaus Copernicus Museum - Gdansk

This morning we enjoy the sights of Torun. Its Old Town has been included in UNESCO's list for its impressive 13th century Town Hall, superb churches and historic streets preserving Torun's past glory. We will visit the Nicolaus Copernicus Museum, Copernicus House, which collects materials about the life and work of Copernicus: a library, old prints and books from the time of Copernicus, various editions of his work, "Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres," and models of the astronomical instruments he used.

We continue to Gdansk, an absolutely charming place with its tall, narrow buildings, peaked roofs and decorative facades that combine perfectly with the cobblestone streets. The famous Gdansk Shipyards are visible from most parts of the city. During our time in Gdansk we'll visit the marvellous Old Town and its main street -- Dlugi Targ (Long Market).

Overnight in Gdansk.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Gdansk Area Tour

Its position on the Baltic has historically made Gdansk one of the most important port cities in Northern Europe, and tragically also the scene of a rather disturbing past. World War II was ignited by a dispute over the control of the city. By the end of the war the city lay almost completely in ruins. The German population was expelled and replaced by Poles as the city came under Polish rule and changed its name to Gdansk. However, the impact of its former
German ties is still evident. Although most of the old buildings were damaged or destroyed in WWII, they have been painstakingly restored or rebuilt.

This morning we head out of town a short distance to visit the Oliwa Cathedral. This Holy Trinity, Blessed Virgin Mary, and St Bernard's Church was first erected as a Cistercian shrine back in the 13th century. Reconstructed in 1350 after a great fire, it re-emerged in the Gothic style, but many of the new fixtures were to be relatively short lived. The Gothic interior was extremely damaged in a 1577 fire and was replaced with the Baroque fixtures we admire today for their beauty and intensity.

The Oliwa Cathedral is perhaps best known for its massive, splendid organ. The organ is comprised of over 7,000 pipes and is decorated with movable angels and brightly painted stars. When built, the instrument was the largest in Europe. The main alter is also very impressive, and if the organ is in use, you're sure to be riveted by its magnificent sound!

While in Gdansk we'll also visit the European Solidarity Centre, a museum and library devoted to the history of Solidarity, the Polish trade union and civil resistance movement, and other opposition movements of Communist Eastern Europe.

The balance of the day is free to enjoy Gdansk. Gdansk is sometimes called the Amber Capital of the World; the surrounding area is the richest known source of this semi-precious stone, and the product can be viewed (and purchased, of course) in many shops in town. In order to maximize your free time in this interesting place, we do not include dinner this evening.

Overnight in Gdansk.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 9 Gdansk - Malbork - Olsztyn

After breakfast, we drive to Olsztyn. En route, we stop at the Teutonic Knights Castle in Malbork, the largest brick building in Europe and one of Poland's greatest tourist attractions.

In the afternoon, we continue to Olsztyn, a town located in a region of lakes and forests. The most attractive part of the city is the old town, encircled by a set of fortified walls.

Overnight in Olsztyn.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Olsztyn - Olsztynek - Warsaw

After breakfast, we return to Warsaw. On the way, we visit the Ethnographic Park in Olsztynek, site of the Museum of Folk Architecture, one of the oldest open-air museums in Europe. The museum contains many interesting examples of folk architecture, including houses, barns, windmills and other traditional buildings. A particular attraction of the park are the interiors of old houses, the evangelical church, a blacksmith, a pottery stand, a windmill
as well as various temporary displays representing items of traditional craftsmanship and modern folk art and handicraft from the region.

Continue to Warsaw.

Overnight in Warsaw.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Departure

Departure from Warsaw, or continue to our tour of the Baltic States.

SZEROKIEJ DROGI!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast