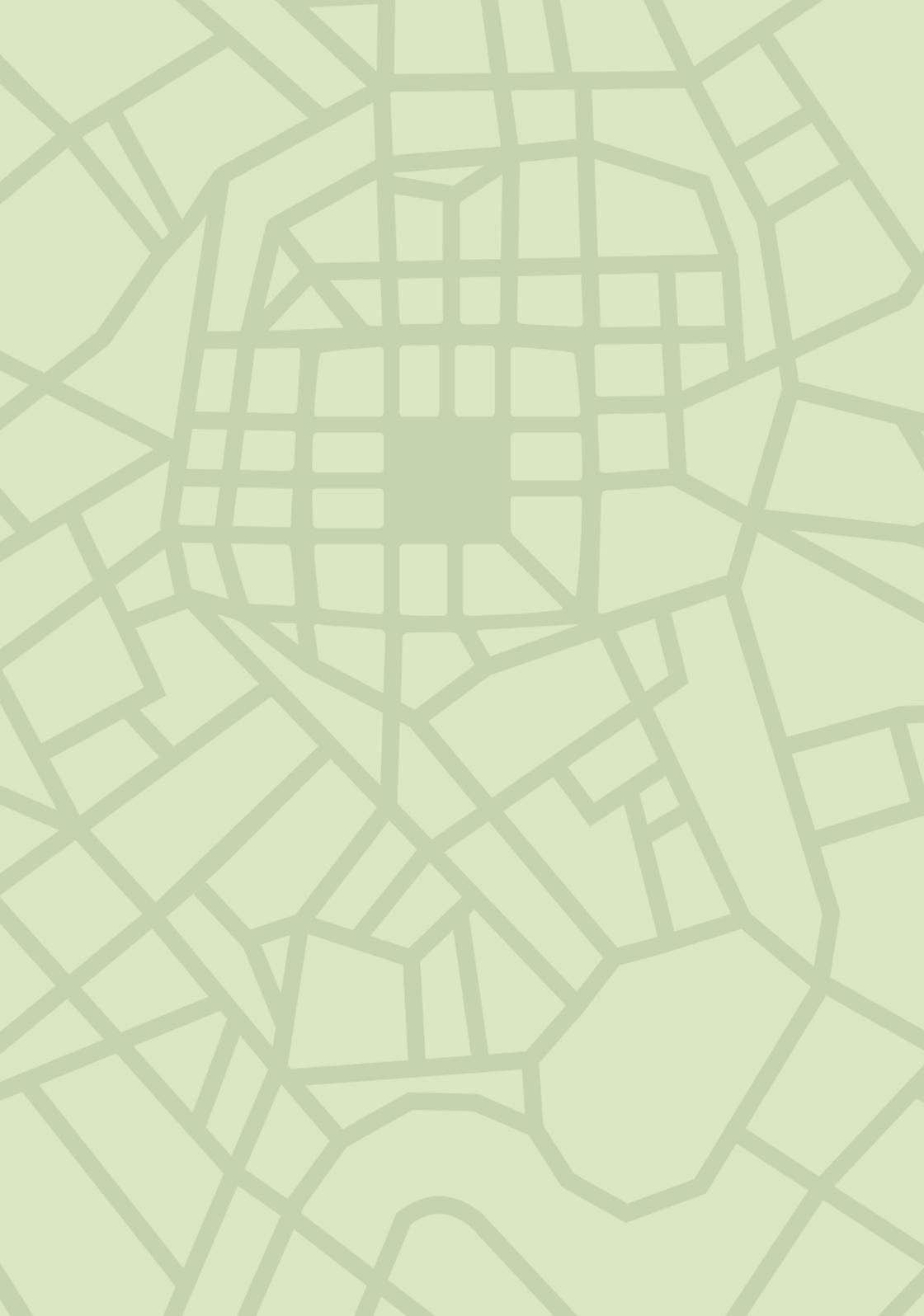


A GREEN
VIEW OF
KRAKÓW



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A Green View of Kraków



Are you heading to Kraków, or are you already here? Are you just passing through or staying for a while – or maybe you’re here for good? It may be that it is now Spring, and the city presents itself in bloom – filled with colours and fragrances. Perhaps Summer has already arrived – at this time, the forests and meadows start to bear fruit and the trees provide soothing shade. Or maybe Autumn has brought her palette – and we are in Kraków’s autumn of the painters, when the city boasts the colours of royalty, from purple to gold. If Winter has come, Kraków isn’t green. But in return, the barren nature makes it extremely theatrical. Whatever the season, Kraków is beautiful.

As time goes by, there is more and more greenery here. The choices available to the stroller or cyclist are vast – from parks that have contributed to Kraków’s history and even its mythology, through intimate gardens hidden behind old walls, to green areas that respond to the challenges of our times. Nearly always, while taking full advantage of the city’s natural beauty, we remain close to culture here. The green trail leads us through historical and contemporary Kraków – both the one whose images are known all over the world and the less obvious, but equally fascinating one.

So it is time, dear Kraków lovers – present and future – to put on your green glasses. You will see Krakow through them – even more beautiful than usual.



Planty

Once Upon a Time, There Were Walls Here

Planty is the oldest park in Kraków. This green belt is from 40 to 120 metres wide, covers an area of approximately 21 hectares, and has a 4-kilometre-long perimeter. It takes about half an hour to walk along it at a slow pace. However, it is worth spending much more time there. One reason is that from almost any point in Planty Park the most beautiful places in the historic centre of Kraków can be reached in just a few minutes. Here, all paths lead to some interesting destination. And the choice is huge. Planty Park is not only a green belt encircling the heart of the Old Town, but also a space where nature coexists with culture. Strolling today through Planty Park in Kraków, you can encounter history and art, the social and popular history of the city, and the art of landscaping.

Planty Park was established in the 19th century on the site of the former moat and city walls, the course of which is presented on modern information boards placed in the park. As early as the second half of the 17th century, the area adjacent to the fortifications was used as a venue for recreation and entertainment. However, it was neither a beautiful landscape nor a safe place. There were piles of rubbish near the dilapidated walls, and the land was swampy and overgrown with weeds. Poor people lived there. Crime and disease spread. Some remedy had to be found for this problem. In 1806, a decision was made to demolish the old city walls and to level the ground. Finally, local authorities decided, in line with popular trends in Europe at that time, to create a garden on the site of the former fortifications in Kraków called the plantations (*plantacye*).

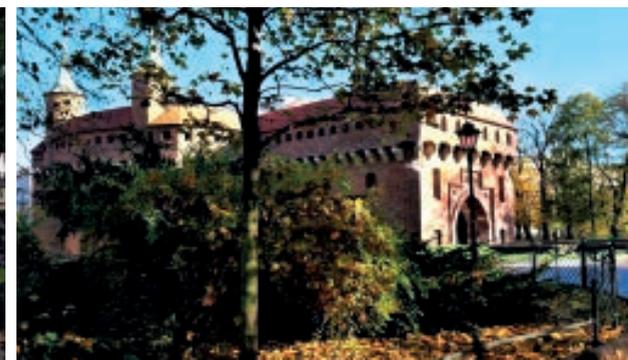
City gardens were designed in the 1820s and 1830s according to the classicist concept developed by their main originator, Professor Feliks Radwański. In 1816, Radwański postulated the preservation of some fragments of the city walls. According to him, these fragments provided

good protection against snowstorms that caused lung diseases in women and children. Radwański also argued that the winds blowing from the Kleparz district could immodestly lash out at the dresses of noble ladies. Thanks to his efforts, Brama Floriańska, Barbakan and other fragments of the city walls were saved from demolition. Work on establishing the park started in 1820. It was supervised by the Financial Committee, with Florian Straszewski, a well-known social activist, among its members. At that time, Kraków was a small and poor city. Straszewski took responsibility for the financial aspect of the project, and had to raise funds for this initiative. He did a lot to complete his mission, and often paid workers out of his own pocket.

