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**Welcome to Krakow**, the city so well-known, and yet full of mysteries waiting to be discovered. In Krakow everyone will find something for themselves: some will be captivated by its royal grandeur and the air of "living history", which surrounds the city, others will acquire a taste for the magical atmosphere of open-air cafes, and there will be also those who will experience here the craziest adventure ever discovering Krakow's night life.

In Krakow you can't be short of attractions, yet in order not to get lost in all that you may want to read this mini guidebook, where you can find the descriptions of the most important monuments and a handful of information about Krakow's customs, specialities and cuisine. These tips will help you get to know the characteristics of Krakow and its unusual inhabitants.

### **Sukiennice - The Cloth Hall (1)**

this is one of the most original, and certainly the oldest shopping centres in Krakow, which also houses the museum – located on the first floor. It's difficult to miss Sukiennice, as they are in the very centre of the Market Square. How come they were placed there? There has always been trade on the Market Square of Krakow – for centuries the inhabitants of Krakow have been gathering here, as it was possible to get here almost everything. However, such an accumulation of stands and stalls hastily put together didn't look good. Finally, the matter of aesthetics of the fair was taken over by the king Kasimir the Great, who decided to put up a concrete shopping centre called "Sukiennice". Although the look of Sukiennice has been changing throughout the centuries, they haven't lost their original character, and up till now you can buy there typical, Krakow's craft and souvenirs.

### **St. Florian Gate and Barbican (2)**

like every decent medieval city Krakow also used to have defensive walls surrounded by the moat, which protected the inhabitants against the invasion of hostile army. You could get to the city through one of eight gates, out of which there is only one remaining left – 34,5 meters high St. Florian Gate. In front of the Gate there is the Barbican, erected in the 15th century, and separated from the Gate by the ring of Planty – the park which now replaces the old defensive walls. Until the 19th century, due to its round shape, the Barbican had been called Rondel (a pot). The Barbican used to be connected with St. Florian Gate by the so called "neck", and it provided an additional protection of the entrance to the city from the east.

### **The Wawel Castle (3)**

Wawel Hill had been inhabited since prehistoric times and it is difficult to say exactly when it became a seat of magnates – both secular and clerical. Throughout the centuries Wawel had been not only the seat of Polish kings, but also famous characters, such as the Dragon of Wawel (whose den, or a Jurassic cave, can be still visited). The Wawel Castle thrived during the

reign of the Jagiellons, and it declined during the reign of Sigismund III Wasa. Since then the Wawel Hill has had many functions: during the partitions there were Austrian barracks on the Wawel Hill, during the Second World War the Castle was the residence of the governor general Hans Frank, and today Wawel is, first of all, a cluster of historical buildings including one of the most important Polish museums and The Wawel Cathedral.

### **The Market Square (4)**

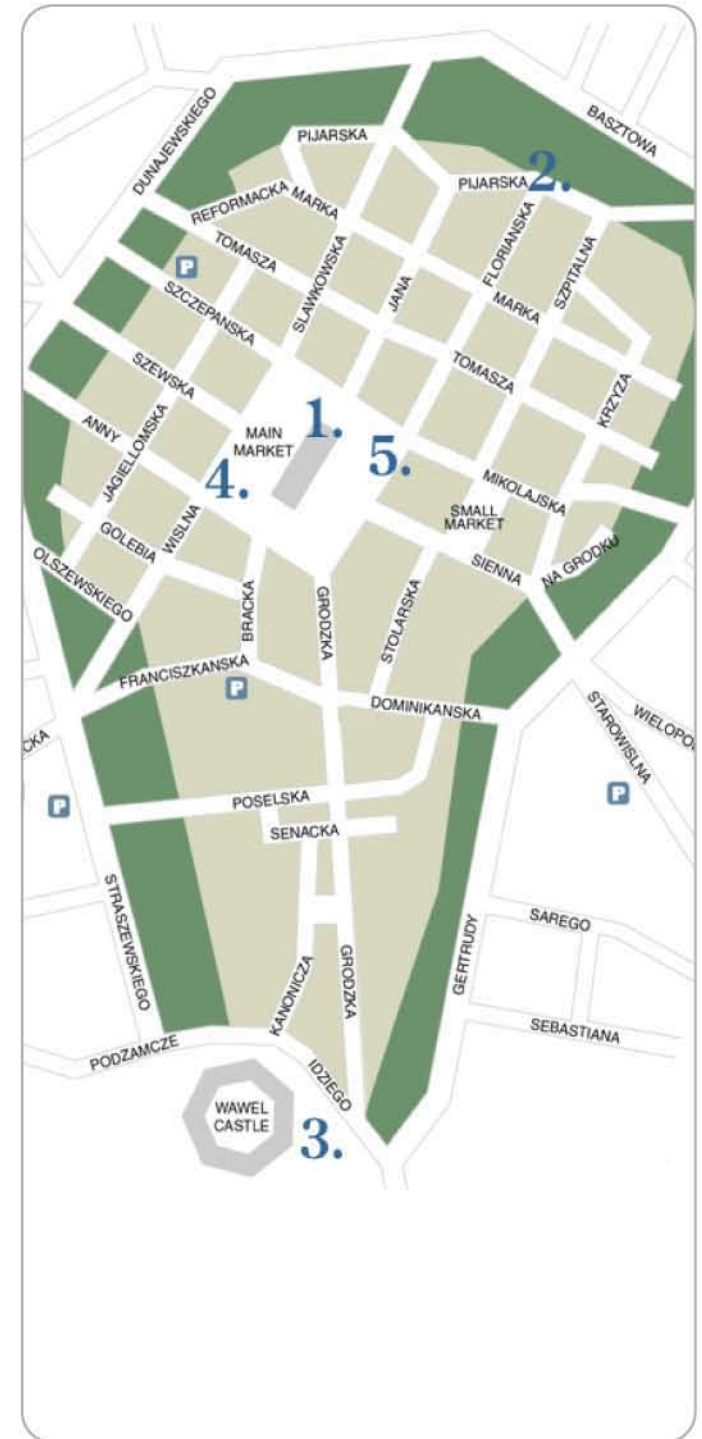
This is a huge square of 40 thousand square meters located in the heart of Krakow. It was created on the basis of the foundation document issued by the king Boleslaw Wstydlivy in 1257. The Market Square has always had a function of an open air trade market, but it was also a place where important celebrations were held: homage was paid to kings (e.g. famous Prussian homage) and historic oaths were sworn (e.g. Kościuszko's oath). Today the Market Square is the heart of Krakow vibrant night and day, the place of national celebrations, cultural events, concerts and social meetings.

