

## Warsaw

### Overview

Warsaw is a historical gem alive with the stories told in its architecture, galleries and museums. Its palaces and castles do not merely represent physical traces of the past; they are scenes of the most important historic events affecting both the city and the State. The Royal Castle was once the kings' residence and the seat where the joint Polish-Lithuanian Sejm sessions were held. Destroyed during World War II, it was rebuilt in the early Baroque style and today it serves representative, national and cultural functions, inviting visitors to Royal Apartments, Courtier Rooms, Sejm Halls and art galleries. The Presidential Palace was constructed in the seventeenth century and it was here that the Warsaw Pact was signed. Now it serves as the presidential seat.

Always serving the idea of knowledge, the classical Staszic Palace is today the location of the Polish Academy of Science. The Ujazdowski Palace on the bank of Vistula houses the Centre Modern Art and the Royal Lazienki (Lazienki Królewskie) - a palace and park complex - witnessed dramatic events of the November Night as the Belvedere was Prince Konstanty's departure point fleeing from the insurrection. A hundred years ago, it was a place of residence for the presidents of the Republic of Poland.

Warsaw has around 30 museums, museums including the only Museum of Posters in the world, the Museum of Hunting and Riding and the Railway Museum. The most prestigious are the National Museum featuring a wide collection of works from antiquity to the present epoch and the Museum of the Polish Army portraying the history of arms. Among the more modest but nonetheless interesting museums you will find Chopin's Parlour, the artist's last apartment in Warsaw, as well as the Museum of Artistic and Precision Handicraft featuring beautiful items of everyday use from the past epochs. Technical enthusiasts will find Motorization Museum in Otrebusy very interesting. It houses around 300 vintage vehicles.

The sign of bronze letters embedded in marble, "Cunctis Patent Ingressus" meaning, "Admission free for everyone" greets visitors to the first public museum in Poland - "Grand Gallery". Opened in 1805, Polish rulers, gentry, aristocracy, statesman and scholars have gathered their works of art here at their own expense. It features a wide collection of paintings, sculpture, medals, graphic arts and works of applied and numismatic art.

Nowadays the inhabitants and visitors of Warsaw have the opportunity to admire a wide variety of paintings, sculptures and other fine arts. In addition, alongside these treasures of national culture, the city abounds in galleries small and large, thanks to which, citizens and guests can maintain a less formal contact with art. One such gallery is in the open air featuring photographs by the fence of Lazienki Park, along Aleje Ujazdowskie. What is more, in many cafés, guests can order desert and, buy a painting featured on the café wall. Galleries housed in the Centre of Modern Art in Ujazdowski Palace offer not only fascinating exhibitions, but also events including film screenings and avant-garde concerts. In addition to all this wonderful art, contemporary works of graphic art can be a perfect souvenir from Warsaw.