Kraków recognized Straszewski's merits by awarding him a medal for "sacrifice and efforts in making the city beautiful". One of the streets running along Planty up to Wawel Hill was also named after him. Near the Main Railway Station, a monument to Straszewski was erected, and it was not only the first obelisk in Planty, but also the first monument in the open space of the city.

The placement of the obelisk commemorating Straszewski gave rise to other monuments in Planty. They commemorate kings and queens, such as Queen Jadwiga and King Władysław Jagiełło, but also distinguished people, e.g. Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński, an outstanding writer and translator, and the comedy writer and journalist Michał Bałucki. Other obelisks were also placed to commemorate literary heroes, e.g. those from works by famous Polish romantics, such as Grażyna and Litawor – characters from Adam Mickiewicz's poem "Grażyna", and Lilla Weneda – the heroine of a drama by Juliusz Słowacki. The newest monument, which was erected in 2014 in Kraków's Planty Park, is a monument to Jan Matejko, an outstanding Polish artist representing history painting. The sculpture depicts Matejko sitting in an armchair surrounded by a picture frame.

The beginning of tree planting in Planty Park dates back to 1792, when on 3 May, the Tree of Freedom (*Drzewo Wolności*) was planted between



today's Szpitalna Street and the entrance to the underpass leading to the Main Railway Station. This was done on the first anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May 1791, the first in Europe and the second – after the American constitution – in the world to regulate the legal system. The elm was not chosen accidentally for the Tree of Freedom, since it symbolizes reconciliation. Each negotiation must end with an agreement under the elm canopy, and enemies become best friends.



The Tree of Freedom in Planty Park did not live to the old age of 200 years, as is often the case with elms. It was cut down in the 1930s. An oak tree now grows on its site, a symbol of strength and wisdom, and – what is especially important – durability and longevity. An oak can live up to 500 years. It is a royal tree. In the contemporary stand of Planty there are many oaks that witnessed local historic events.

At first, the pleasant shade on Planty paths on sunny days was created by 200 poplars and 290 horse chestnuts. The Italian poplar dominated the landscape of Kraków in the mid-19th century. The beauty of these slender trees, which can often grow to 38 metres tall, is ephemeral since they die back quite quickly. Nevertheless, single specimens of Italian poplar can still be admired in Planty Park.

Around 1830, benches were installed in Planty, first made of stone, then wood. Visitors could now have a good rest in the shade of tree canopies. With benches in place the park looked like an open-air urban lounge. Now it was possible to sit down for a moment for a chat, to watch Kraków's life go by at strolling pace, or read a book or newspaper.

In October 2013, Kraków became the second non-English speaking city in the world to be awarded the fully-deserved status of UNESCO's City of Literature. At that time, literary benches were set up next to standard benches in Planty Park. They primarily commemorate novelists and poets associated with the city, but also literary works set in Kraków. These benches are named after great classics, such as Jan Kochanowski, a Polish poet of the Renaissance period, and Honoré de



Balzac, but also Nobel Prize winners, such as Czesław Miłosz, Herta Müller, William Styron, Wiśława Szymborska, and representatives of almost all genres and many literary periods. The list is very long, which reflects the richness and diversity of Kraków's literary heritage. Each bench bears the name of the commemorated person as well as a QR code. By scanning this code with a mobile device, we reach a website with biographical information (including an English version), passages from books, and audio materials, often read by the authors themselves.

There is another, unusual, bench in Planty, near Wawel Hill. Two men are sitting on it and having a lively conversation. You can meet them here at any time of the day or night, set in the same pose. These are bronze sculptures of Stefan Banach and Otto Nikodym, famous mathematicians from the first half of the 20th century. They used to have lively conversations about mathematical problems while strolling around the Kraków park.

The features and design of Planty Park have evolved over the years, and most changes concerned the type of vegetation and its arrangement

on the garden map. The landscape was modified according to existing trends in gardening. Therefore, after 1840, most solutions referred to the English style, then neo-romantic features were introduced around 1880, followed by Art Nouveau, and modernist solutions were used in the 1930s.

But most importantly, Malecki divided the Planty space into eight separate gardens, and each of them had a different style. Thanks to this, the landscape has become diversified and full of surprises for human eyes. It was no longer a park, but a real theatre of nature. A microcosm of nature in which wandering people can forget that they are – after all – in the heart of a busy city. Planty Park has become a very important place on the map of Kraków. This is evidenced by the fact that gardeners who looked after the park were under a strict obligation to stay on site even at night. In the event of illness, they had to organize a replacement.

Malecki planted new species of trees and shrubs. He took care of harmony in the whole park, but also kept each of the eight gardens distinct, specific and unique. Apart from lime trees, maples, willows, birches, oaks and poplars, fruit trees were also introduced in Planty Park, including pears, mulberries, plums and cherries. There were also many conifers, such as fir, spruce and pine. Planted shrubs, apart from their visual qualities, also produced beautiful fragrances, especially in spring. Jasmines, lilacs and magnolias have become the source of natural fragrance in the heart of the urban space. And last but not least, exotic trees like the Turkish hazel and the Japanese pagoda tree were introduced in Planty. The variety of colours, textures, shapes and fragrances in Planty stimulated the senses and brought relief to citizens who craved contact with nature. Just like it does today.

Soon, however, difficult times came for both people and nature. During World War II, Germans gave an order to cut shrubs in Planty Park to get a better field of view and control of the local streets. Metal elements of the park fence were smelted and turned into heavy tanks called "Tigers". In the difficult post-war period, Poland's priority was to rise from ruins. When towns and cities are in ruins, the major thing is to provide people with shelter, not to restore parks. In fact, Planty Park came back in favour only in 1986, when the National Council of the City of Kraków made a groundbreaking decision to restore five of Kraków's parks, including Planty.



Today, Planty Park is divided into eight gardens, as it was in historical times. On the one hand, each of them has its own distinguishing features and specific character. On the other hand, they all form a diverse but harmonious and soothing landscape. Interestingly, individual gardens take their names not from the vegetation that dominates in each of them, but from the buildings in the vicinity of which they are located. This is also proof of a close link between nature and culture in Kraków.

Now is the time to stroll across Planty Park and visit its eight gardens.

Right at the foot of Wawel Hill, from the side of the entrance gate to the Royal Castle, there is **Ogród Wawel (the Wawel Garden)**. It covers the area from Podzamcze Street to Franciszkańska Street. This is the widest part of Planty. Most of this garden was designed in the English style, hence the irregular paths and groups of plants. There are many old and exotic trees in this area, including a magnificent tulip tree.

The landscape of Planty Park near Wawel Hill may seem familiar even to those visiting this place for the first time. It was the inspiration for the famous painting *Planty o świcie/Planty at Dawn* (1894) by Stanisław Wyspiański, an outstanding artist representing Polish modernism. It is a beautiful and disturbing work of art. The blurred image of Wawel Castle is in the background behind the dangerously spreading branches of trees growing in rows. The dawn breaks the contours of reality. Planty Park becomes an oneiric vision.