### **St Mary's Church (5)**

It is probably the most famous Krakow's church. Situated at the beginning of Floriańska Street, it is overlooking the Market Square and its two towers are visible from the distance. It is in St Mary's Church where you can find the altar of the famous Nuremberg artist Veit Stoss (Wit Stwosz) and polichromies designed by the master Matejko and realised by his equally talented students – Wyspianski and Mehoffer. Every hour you can hear the bugle-call resounding in the Market Square and the nearby streets. It is played from the higher tower - called a "city tower" (miejska) or a "bugle-call tower" (hejnalica).

### **Kazimierz (6)**

The key to the understanding of the popularity that Kazimierz enjoys today is its unbelievable and lasting tolerance: two nations and two great religions existed here for centuries in harmony. It is in Kazimierz that the massive, Gothic churches of St Catherine's and Corpus Christi sprung up alongside synagogues. Kazimierz is Krakow's centre of artistic and intellectual ferment. The cafés, clubs, and galleries recently opened here in great numbers attract all those who find the Main Market Square and its close vicinity "too touristy". Everyone discovers their own aspect of the charmingly unique Kazimierz. Neighbours of exclusive hotels and classy restaurants include craftsmen's workshops: leatherworkers, shoemakers, and engravers. Places of religious worship stand alongside places that have recently acquired "cult" status. To experience this, simply take a walk near Plac Nowy, along ul. Miodowa and visit ul. Szeroka, where the Closing of Jewish Culture Festival - an open-air concert lasting into the small hours of the night - is held every year.



## Only in Krakow...

**Lajkonik** which is also called Zwierzyniecki Pony, is in fact, a strangely dressed man: a man with a pointed hat and on a white horse with... two legs. Lajkonik appears on the Market Square at least once a year, during eight days after Corpus Christi, but he can be also seen during various important events. The appearance of Lajkonik commemorates the defeat of Tatar invaders, who tried to conquer the city ages ago. So, Lajkonik prances around the Market Square every year and nudges the passer-bys with his wooden mace. Yet, nobody should fear that, as apparently, being hit by his mace brings luck for the whole year.

**Wianki (Chaplets)** One of the most popular Krakow's open-air events, called "Wianki" (Chaplets), takes place every year, on 24th June (the Night of St John), or around that date. The tradition of "wianki" refers to pagan rituals, according to which marriageable women used to make

## A Few Words About Inhabitants of Krakow...

**Who is the Inhabitant of Krakow?** Inhabitants of Krakow are not a uniform community, but they can be divided into four main subtypes:

- **Cracovians** are all those who simply live in Krakow, disregarding the fact if they were born here or if they came here on different stages of their lives and came to love this city so much that they stayed here for good.

- **Krakuses** Krakus is native Cracovian, the one who was born here and who has inherent Krakow's mentality. Even if Krakus goes away somewhere – to Warsaw or Paris, they will become Warsawian or Parisian, but it doesn't mean that they stop being Krakus. As one is Krakus until one dies.

- **Krakauers** These are Krakuses whose Krakow's family traditions go back to the times of partitions, and especially the reign of His Emperor Franz Josef I. Krakauers love exaggerated politeness (saying "my servile respect" instead of "good morning") and excessive addressing people using their titles

counting every cent. There is the whole set of jokes about Krakow's misers, and their exaggerated attitude to money, while in fact Cracovians have simply inherent talent for saving and respect for money.

**Krakow's Specialities** - Krakow's traditional cuisine was shaped by the 19th century Galician and Austrian (especially Viennese) influences, but some dishes have even older roots. Although in Krakow, as in every big city, you can try various dishes from many regions in the world (among others, there are Hungarian, Italian, Mexican and Vietnamese restaurants), still there are a few specialities typical of Krakow, which perfectly go together with the atmosphere of this unusual city.

- **pork tenderloin** in pepper-cognac sauce

- **borsch**, cooked on smoked bacon and seasoned with cream

- **duck in Krakow's fashion**, served with mushrooms and Krakow...

