



photo: Poland National Tourist Board

Essential Poland 2020



Essential Poland

Warsaw and Krakow: Two of Poland's Finest Cities

Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 6 Days

Your choice of dates, suggested start day: Saturday

Modern Poland is one of Europe's most exciting countries, brimming with lively urban centers, beautiful countryside, saw-toothed mountains, cultural treasures, and deep beliefs. Survey Poland's capital, animated Warsaw, and the former royal city of Krakow with its medieval town square and underground pubs. On this focused tour, visit four Polish UNESCO sites in six days – Warsaw's Old Town, Krakow's Historic Center, the Auschwitz/Birkenau camp, and the Wieliczka Salt Mine.



Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Saturday	Arrive Warsaw, Poland
Day 2, Sunday	Warsaw
Day 3, Monday	Warsaw • day train to Krakow
Day 4, Tuesday	Krakow • half-day trip to Auschwitz/Birkenau
Day 5, Wednesday	Krakow • half-day trip to Wieliczka Salt Mine
Day 6, Thursday	Depart Krakow



Tour Highlights

Warsaw

Krakow

Old Town (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Market Square, Lazienki Park, Royal Castle, Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Monument, Mila 18 Old Town & Market Square (UNESCO World Heritage Site), St. Mary's Church, Florian Gate, Wawel Castle, Collegium Maius of Jagiellonian University, Auschwitz/Birkenau (UNESCO World Heritage Site), Wieliczka Salt Mine (UNESCO World Heritage Site)

Daily Itinerary

Day One, Saturday

Arrive Warsaw, Poland

Arrive in **Warsaw** and following immigration and customs formalities, transfer to the hotel. The afternoon and evening are free to rest and refresh. Meet with your guide to get acquainted and discuss the touring program.

Founded in 1374, Warsaw became Poland's capital in 1596, when King Zygmunt III moved here from Krakow. For the next 200 years, Warsaw was beset on all sides by the Swedes, the Prussians, and the Russians. The late 18th century was Warsaw's "Golden Age" under King Stanislaw August Poniatowski, Poland's last king. Since then, except for a brief period between the two World Wars, Poland was not truly independent until 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved.

By the end of WWII, nearly 85% of Warsaw was reduced to rubble. The city has been rebuilt since then, including a painstaking recreation of the historic Old Town.

Meals: Independent – *Polonia Palace or similar*

Day Two, Sunday

Warsaw



This morning, set off on an exploration of Warsaw. Begin on foot with a tour of the **Old Town and Market Square**. Admire the facade of the powerful **Royal Castle**, home of Poland's kings from the 16th century up to Poland's partition; the Market Square, a beautiful pedestrian area filled with cafés, market stalls, and strolling townspeople; and Warsaw's neoclassical **Grand Theater**. The entire Old Town was meticulously reconstructed after its destruction at the hands of the Nazis after the Warsaw Uprising, and is now a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Visit the **Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising Monument**. This is the beginning



of “Memory Lane,” a trail of black marble stones commemorating some of the events and the people of the uprising. Follow the trail to **Mila 18**, the headquarters of the uprising, led by Mordechai Anielewicz. A pile of rubble is all that remains.

After an independent lunch, visit **Lazienki Park** along the banks of the Vistula River, a favorite place among citizens and tourists alike. This romantic park was landscaped in 1764 as part of the king’s residence. It features several palaces and pavilions, a temple, historic monuments, an amphitheater, and two orangeries. The Palace on the Water within the park is a monument of Polish history, with its splendid interior providing a lovely setting for cultural events, art exhibitions, and official state ceremonies. Visitors arriving between May and September proceed to the dramatic **Chopin monument**, surrounded by blooming roses. Benches are scattered throughout the greenery, and a piano sits on the dais next to the windswept sculpture of Chopin, who seems to be looking over his shoulder at the pianist. Internationally acclaimed pianists perform romantic Chopin pieces as the trees behind the monument rustle and sway.

Dinner is independent and the remainder of the evening is free to explore the city center.
Meals: B – *Polonia Palace or similar*

Day Three, Monday
Warsaw • day train to Krakow

Following breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the central station and catch a day train to Krakow. Enjoy views of the Polish countryside dotted with small private farms and fields.