Everyone can experience similar sensations in real life. It just takes a few steps, moving from Poselska Street towards the Royal Castle. The branches of the trees become more and more scarce, they open up before the eyes of a stroller almost like a curtain, to finally give way to a spectacular view. We are at the foot of Wawel Hill, which rises



above us with the majestic building at its summit. The view is impressive and truly royal.

The building of the Higher Theological Seminary of the Archdiocese of Kraków, where the first students were admitted in 1603, is on one side of the Wawel Garden. On the other side, there is a villa built in 1886-1888. Its architecture was clearly inspired by the Renaissance style, and hence it was called “Little Wawel”, and this name caused a lot of controversy among the local people. Right behind the villa there are stone owl figures, which as a symbol of wisdom refer to the person of Maurycy Straszewski, an outstanding professor of philosophy, and back then the owner of the building.

Walking away from Wawel and approaching Poselska Street, we go along a high wall that hides a real treasure from our eyes: Ogród Muzeum Archeologicznego (the Archaeological Museum Garden), one of the largest and most beautiful gardens in the Old Town. Obviously, its name comes from the Archaeological Museum, which is the oldest museum in Kraków and is located just around the corner, at No. 3 Senacka Street. The garden was established near the former monastery of Discalced Carmelite Brothers, on the plan of a Late Renaissance grid: a square piece of land is intersected by symmetrically arranged paths, with a round bed filled with plants in the centre. In this harmonious and serene place we find old trees, shrubs, perennials and grass. Roses are planted along the paths. It is a perfect setting for the artistic and scientific meetings and concerts that are often organised here. However, the most remarkable thing about the Archaeological Museum Garden is that once you cross its walls you forget about the whole world. But there is still a beautiful view of Wawel

Hill from the garden paths. You may even fall for the illusion of being in the castle gardens.

From the Archaeological Museum Garden we go back to Planty, cross Poselska Street, and in a moment we go by the monastery and the Gothic Church of St. Francis of Assisi, the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, which dates back to the 13th century. There is a beautiful flower bed nearby. Inside the church, there are works by outstanding artists, including the Art Nouveau polychrome decoration by Stanisław Wyspiański. The work was not finished, because it was too innovative for the tastes of the commission that supervised the restoration of the church. Near the Franciscan monastery, during the Christmas period, a nativity scene with live animals is organised every year.

There is also a square that informally belongs to Planty Park. During the pilgrimages of John Paul II to Poland, crowds of people gathered at this venue. They were eager to meet the Pope, who was then staying at the Kraków Bishops' Palace in Franciszkańska Street. Called by the faithful, the Holy Father approached the window and engaged in spontaneous, often humorous conversations with them. And there are still many people who want to see this famous papal window with their own eyes. By the way, it is also worth taking a look at the courtyard of the palace and seeing the well-established old Japanese ginkgo tree.

Strolling farther, clockwise, we reach **Ogród Uniwersytet (the University Garden)**. It covers the area between Franciszkańska and Świętej Anny Streets. From the Middle Ages up to the last century, it was the centre of academic life.

On the left side, on the outer ring of Planty, we pass the building of the Kraków Philharmonic, named after Karol Szymanowski, an outstanding Polish composer from the beginning of the 20th century. Almost in front of



this building there is a water fountain named “Chopin’s Piano”, a sculpture designed by the late Maria Jarema, a Kraków-based avant-garde artist. This was the winning design in the competition for a monument dedicated to Fryderyk Chopin, announced in 1949, but it was not until over 50 years later that it was placed in Planty Park in Kraków. “Chopin’s Piano” is a beautiful symbolic fusion of the highest and noblest art – music – with a natural element – a stream of water. Nearby, at the end of Wiślna Street, there is an admirable natural monument: a 130-year-old plane tree with an impressive circumference of 465 centimetres.

We move on to see the magnificent university building of Collegium Novum on the right side. This neo-Gothic building seems to tower above Planty. But there is another equally monumental feature: the Oak of Freedom in front of the building, which was planted in 1919 to commemorate Poland regaining independence after 123 years of partitions.

Just behind Collegium Novum, it is worth turning for a moment into Gołębia Street, and then left into Jagiellońska Street, parallel to Planty. You can visit Collegium Maius, which for almost 500 years was the main seat of Jagiellonian University, but also visit Ogród Profesorski (the Professors’ Garden). It was founded in the 15th century. At that time, the fruit and vegetables harvested there reached the tables of scholars. Today, in addition to the beautifully arranged vegetation, there are sculptures of professors, as well as a sundial and a model of the armillary sphere.

We return to Planty. We cross Świętej Anny Street with the Baroque church of St. Anna. It is closely connected with Jagiellonian University and the academic community.

The University Garden, obviously located close to the university, neighbours **Ogród Pałac Sztuki (the Palace of Fine Arts Garden)**, which covers the area from Świętej Anny Street to Świętego Tomasza Street. The name of the garden indicates its proximity to the Art Nouveau Palace of Arts. It houses the office of the Society of Friends of Fine Arts, the oldest organisation of its kind in this part of Europe. The palace is also an art gallery, and art auctions are organised there.

A special place in this part of Planty is a monument, surrounded with lush vegetation, to Artur Grottger, one of the most outstanding painters of Polish Romanticism. It was the collection of works by Grottger that was used by the Society of Fine Arts to pay the city for the plot of land on which the Palace of Fine Arts was built.

Culture is ubiquitous in this area. Near the Palace of Arts, on Jagiellońska Street, there is the oldest theatre building in Poland – the legendary Helena Modrzejewska Stary Teatr, which continues to set new trends in the performing arts. Along the line of the Planty ring, located next to Szczepański Square, there is **Bunkier Sztuki (the Art Bunker)**. This is the first – and until the 1990s the only – modern building erected in the Old Town. It is also one of very few examples of Brutalist architecture, a style characterised by very rough shapes. The most outstanding contemporary artists of international fame exhibited their works at the Art Bunker, including Magdalena Abakanowicz, Tadeusz Kantor, and Katarzyna Kozyra.



We leave the Garden of Arts and walk to **Ogród Florianka (the Florianka Garden)**, which stretches between Świętego Tomasza and Sławkowska Streets. Most features of its landscape architecture are in the neo-romantic and naturalistic styles. The name of the garden comes from “Florianka” – the former seat of the Mutual Insurance Society at No. 6 Basztowa Street, whose patron was Saint Florian.

The first “skyscraper” erected in Kraków, an example of modernist architecture, towers over the Florianka Garden at the intersection of Szczepański Square with Reformacka Street. Before the war, it used to house the Municipal Savings Bank. The building has seven floors, and its design violated the law issued in 1936 by the general conservation officer for historic buildings, stating that it was forbidden to erect structures higher than five floors in the Old Town. However, the management of the Bank resorted to a trick: in three days and three nights, the construction workers built two additional floors and presented the city authorities with a *fait accompli*.

The most valuable historic buildings in this part of Planty are the monastery and the Reformed Franciscan Church of St. Kazimierz the Prince. The construction process of these buildings was complicated and took several years. The monks fell into a dispute with the city authorities so deep that even the mediation of King Jan Kazimierz did not help. Their project also had to be supported by the queen. However, perseverance in pursuing the goal finally paid off and the buildings were erected. The church is a beautiful example of Baroque architecture, but also a unique place. There are catacombs inside, where, because of a specific microclimate, dead bodies undergo natural mummification. The bodies of people who died in the 17th century have been preserved here in almost perfect condition to this day. In monastic books, there are records of 730 lay people and 250 monks buried here. This place hides many extraordinary stories of people who are buried here:

a bride who had been poisoned by her family for a misalliance in the 18th century, a Napoleonic soldier in damaged yet complete gear – a uniform and rifle, and Countess Domicella Skalska, who bequeathed all of her fortune to the monastery, thus ensuring herself a place of eternal rest next to her beloved.

We cross Sławkowska Street, where the **Ogród Barbakan (the Barbican Garden)** begins. Here we find a diverse landscape with classicist, Art Nouveau, naturalistic and modernist features. It is here that the largest pond in Planty is located.

One of the most interesting and most characteristic places in this garden is the square around Barbakan – a part of the city’s fortifications built at the end of the 15th century. Currently, it houses the Museum of Kraków. Opposite Barbakan, on the side of the Main Square, there is the medieval Florian’s Gate – the main gate of seven that were used by people arriving in the city. It creates a specific architectural frame for a beautiful, living picture: through this gate we can observe – as if through a keyhole – the busy Floriańska Street. It used to be the starting point for the Royal Road (*Via Regia*), and today it is abuzz with pedestrians. On both sides of Floriańska Street, there are brick houses lined in a row, creating a kind of *enfilade*. It mirrors the one that is naturally formed by the row of trees on both sides of the main path in Planty. This beautiful, almost painterly image, which we can admire from the Barbican Garden, has the slender 82-metre tower of St. Mary’s Church in the background.

On the outer line of the garden there is the Kleparz Market – the oldest open market in Kraków, dating back to the 12th century. Today, you can buy food from local producers there, but also delicacies from around the world. You can still hear the traditional Kraków dialect here, called *krakowska godka*. On the same side, but a bit farther towards the railway

station, there is a square named after Jan Matejko. The landmark feature here is a 24-metre-high monument of Władysław Jagiełło, a proud Polish king. In 1410 at Grunwald, he led one of the biggest battles in European history, which ended with the defeat of the Teutonic Order.

We have just reached Szpitalna Street, where **Ogród Dworzec (the Railway Station Garden)** begins. It is adjacent to Mikołajska Street. Contrary to the name, it is not the railway station, the nearby main



transportation hub of Kraków that dominates this part of Planty, but the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre – the first national stage in Poland. It is the largest eclectic building constructed in Kraków in the 19th century. Undoubtedly, it is also one of the most valuable historic theatre buildings in Europe. When the theatre launched its operation in 1893, it had one of the most technologically advanced stages not only in Europe, but also in the world. Importantly, the theatre was funded by Kraków citizens. This fact is commemorated with the inscription on the façade of the building “Kraków for the National Arts”. On the stages of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre premieres of masterpieces of Polish Romanticism and plays by Stanisław Wyspiański were performed. In 1896, the first film screening in Poland took place in this building. Nearby is the Church of the Holy Cross, one of the oldest and finest Gothic churches in terms of style in Kraków. It dates back to 1300. Walking further, we will see a neoclassical building dated to the 1820s or 1830s. It is the oldest cafe in Planty.

In the Railway Station Garden, there is a beautiful old woodstand formed by ash, chestnut and lime trees, and even a Japanese pagoda tree native

to the Far East, which is more common for botanical gardens than parks. The arrangement of paths in this part of Planty Park is very tidy. Wide green belts are the dominant features here.

We move along a gently curving line and reach **Ogród Gródek (the Gródek Garden)**, located between Mikołajska and Dominikańska Streets. Its name comes from a place called *Grunda*, which is reflected in the contemporary name of the street *Na Gródku*. This garden is designed

mostly in classicistic style. It is also reflected in the clearly marked shape of paths. Priceless old buildings stand on the inner ring of the garden, including the Basilica Church of the Holy Trinity and the Dominican Monastery, the oldest Gothic building in Kraków. Apart from those on the grounds of the Franciscan Monastery, this is the largest and oldest garden within the city's defensive walls. A must-see place is the early Baroque convent of the Dominican Sisters and the Church of Our Lady of the Snow, also known as the church “na Gródku”. Near the convent, there is a beautiful early-classicistic path with old trees.

We end our stroll across Planty in Kraków in **Ogród Stradom (the Stradom Garden)**. It stretches between Dominikańska and Grodzka Streets. Its name comes from the old suburb of Stradom, located in the south of Kraków. This garden has a characteristic and unique feature – its area is integral and not intersected by any street. There is even a playground for children. This part of Planty was designed as a wide promenade. The main alley is approximately 510 metres long. On its sides there are mainly chestnut trees, limes and ash trees. There are also many shrubs, including deciduous ones – park rose, common

hazel, elderberry, and jasmine. There are no flower beds here, which corresponds to the rather cold and melancholic beauty of the site. Due to the arrangement and the size of trees, there is little natural light here. Additionally, the inner ring of Planty is closed in by tall buildings. The terrain in this part of Kraków is diverse. A closely set building including the convent of the Bernardine Sisters at the Sanctuary of St. Joseph, the Church of Sts. Peter and Paul the Apostles and other structures are located on a gentle hill. These impressive buildings, with a fairly rough texture of walls on the Planty side, make a beautiful background for the park's greenery because of contrast. However, the closer we get to the exit of Grodzka Street, the lighter our field of view becomes. Finally, we pass the Hotel Royal on the left. It is an example of beautiful eclectic architecture. The hotel consists of four brick buildings, which before World War II used to be four separate hotels. During the war, Wehrmacht soldiers were stationed here. This is the last spectacular building on the line of the Stradom Garden.

From the turn of the 20th century, an increasing number of Jewish people settled in Stradom. They moved here from Kazimierz, a district of Kraków called the Jewish Quarter, where they had lived since the 1450s. This district, just a few minutes' leisurely walk away from Planty, is today one of the most frequented places by both Cracovians and tourists. It is a space where Jewish culture and architecture intertwine with Polish culture, and where history meets modernity. The Kazimierz district is just one of many reasons for which it is worth going outside the Planty ring, moving away in different directions from the Main Market Square and the adjacent streets and squares. This is where beautiful must-see areas of Kraków are waiting to be explored.

Strolling through Planty, we have made a circle around the heart of the Old Town. Now we have a good view of Wawel Hill before us. The Royal Castle looks very different from this perspective compared to the one from which we admired it in the Wawel Garden. At the beginning of our journey, we stood, like human miniatures, at the foot of Wawel Hill, which seemed to cover almost the whole horizon. Here, from the Stradom Garden side, there is a lot of light and space. Following the route marked by the Planty line, you can clearly see the rich and changing scenery of the city. This is what Kraków looks like from the perspective of the city park.



PARK KRAKOWSKI

Open to All

Park Krakowski is yet more proof that green areas are an integral part of Kraków's cultural landscape. It is enough to take a walk along Karmelicka Street (an extension of Szewska Street running from the Main Market Square) to find yourself in the park. The walk is sure to evoke many emotions and aesthetic sensations.

Already at the very start, at the junction of Karmelicka and Krupnicza Streets, we pass the Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński "Bagatela" Theatre. Even at the beginning of the last century, there was a well-known restaurant here. However, its owners succumbed to the arguments put forward by Marian Dąbrowski, a press magnate of the Polish publishing market at the time, and decided to build a theatre in the place of the culinary business. From today's perspective, such a decision seems risky, to say the least. The new stage, which opened in 1919, was nevertheless intended to follow in the tradition of Parisian entertainment theatres and to offer, above all, the good entertainment that audiences were so hungry for after the First World War.