Arrive in Krakow around midday and check into the hotel. Following some free time for an independent lunch, begin exploring Krakow with a guided **walking tour of this beautiful city**.

Poland’s royal capital from the 11th to the 16th century, Krakow was included on **UNESCO’s first World Heritage list in 1978**. Since the Tatar raids in the 13th century, the Old Town has remained mostly intact, the only large Polish city to escape the destruction of WWII. In its center is the largest remaining medieval town square in Europe, Rynek Glowny, the Main Market Square, laid out in 1257.

The **Main Market Square** is one of the finest urban designs of its kind. Its buildings have changed over the years, and today most of them look neoclassical, but the basic structures are older, as can be seen by their doorways, architectural details, and interiors.

Not far from the Main Market Square is the **Florian Gate**, the only one of the seven original gates left standing from the nearly two miles of walls that used to surround the Old Town. Just outside the gate is the **Barbican**, a squat and powerful brick



bastion that was originally connected to the gate by a drawbridge and walled passage. Its walls are nine feet thick. In the same corner of the square is the **Basilica of St Mary's** from whose tower the *hejnal* is sounded hourly. This bugle call was used to signal the raising and lowering of the great gate, and to warn the townspeople of attack. The familiar refrain is cut off in mid-phrase, in remembrance of a bugler who, legend tells us, was shot in the throat by a Tatar arrow as he was blowing the *hejnal*.

Independent dinner, and overnight at the hotel.

Meals: B – *Queen Boutique Hotel or similar*

Day Four, Tuesday

Krakow • half day trip to Auschwitz/Birkenau

This morning, continue exploring Krakow on foot with a visit to **Wawel Castle**. Wawel Castle on the hill above the Old Town was the seat of Polish kings for hundreds of years. The high ground of Wawel Hill has been occupied since the Paleolithic Age. The Polish kings didn't take up residence until the 11th century. In the 16th century, King Sigismund the Old had the castle complex designed and built into the Renaissance ensemble that it is today.

Gothic **Wawel Cathedral**, with its thousand years of history, has since the 14th century been the place where Polish kings were crowned at the beginning of their reigns, and buried at the end of them. Chapels and crypts have been added on over the years, nearly hiding the central nave. This is where Polish Pope John Paul II celebrated his first Mass as a priest.

Also visit the *Collegium Maius* of **Jagiellonian University**. The *Collegium Maius* is the university's original building, and now a museum. Items on display at the museum include a collection of "scientific objects

and curios" that was begun in the 15th century, permanent exhibitions of painting and sculpture, and treasures specific to the university, such as Nicolaus Copernicus' original tuition receipt from when he was a student here.



There is time for an independent lunch before a visit out of town to the **UNESCO site of Auschwitz**, located about an hour outside of Krakow. The Polish town of Oswiecim, whose German name is Auschwitz, has become a symbol of horror and genocide. In 1940, the German occupiers took over this former army barracks and

populated it with Polish political prisoners. As the war years went on, the Nazis expanded and refined the camp, imprisoning Jews from all over Europe here before sending them on to their deaths at nearby Birkenau. The **Martyrdom Museum at Auschwitz** is a ghastly reminder of the inhumanity of which



humans are capable. Join a group tour here, with up to 30 travelers and an expert guide. Earpieces are used to ensure you can hear the guide.

Return to Krakow this evening with the remainder of the day spent independently – to reflect, rest, and explore. Dinner this evening is independent.

Meals: B – *Queen Boutique Hotel or similar*

Day Five, Wednesday

Krakow • half day trip to Wieliczka Salt Mine

This morning, head for the outskirts of the city again for a visit to the **Wieliczka Salt Mine**, where miners have worked more than 700 years. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, miners and sculptors carved out beautiful chambers and chapels on the first three levels. A highlight of the trip down the mines is the fabulous Chapel of the Blessed Kinga, where everything, including statuary and chandeliers, is carved from salt. A **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, the mine displays 700 years of evolving technology and artistry. The touring here will be with other travelers, up to a group size of 35 with each traveler having his own ear piece.



Return to the city center for free time to explore independently. Head to Cloth Hall in the main market square to shop for all kinds of Polish souvenirs. Lunch and dinner are independent, and overnight is at the hotel.

Meals: B – *Queen Boutique Hotel or similar*

Day Six, Thursday

Depart Krakow

After breakfast, the program ends with a departure transfer from the hotel to the airport.

Meals: B

Tour Days of Operation

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2020. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices

Four star hotels: Polonia Palace Hotel in Warsaw, Queen Boutique Hotel in Krakow, or similar

Tour start date in November, December:

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,775 per person, twin share



Single supplement, from \$575
Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,150

Tour start date in July, August:
2 traveler minimum, from \$2,875 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$575
Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,250

Tour start date in April, May, June, September, October:
2 traveler minimum, from \$2,975 per person, twin share
Single supplement, from \$575
Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,350

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Please call for pricing if interested in upgrading to 5-star properties.

Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and by start day, and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Hotel room category upgrades and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Your Private Journey Includes

- Accommodations per the itinerary. **Please call for upgrade rates.** All room types, even in upgraded properties, are standard entry-level doubles or twins; please call for room category upgrade pricing and information.
- Breakfast daily. Lunches and other dinners are left open to allow independent exploration.
- One arrival and one departure airport transfer. (Additional arrival and departure transfers available at additional cost.) MIR will arrange for travelers to be met upon arrival and seen off on departure, whether we make your air arrangements or not.
- Ground transportation throughout itinerary by private vehicle (size of vehicle depends on number of travelers in your group).
- Evening cultural performances per the itinerary.
- Guided sightseeing tours and entrance fees as outlined in itinerary.
- Services of experienced, English-speaking local guides, drivers, and other staff.
- Complete pre-departure information including detailed packing list, reading list, *Touring with MIR* handbook with country-specific information, maps, and travel tips.
- Assistance booking your custom flight arrangements (on request; please note that international airfare is not included in the land tour cost).
- Final document packet including luggage tags, final updates, and more.

Not Included

- International airfare or taxes/fuel surcharges.
- Meals not specified as included in the itinerary.
- Single supplement charge, if requested or required.
- Baggage handling.
- Items of a personal nature (phone calls, email, laundry, alcohol, excess baggage, etc).
- Gratuities to local guides and drivers.
- Visa/passport fees, airport departure fees.
- Expenses incurred as a result of delay, modification, or extension of a tour due to causes beyond MIR's control.



- Travel and trip cancellation insurance.

Interested in travel insurance?

To learn more about all the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp or contact Travel Guard at 1-877-709-5596.

Start Planning Next Year Now

2021 Flexible Essential Trip – Classic Private Journey – 6 Days

At the time of writing, the land itinerary for this program next year is projected to be generally as depicted for this year. Please call if you're ready to book now.

Private departures of this land itinerary can begin on the Saturday of your choice in 2021. Please note you will need to depart the U.S. at least one day prior to your tour start date due to airline flight schedules.

Private Journey Prices – 2021

Four star hotels: Polonia Palace Hotel in Warsaw, Queen Boutique Hotel in Krakow, or similar

Tour start date in November, December:

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,795 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$625

Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,195

Tour start date in July, August:

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,895 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$625

Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,295

Tour start date in April, May, June, September, October:

2 traveler minimum, from \$2,995 per person, twin share

Single supplement, from \$625

Solo traveler rate, based on single room occupancy \$5,395

Hotel Upgrade Prices

Please call for pricing if interested in upgrading to 5-star properties.

Flexible Essential trip prices may vary by season and are subject to hotel availability for your travel dates. Extensions and additional nights are available on request. Contact us at 1-800-424-7289 for more information.

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Flexible Essential Private Trips are compact, well-designed, private tour itineraries – researched and ready to book on the dates you choose. They work perfectly as brief overviews of a country or as effortless



extensions to group tours – great for solo travelers, couples, or private parties who prefer to travel independently but appreciate a savvy, pre-designed program.

Flexible Essential Trips feature most of the inclusions of our escorted small group tours with just a few exceptions: tours are led by local MIR guides, without an additional tour manager; fewer meals are pre-planned, so you can eat where and when you want; and baggage handling and gratuities are left to your discretion.