It was not until the 19th century that Karmelicka Street became one of the representative streets of Kraków. There, you will find the entrance to the Basilica of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the home of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Piasek, with the largest woodcarving work created in Kraków in the Baroque period (an altar with a bas-relief depicting the scene of the Visitation of St. Elizabeth). It is also from this time that the buildings on the street date. As we continue our journey towards Park Krakowski, let us take a step back in time: from the Middle Ages on, this was the road leading to Łobzów, where the summer royal residence was located already during the reign of Kazimierz III the Great

(1333–1370). This was also the route leading to Czarna Wieś, near Kraków, which did not become an integral part of the city until the beginning of the 20th century.

It was in this area, located outside the urban centre - and to a small extent in the area of Nowa Wieś Narodowa - that Park Krakowski was opened at the end of the 19th century. The initiator of its establishment at the exit of Karmelicka Street was Stanislaw Rehman, an enterprising city councillor. In this way, he wanted to provide the people of Kraków with a new place for leisure and entertainment. Here, fresh air was to be guaranteed by being a certain distance from the centre of the busy city, but close enough for the park to be easily accessible to everyone. In any case, it was possible to get there by horse tram and, from 1901, even by electric tram.

The park was modelled on the famous Prater amusement park in Vienna, and is an example of a 19th century so-called "folk garden", a public park for relaxation and entertainment. At the origin of the creation of such facilities in Europe at that time was the conviction that it was necessary to generate public spaces that would have an important social function: people from different social classes were to meet here to enjoy leisure

and educational activities surrounded by Nature. Over time, those park elements that enabled the development of physical culture, such as playing fields and playgrounds, grew in importance.

In line with the original notion, the natural qualities of Park Krakowski of the time were not as important as the social and recreational dimension of the site. The vegetation was dominated by fairly uniform greenery, mainly represented by trees, primarily ash and elm, which were planted along paths marked out in geometric order. More importantly, the park space provided space for a café and for music pavilions, as well as a pond for water rides, swings for children, a bowling alley - and even a skating rink in winter. Outbuildings and vegetable gardens were built on today's Czarnowiejska Street. In 1885, the park gained a great attraction - a zoo, where it was possible to see native fauna, such as foxes and wolves, as well as animals that were exotic for more than just the suburbs of Kraków at the



time, such as leopards and pumas. Over time, the zoo gave way to a more (from a modern point of view) useful pastime - tennis courts. It was here that the famous tennis player, Jadwiga Jędrzejowska, took her first steps on a court in the 1930s. In the 1970s, she even accomplished successes at Wimbledon - where she earned the nickname "Polish flying girl".

However, this is not the end of the story. In 1893, a wooden building of the Summer Theatre was opened. This operated on a seasonal basis - from May to September. Its technical operation became increasingly efficient over time as a power station was set up in the park as early as 1895. In keeping with the spirit of universality - the theatre, like the park, was accessible to all. The folk character of the stage was symbolically

emphasised by the fact that after its thorough renovation, the main stage curtain was one that was decorated with patterns typical of the Cracovian shawl. The theatre was sometimes called the Variety Theatre, and at other times the People's Theatre. Due to its location and repertoire, which was dominated by musical performances, it was frequented by members of the lower social classes. One of the performances, Queen of the Suburbs, was also exceedingly popular with the female employees of the nearby Cigar Factory. This was probably because a story taken straight from life was played out on stage: the authentic tale of the love between the play's author, Konstantin Krumlovski, and an employee of the Cigar Factory. Whatever the reasons for its great popularity, the theatre undoubtedly played a major social and educational role - just like the city's first open-air cinema, which began operating in Park Krakowski in 1907 under - it has to be admitted - a name that was ingenious, but not devoid of critical distance: Edison's Circus.



The functioning of a theatre and a cinema in the park is another example of the fact that Kraków is built on both Nature and Culture. The 1920s and 1930s brought further evidence of this. At this time, the expansion of architecture into the fabric of Park Krakowski began: the green area decreased, and the area covered by the network of streets and buildings increased. From its original seven hectares, the park shrank to just two. The buildings were designed and constructed in the spirit of functionalism, an art direction that focused on meeting the living needs of the occupant. Typically for Kraków, however, this style was usually combined with elements of tradition and modernism. Without sparing the park, buildings appeared that, even from our contemporary perspective, can be described as modern, or at least heralding this modernity. Many examples of such architecture can still be found today, for example, in Inwalidów Square.

With the emergence of new housing in the interwar period, the character of the entire district changed. Park Krakowski, which at its inception was located outside the city, was now almost in its centre. As a result, the social role of the park also had to change – from entertainment and recreation – to more leisure. The park transformed from a folkloric and at times even ludic space, into a kind of urban garden. Such a project for transforming the space and functions of Park Krakowski was developed between 1937 and 1938. The previous geometric layout, which allowed easy access to the destination – sports or entertainment – was replaced by a free composition of avenues. All buildings and facilities, including sports facilities, disappeared from the park. Culture gave way to Nature. Two islands also appeared on the surface of the pond, which had been left in its former position. The process of the park's metamorphosis was interrupted by the Second World War.

In the post-war period, Park Krakowski changed little from what it looked like before 1939. However, it definitely experienced an increase in traffic, and this was not related to the number of walkers, but rather

to the ever-increasing crowd of passers-by. They walked with a quick step through the park space, which was now not only in the city centre, but almost in the middle of several traffic routes leading in different directions. Not surprisingly, there were as many as 12 entrances to the park during this time.

On hot days, however, many walkers simply turned up. This was due to the fact that by this time, the park already had almost 30 species of shrubs and trees, mainly Polish ones, which provided plenty of soothing shade. There was also an abundance of previously planted shrubs and exotic trees such as Chinese lilac and mock-orange. Moreover, the banks of the pond, as well as the line running along Mickiewicz Avenue, were decorated with slender Italian poplars, which formed a natural wall separating the park from the extremely busy street.

Certainly, the best of the changes that took place in the post-war time came from the cultural world: in 1974, sculptures made of stone, concrete and metal were placed in the park. They consisted of artistic objects that a group of sculptors created in the 1970s and donated to the city free of charge. The form of the sculptures was pure and abstract, primarily serving an ornamental role. Another group of exhibits included sculptures by Roman Tarkowski, which were made of glass (among other materials). Some of them were artistic expressions of emotional states, such as those under the titles of *Contemplation*, *Confusion* and *I Am Not Alone*. Just as the park once hosted open-air cinema screenings, the green landscape was now complemented by an open-air art gallery.

In 2018, Park Krakowski was named after Marek Grechuta, the famous Kraków bard. In one of the songs, entitled "Kraków", which the artist performed as a guest on the album of the popular Polish band Myslovitz, the following verses appear:

Never more than today

Has Kraków had such power in it

[“Kraków”, lyrics by Artur Rojek]

These words can also serve as a contemporary point of reference to the history of Park Krakowski, which after years of splendour and a time of erosion, today once again represents a force of natural beauty in the city centre. After 2017, the park got a new – or rather renewed – face. In contrast to the previous landscape, which was monochromatically dominated by greenery, colour has now appeared, above all in the form of natural meadow spaces and floral carpets. The types of flowers and plants have been selected so that the flowering process continues uninterrupted from early spring until late autumn. They create harmonious configurations of colour.

Invariably, however, the park also fulfils its original recreational function, offering something for both body and soul. There are tables for playing chess or ping-pong, and a space to play boules. Children have their own playground with water pumps and a ropewalk between the towers, and reading enthusiasts have a library with a book swap. Interestingly, there is a designated smoking area in the park. One of the attractions here is the former German air-raid shelter, which can be visited by telephone appointment. During the Night of the Museums and during the Kraków Museum Open Days, the shelter is open to the public.