Important Notes: Is This Trip Right For You?

It is important to keep in mind that while Poland is fairly modern and cosmopolitan, some aspects may not live up to the standards North American travelers expect. Services are improving in the region; nevertheless, you may encounter problems with plumbing, bureaucratic service, road conditions, unpaved sidewalks, uneven surfaces and steps and availability of public restrooms.

While this program is designed to be comfortable for travel in this region, this is an adventuresome tour. It is rated as **rigorous touring** due to the daily walking involved the general challenges of traveling internationally in unfamiliar environments. This itinerary features a significant amount of touring on foot. Some streets are of cobblestone, and some attractions are only accessible via steep staircases. Museums rarely have elevators. **Please note:** Wieliczka Salt Mine is accessed by a 10-story descent by stairs only. (Elevator access for the descent may be possible at additional cost, but cannot be guaranteed due to the logistics in the mine). Expect crowded conditions and a long climb down. The elevator is used for the ascent at the end of the tour. Touring at Auschwitz/Birkenau and at Wieliczka Salt Mine is done with a mixed public group of other travelers, with expert site guide and personal ear piece, rather than as a private excursion.

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this schedule is accurate. However, trip itineraries are always subject to change. We do our best to inform you in advance of any changes, but due to the nature of travel in Central Europe, this may not always be possible.

Are You Prepared?

A Travel Guard travel insurance plan can help cover your vacation investment, offset expenses from travel mishaps and provide you with emergency travel assistance. To learn more about all of the benefits of purchasing a Travel Guard travel insurance plan, please visit www.travelguard.com/mircorp

Please read the U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory regarding travel to Poland here: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/poland-travel-advisory.html>

If you are not already enrolled in STEP, Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, a free service to enroll your trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate, please consider enrolling. For more information: <https://step.state.gov/step/>

Weather

This part of Europe has a travel season of roughly May to September. Spring and summer are the best times to travel to Poland. Travelers should expect temperatures in May to range from 50-65 degrees Fahrenheit, and in June and July 55-75 degrees Fahrenheit. Rain and slightly cooler temperatures at night are possible.

Please remember, weather at all times of year has an element of the unpredictable. This information comes from weatherbase.com and is based on data from previous temperatures on record.



It is always advisable to check with weatherbase.com closer to your departure date for current conditions and forecasts for the specific region you will be visiting.

International Airfare

MIR's in-house, full-service air department is available to assist with your air travel needs. Check with MIR before booking air on your own, as we are happy to research and compare the best fares available through multiple channels. Airfare varies depending on a wide variety of factors, such as dates of travel and seasonality, seat availability, special airline promotions, how restrictive ticket changes are, how long the fares can be held without purchase, routing considerations such as stopovers and more. Tour dates are based on the land tour only. Our preferred carriers for this tour are Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, Swiss Air, and LOT Polish Airlines, as they offer convenient itineraries and competitive rates from multiple cities across the U.S.

Please call us at 1-800-424-7289 to discuss air options and routings for this program and to request a quote for your specific plans and dates of travel. We will be happy to put together a no-obligation suggested air itinerary and estimate for you at your request.

Visas

U.S. passport holders do not require a visa for Poland. Citizens of other countries may require a Polish visa; please contact us for more details. Visa requirements and prices are always subject to change.

Pre- and Post-Tour Extensions

You may want to extend your time in Poland with a visit to Wroclaw, or a pre-tour in the northern city of Gdansk. The Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, or the Baltics also make great add-ons. Call us for more details.

Also Nearby...

For more tours in this part of the world, you may want to check out the following:

Flexible Essential Trips – Classic Private Journeys

Essential Ukraine, 8 days. Ukraine is the new borderland between Europe and Russia. Explore this resilient region influenced by Polish princes, Cossack *hetmen*, Turkish khans, Russian communists and Ukrainian poets and nationalists.

Essential St. Petersburg, 7 days. St. Petersburg, home of the czars and their courts, is a rich repository of extravagant palaces, brilliant museums and renowned theaters overflowing with music and dance. Its fashionable boulevards and serene canals glisten in the “White Nights” of summer and dazzle on sunny winter days.

Essential Russia, 7 days. A compact and compelling survey of Russia's political capital, Moscow, and its cultural capital, St. Petersburg, this tour communicates the character of Western Russia in a succinct and meaningful series of experiences.

Essential Balkans, 14 days. Visit seven Balkan countries in 14 days on this compact overland journey through history. A remarkably complex region, the mountainous Balkan Peninsula is fascinating, diverse and incredibly beautiful.



Small Group Tours

Bulgaria & Romania: Frescoes & Fortresses, 16 days. Explore the complex history and fascinating culture of Bulgaria and Romania, two Balkan countries whose rugged terrain and consequent isolation have helped preserve their heritage. Discover the luminous frescoes of the painted monasteries, breathe in the fragrance of the Valley of the Roses and spend an afternoon visiting with villagers in a tiny Transylvanian town.

Russia's Imperial Capitals & Ancient Villages, 11 days. Discover where Russian art, architecture and culture began. In between the urban centers of Moscow and St. Petersburg, experience the Russian countryside. The oldest and loveliest churches in Russia, Sergiev Posad's wooden crafts and Fedoskino's glowing lacquer boxes all put a shine on Russia's Golden Ring.

Kaliningrad & The Baltics, 13 days. This overland journey roves the countryside and urban centers of four distinct nations: the three independent Baltic countries – Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia – and Kaliningrad, an exclave of Russia.

Belarus, Ukraine & Moldova, 14 days. Traverse a little-known region that has changed hands from its earliest history. Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova are three of the least frequented and least familiar countries in Europe. Time slowed drastically here after the devastation of WWII, but these beautiful countries are emerging from the shadows.

Conditions of Participation

Your participation on a MIR Corporation trip is subject to the conditions contained in the 2020 Tour Reservation Form and Release of Liability and Assumption of Risk Agreement. Please read this document carefully and contact us with any questions.

Cancellation and Refund Policy

Payment Terms: Non-refundable deposits are accepted by check, Visa, MasterCard, or American Express. Final land payments may be made by check or credit card for reservations made directly with MIR. If booking through a travel agent, please contact your agent to find out what form of payment they accept. (MIR can accept final payment from travel agents by agency check only.) Airfares are subject to change until ticketed; payment policies vary by carrier.

If you cancel your trip, please notify MIR in writing. Upon MIR's receipt of notice the following charges apply to land tours (policies for air tickets, custom group trips vary).

Flexible Essential Trips

Cost of cancellation, if received:

61 or more days prior to departure, deposit due or paid in full of \$750;

31-60 days prior to departure, 50% of land tour cost;

30 days prior to or after trip departure, no refund.

References

We encourage you to speak directly with satisfied past travelers. Please request a list of references.



Why MIR?

Regional knowledge is crucial to the success of any trip to our corner of the world. MIR combines detailed information about geography and infrastructure, history and art, language and culture, with the depth of knowledge that comes only from decades of regional experience. You may wonder how we differ from other tour operators...

Destination Specialization

MIR focuses exclusively on the exceptional region at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. This area has been our overriding passion since 1986; we don't do the rest of the world. Our hard-earned expertise gained over the last three decades can take you from end to end of the largest country in the world – Russia – and to all of its neighbors. We specialize in travel to Siberia, the Silk Route, St. Petersburg & Beyond. Our destinations include: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, the Baltics (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia), Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Turkey, Mongolia, China, Tibet, and Central/East Europe (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia).

30 Years of Experience

A travel company doesn't last more than 30 years in the business without a solid track record. MIR has helped thousands of individuals achieve their travel goals. Our dedication and experience have earned us their trust and the trust of many well-respected institutions. Today MIR is the preferred tour operator for museum, alumni and special interest organizations across the country.



Recommended & Respected

MIR has twice been rated one of the “Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth” by *National Geographic Adventure*. Several of our tours have won awards in top travel publications, such as *Outside* magazine and *National Geographic Traveler*. Our trips have been featured in books such as *Riding the Hula Hula to the Arctic Ocean* and *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*.


More Questions?

Please feel free to call us with questions at 1-800-424-7289, 8:30am-5:30pm Pacific Time.

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