In the park, which today covers an area of 4.77 hectares, the historic chapel, known as the Lighthouse of the Dead, still stands near Inwalidów Square. On top of it there is a beacon. As intended, it will help a lost wanderer find the right direction. So anyone who loses themselves in the beauty of Park Krakowski can rest assured – the lighthouse will show them the way back to the usual tourist routes.



WAWEL GARDENS

A Royal Walk

A stroll through the royal gardens? In Kraków, the City of Kings, it's possible. After many centuries, in 2015, Wawel Gardens was re-opened – this time for the enjoyment of the people of Kraków and the city's many visitors.

The walls of Wawel Castle have survived more than one turmoil in history. The gardens, by their very nature, didn't stand a chance. However, they certainly existed in the past. The remains found, as well as historical sources, testify to this. The gardens were founded in the 16th century, during the reign of King Zygmunt I the Old and his wife, Queen Bona, an Italian from the powerful Sforza family. In Europe at the time, gardens were an essential complement to any residence. They added prestige, became a place where royal children played, the site of walks and meetings, and probably also love affairs and secret political negotiations.

We can only dream about finding out what conversations Zygmunt the Old and Bona had while strolling around Wawel Hill. We also do

not have sufficient knowledge of what the castle gardens looked like at the time. A group of eminent specialists from various research fields worked on their modern reconstruction for many years. Finally, they achieved their intended goal, but not to the full extent: walking around the hill, we learn as much about the specific form of the Wawel Gardens themselves as about what characterised Renaissance gardens in general. Wherever it was not possible to reconstruct the original shape of Kraków's gardens, efforts were made to recreate at least the style and spirit of Renaissance garden art. In the process of restoring Wawel Gardens to the splendour lost centuries ago, experts relied among other things, on paintings and engravings from the 15th and 16th centuries. Occasionally some minor reference in the source texts allowed for more bold conclusions to be drawn and put into practice. This is what happened, for example, with the information found that there were oak boxes on the hill for growing herbs and spices; this enabled experts to decide to incorporate raised wooden beds with plant mosaics into the garden space. Where possible, great care has been taken to recreate not only the flora, but also the process and methods of planting. If a plant species common in the Renaissance has not survived to the present day, it was replaced by a related genus in the Wawel Gardens. In the end, a landscape was created on the castle hill that allows walkers to enjoy spending time in a beautiful natural setting and connoisseurs to enrich their knowledge of Renaissance gardens.

Indeed, Nature here is royally splendid – on two terraces. Crossing the upper terrace, customarily called Queen Bona's Garden, we walk on a brick path between plants planted in rectangular wooden beds, symmetrically arranged in rows. This geometric order must have pleased the royal couple as they gazed at the upper terrace from the castle window. The vegetation here is also woven into floral carpets and a naturally beautiful floral meadow. The diversity of species feeds both the sense of sight and smell – lavender, oxeye daisies, mallows, mugwort, basil, woodruff, sage, rosemary, as well as hyacinths, narcissi, irises, and last but not least, tulips – which were already known thanks to 16th century botanical works. What more could you want?

The upper terrace offers a spectacular view of the lower terrace. The name “the king's garden in front of the baths” – as it is sometimes called – comes from the fact that on this site, a well-preserved fragment of the oldest brick road in Poland was discovered, leading specifically to the royal baths. Due to the lack of reliable historical sources, the lower



terrace is not a reproduction of the original appearance of the garden, but a kind of impression of the garden spaces of the 16th century and early 17th century. In the central part of the terrace, we can see the letter “S” formed from plants – this is a reference to the monogram of King Zygmunt the Old.

There is no shortage of vines in the Wawel Gardens, either – after all, wine is the nectar of the gods. Vineyards were certainly cultivated on the southern slope of the hill. This is evidenced by the expenditures appearing in the accounts at the time.

In turn, the northern part of the lower terrace is filled with an orchard, which was considered an ornamental garden during the Renaissance. The hedges made up of roses are particularly picturesque, as is the gazebo, which is a contemporary reference to the elements of a garden building discovered in this location. Perhaps there was a greenhouse where orange trees were sheltered from the cold and whose fruits were served to the royal table straight from the garden, without the costly need to import them from southern countries? If so, it offered some savings in a budget that was admittedly royal, but nevertheless constantly strained by Bona's culinary tastes. As a wise and, for those times, very educated woman, she ate differently than her husband – she shunned the heavy, meaty dishes of Polish cuisine, preferring Italian delicacies, especially vegetables, the transport of which she paid dearly for.

Many also wonder whether Bona Sforza cultivated the poisonous herb wolfsbane in the castle garden... After all, she was readily accused of using poison to get rid of her enemies. Unfortunately, our curiosity will not be satisfied this time either – the Wawel Gardens are silent on the subject as if enchanted to remain so.



PARK BEDNARSKIEGO

Wild at Heart

Park Bednarskiego, located on the right bank of the Vistula River, is best reached by crossing the picturesque Father Bernatek footbridge, from which you can also admire the beautiful architectural silhouette of Cricoteka – the Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor. It is also a good bridge for all those who, while walking along the Vistula Boulevards on one side of the river, also want to explore its opposite bank. Above all, however, the footbridge connects the districts of Kazimierz and Podgórze. Podgórze used to be an independent city, which only became an integral part of Kraków in 1915, something we can also learn about by visiting the Podgórze Museum. In 1941, the Nazis established the Kraków ghetto in this area. Oskar Schindler's famous enamel factory also operated here, and now functions as a museum space. The story of Schindler, the industrialist and member of the Nazi party who saved many Kraków Jews from extermination, was popularised around the world by Steven Spielberg's Oscar-winning film *Schindler's List*. Adjacent to the Schindler Factory is the MOCAM Museum of Contemporary Art, which is also worth a visit.

Today, Podgórze is one of the most interesting parts of Kraków, covered by a dense network of atmospheric restaurants and cafés. The heart of the district is Podgórski Square with its centrally-located Church of St. Joseph – one of the most beautiful neo-Gothic churches in Poland.

Just above the market square, in Krzemionki Podgórskie, there is a park whose creator and namesake was a local social activist – Wojciech Bednarski. Originally, probably as early as the Middle Ages, there was a quarry, where extraction resumed in the 19th century. It is the limestone rocks that create the unique landscape of this place, unusual for an urban space. When the park opened its doors to the public and tourists in 1896, the quarry was still in operation. Thus, at the root of Bednarski's concept was an unusual idea for the time – the transformation of an industrial area into a green space, a reclamation of an area degraded by human activity.

However, this was not the only wonder that happened there: according to legend, it was in one of the quarries in Podgórze that a certain Mr. Twardowski practised black magic in order to create the philosopher's stone. In his attempt, he tried to deceive the devil, with whom he signed a pact: he promised to give his soul to the devil, but only if the devil caught him in Rome. One day, Twardowski had the misfortune to visit an inn called Rome... In honour of the sorcerer, about whom it is not certain whether he was a fictional character or whether he really lived in 16th century Kraków, this quarry is today called "Twardowski's School".

Today's Park Bednarskiego is also said to have been home to the only white raven in ancient times – the wisest among the ravens which are said to have inhabited the area of future Kraków in large numbers and which people considered sacred. According to one of the legends, it was from these birds that the city took its name.

In the interwar period, the quarry was completely abandoned and incorporated into Park Bednarskiego, which made the landscape even more picturesque. Today, the park grounds cover 7.2 hectares, and the rock walls have an additional function: they surround a playing field, providing a natural barrier to any ball escaping their owners' feet. The hustle and bustle of boys playing football and the children filling the playground is a great competition for the sounds of the fauna,



especially the birds – woodpeckers, nightingales, orioles, and goldfinches, which have taken a special liking to the park as their home. Here, they enjoy the hospitality of numerous birdhouses hung in the crowns of the trees.

Since its inception, Park Bednarskiego has also served as a space for various forms of recreation. Shortly after its opening, it began to function in an analogous way to a Jordan Park: under the guidance of instructors, classes for children and young people were conducted here. The merits of Wojciech Bednarski, who also financially supported the development of sports infrastructure, have not been forgotten: in 1937, his monument was placed in the park, where it survives to the present day and is surrounded by blooming tulips in early spring. There were more monuments commemorating famous Poles. Unlike Nature, however, they have not stood the test of time. In the midst of the natural elements, the remains of one of the monuments can still be found, giving the surroundings a romantic feel. The park's atmospheric landscape is also a consequence of the terrain: the park is situated on different levels, thus creating a kind of "amphitheatre construction".

The abundance of different forms of freely growing vegetation here is reminiscent of a magic garden. Nature in Park Bednarskiego knows no limits, even though we are in one of the central districts of the city. The impression that this is a primal, even wild place is enhanced by the rich stand of about 3,000 trees. Among them, you can find stately oaks, hornbeams, and beeches, which have remained here unmoved since time immemorial. The tallest of the trees, a chestnut, is 172 centimetres in circumference.



On leaving the park, we go down the stone stairs to shortly find ourselves on Zamoyskiego Street, which is where the seat of the KTO Theatre is built. It is an example of how modern technological solutions can be combined with the restoration of a 19th-century building façade in a harmonious unity, and to integrate it all into the natural background created by the exuberant greenery of Krzemionki Podgórskie and Park Bednarskiego.



MEHOFFER'S GARDEN

Painted by Nature's Brush

Mehoffer's garden is a real surprise – one hidden between the high walls of a block of old townhouses. On entering, instead of a historic brick courtyard, such as that often found in this part of the city, greenery appears before our eyes. It is omnipresent here – it seems to engulf the walls of the surrounding buildings. It gives the impression of overflowing the space of the courtyard and of wanting to get out. This is the first experience, triggered by the delightful discovery of an unexpected enclave of greenery in the city centre. After a while it gives way to a sense of harmonious gentleness, full of the painterly beauty of Nature.

The garden was designed in the 1930s by Józef Mehoffer, one of the most versatile creators of Modernism and an outstanding representative of the Art Nouveau movement. At that time, the artist moved with his family to a townhouse at 26 Krupnicza Street, which now houses a museum dedicated to his work. The fascinating history of this house began to be written much earlier – this is where Stanisław Wyspiański,



another outstanding modernist, was born in 1869. In Mehoffer's time, the building served as the social and cultural salon of Kraków. This artistic character of the street also continued in times closer to the present – many eminent contemporary artists met, lived, and worked nearby, at 22 Krupnicza Street, including Wisława Szymborska, Czesław Miłosz, and Stanisław Lem.

When Mehoffer first came here, there was a garden adjacent to the tenement house at 26 Krupnicza Street. In its centre, Mehoffer placed a lawn with flowerbeds, open on the side of the house, which allowed light to freely reach the interior. On the other three sides, the garden was enclosed by rows of fruit trees, which gave the place an intimate atmosphere. The domestic nature was emphasised by a vegetable garden. The presence of slender poplars led the walker's gaze upwards, towards the space open to the sky. Vines climbed the walls, thus conquering the territory of the stone walls. Roses were a beautiful, colourful touch in the garden, and they still adorn it today – just like the mock-oranges, violets, lilacs, and lilies of the valley, which spread their spring aromas every year.

After the Second World War, the glory days of the garden became a thing of the past – for a long time, but not irrevocably. In 2003, the National Museum in Kraków began restoring the garden space to its former appearance. The reconstruction process was based on an analysis of iconography, including landscapes painted by Mehoffer himself, and studies of the area. The garden is currently open to the public from spring to autumn. You can enjoy a cup of coffee here – there is plenty of room, as the space opposite the stairs to the house has been considerably expanded to accommodate the café's guests. As in times gone by, the garden is dominated by a mighty pedunculate oak. Today, the garden soothes the senses, but at the same time it stimulates the imagination. In this way it remains faithful to Mehoffer's own idea,

for whom Nature was a source of artistic inspiration and one of the main themes of his work. The garden on Krupnicza Street had a special significance in the artist's life – it was his refuge in the last years of his life. Two months before his death, in 1946, Mehoffer created a painting entitled *Front of the House*. It shows the garden at 26 Krupnicza Street, bathed in spring sunshine. It is May. The smell of lilac fills the air. Vegetation in full bloom casts shadows on the ground and the walls of the townhouses. A woman in a bright orange outfit walks down the terrace stairs. Her face is turned up towards the sun and she spreads her arms in a gesture of adoration to Nature. She is about to cross the garden line and sink into its greenery... what soothing bliss...

PARK STRZELECKI

Who Will Shoot the Rooster?

Moving away from the Planty line towards Lubicz Street, we pass the historic building of the Central Railway Station with its neo-Renaissance architecture. What we don't expect is that in just a few steps farther on, an area of urban greenery will emerge in front of us again. This is Park Strzelecki [Shooting Park]. It mostly lies on flat ground, surrounded by townhouses. It was the second public city park – after the Planty – in 19th century Kraków. Throughout history, its size and appearance have changed: it has been both an English-style garden and its opposite. Nowadays, the natural landscape consists mainly of around 200 trees, including the natural monument, the plane tree. However, the elemental qualities of Park Strzelecki are successfully rivalled by the history of its creation and development.

In 1836, one Józef Louis, then "King of the Fowlers", purchased the site of the future park with his own money and donated it to the "Fowlers"



Brotherhood” Sharpshooters’ Association in Kraków. It was a guild organisation that had probably existed in the town since the late 13th or early 14th century. It was founded on the model of similar societies that had been established since the Middle Ages in almost all of Europe. Their members – townspeople – were provided with regular military training in order to strengthen the defence of their town in the event of a military threat.

The Kraków Fowler Brothers quickly developed the park at Lubicz Street, erecting there their headquarters – a neo-Gothic palace called the Celestat (German: *Zielstätte* – shooting range). With time it was enriched by the Shooting Hall, which for a long time remained the largest ballroom in Kraków. They also constructed a lookout tower in the park, but above all – they built a shooting range. This is where the ceremonial wooden rooster shooting competition took place. This is a long-established and rich tradition, according to which the title of “King of the Fowlers” is awarded to the best shooter among the Brothers – the one who knocks down with one shot the last piece of the rooster placed upon a wooden target.

At the shooting range, the Fowler brothers practised their skills and organised competitions, while the park itself was frequented by 19th century Cracovians. For decades, it also played a representative role in the city, together with the buildings within it. Visitors included royals, such as Emperor Franz Joseph I (who even tried his luck on the shooting range, but missed every time). Later, prominent personalities from the world of art and politics appeared – Jan Paderewski and Marshal Józef Piłsudski, as well as Polish presidents, such as Ignacy Mościcki. Moreover, the Celestat was also visited by Marshal Ferdinand Foch. Distinguished guests added splendour to Park Strzelecki, and their presence also strengthened the position of the Fowler Brothers in the social hierarchy.

The park was sometimes visited by as many as half a thousand guests, such as at the party celebrating the unveiling of the Grunwald Monument in Matejko Square on the 500th anniversary of the victory at Grunwald. Almost from the beginning of its existence until the outbreak of the Second World War, the garden teemed with social and cultural life. In 1840, the first New Year’s Eve party in Kraków took place here. The park was the venue for triumphal processions of the newly elected Fowler Kings, as well as fireworks displays, circus performances, concerts and theatrical productions. On weekdays, the latter would sometimes be drowned out by the sound of shots fired and noises made by the Brothers during practice.

However, there was more than just partying in Park Strzelecki. Just as today, the Fowlers’ Brotherhood of the time was an organisation that acted pro publico bono. The garden witnessed many such activities, such as the collection of donations for fire victims after the Kraków fire in 1850. In times of great social and historical need, the Sharpshooters’ Association made the park buildings available, either to the pilgrims who thronged to Kraków for the 300th anniversary of Hyacinth of Poland’s canonisation, or to the Polish Legions during the First World War for military quarters.



The Fowlers’ Brotherhood was – and still is today – an organisation which grew out of patriotic ideals and promoted such attitudes. This was reflected, among other things, in the monuments funded by the society, which were erected in the park towards the end of the 19th century: to King Jan III Sobieski – to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the victory at Vienna, and to King Zygmunt August, who granted the founding statute to the Fowlers’ Brotherhood. Contemporary features include monuments to John Paul II, in 2017 – an obelisk commemorating the 750th anniversary of the Fowlers’ Brotherhood, and a statue of Józef Louis himself.

However, a particularly interesting story is connected with Marcin Oracewicz, an excellent marksman and member of the Fowlers’ Brotherhood, whose bust was set next to the Celestat building in 1890. In June 1768, he volunteered to defend Kraków against the Russian army. According to some accounts, when Oracewicz ran out of ammunition, he loaded his gun with a button torn from his clothes, fired and killed the commander-in-chief of the Russian army. Although the reasons why the Fowler Brother used his own button as a bullet

are sometimes interpreted differently, there is no doubt that it was he who shot the enemy officer – during the exhumation of the Russians killed in the battle, a skull was found with a characteristic deep gunshot wound.

Not only the monuments, but also Nature herself – as befits a park – bear witness to the ideas cultivated and the ideals espoused by the Sharpshooters' Association. The Fowler brothers would plant trees in the garden to commemorate important national events and anniversaries. Thanks to this custom, the tree stand of the park was enriched with the "Oak of the Third Millennium A.D. 2000" and with the plane tree that took root on the day John Paul II died.

The fate of the Fowlers' Brotherhood, and thus of Park Strzelecki, has always been intertwined with the history of Poland. During the Nazi occupation, the park buildings were turned into a laundry and delousing facility for German soldiers. In the 1950s, the devastation of the park continued, which corresponded to the situation of the brotherhood itself – it was then liquidated and its property confiscated. Although the organisation was re-registered in 1957, the park continued to deteriorate until the 1990s. It was not until 1997, when a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków inaugurated its activities in the Celestat, that the process of restoring the park to its former glory began, as did the cultivation of traditions connected with the history of the Fowlers' Brotherhood in Kraków. This is the only museum in the world which presents not only the history of one sharpshooters' association in its historical seat, but also the history of the Fowlers' brotherhoods in Poland and Europe. The Celestat houses the most precious jewel – a silver rooster encrusted with precious stones, given to the Kraków Brothers by the City Council in 1565.

Today, 200 Cracovians – men only – belong to the Fowlers' Brotherhood. Meanwhile, 20 personalities from Poland and abroad have so far received the titles of honorary brothers, among them George W. Bush. Pope John Paul II, also an honorary member of the Sharpshooters' Association, was awarded the Grand Cross of the Kraków Brotherhood with the number 1.

As for the youngest aspirants to the title of Fowler Brother – children and adolescents – for the moment, they can take up the challenge of finding the symbol of the rooster, whose images have been placed on various objects in the garden. I wonder who will manage to "shoot" all the roosters in Park Strzelecki?



BOTANICAL GARDEN OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY

A Green Map of the World

During our walk, if we find ourselves at the junction of Mikołajska Street and Planty, let's not hurry in turning around to find ourselves back in the area of the Main Square. This time, let's choose a non-obvious direction: let's go straight, down Kopernik Street. At first it looks inconspicuous, but in a moment, we will see that it is not much inferior to the more titled Kraków trails. Here we pass the Church of St Nicholas, which stands on the ancient route leading from Kraków towards Rus', and its origins date back to the 11th or 12th century. A moment later, we can see the nearly 68-metre-high church tower, second in height only to the towers of St Mary's Basilica. This tower crowns the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an example of early 20th century modernist architecture and art synthesis. The interior houses sculptures by the renowned artist Xawery Dunikowski. Another few steps and again a beautiful building emerges – this is the Baroque Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is here that Kraków's richest group of 17th-century works in black Dębica marble is located. At the end of Kopernik Street, our little "tourist indulgence" is fully rewarded: we are standing in front of the entrance to the oldest botanical garden in Poland – "a living museum of the flora of the world".

The Botanical Garden was established in 1783 as a research garden of the "Kraków Academy" – as the Jagiellonian University, the oldest university in Poland and one of the oldest in this region of Europe, was commonly called until the 19th century. At that time, the garden served



as an auxiliary facility of the Department of Chemistry and Natural History. It was originally designed in the style of a French Baroque park, with a collection of ornamental and medicinal plants. However, the garden area grew rapidly, and new elements appeared, changing its form and character. As early as 1786, the first greenhouses were erected, and here, bananas, lemons, oranges, as well as melons and watermelons were grown. Soon a palm house was built, and an Astronomical Observatory was even created. The Botanical Garden has always aimed high: it was here that the first balloon flights in Poland were organised.

The history of the garden affected the fate of all Polish botany, particularly strongly just after the Second World War. The garden is the only one of its kind to have survived the war, with a relatively small number – only 1,200 species – of flora destroyed. It therefore served as a source of vegetation, enabling other botanical gardens in Poland to rebuild after the war. It owes its present-day appearance to eminent botanist Władysław Szafer, who was director here for an exceptionally long time (almost 30 years). Today, the Botanical Garden of the Jagiellonian University is not only a natural science facility, but also a scientific, educational, artistic, and cultural one – registered as a valuable monument since 1976. There is also the Botanical Garden Museum – the oldest museum collection in Poland, where you can visit, among other things, a permanent exhibition of tropical plants.

Nowadays, the garden has a park character, including elements of a landscape park. Crossing its threshold, we begin a fascinating journey through a botanical map of the world covering an area of 9.6 hectares. There is plenty to see: some 5,000 species and varieties of plants from different continents can be found here. Following the “theatrum of flora”, which awakens the senses, we move with ease and, above all,

great pleasure, between the Japanese garden, East Asia, North America, through the mountain ranges of the Alps, the Carpathians, the Balkans, the Pyrenees and the Caucasus. Everywhere, we can admire specimens of plants so unusual that they seem unreal. However, we may also suddenly find ourselves in a country garden, where the vegetation looks remarkably familiar for a change.

The garden also features impressive clusters of chestnut trees, maples, larches and birches. Sometimes the key to creating such a landscape group with plants is not their belonging to a particular species, but a certain aesthetic feature. The best example here would be to group trees with coloured leaves together in one place. Only Mother Nature paints such evocative pictures...

Of course, a garden with a long history also contains magnificent specimens of old trees. The oldest is the pedunculate oak, which is about 220 years old. It was named the “Jagiellonian Oak”, a symbolic reference to the scientific and didactic nature of the garden, which operated under the aegis of the Jagiellonian University. The oak has aged neighbours in the form of two dogwoods and the oldest *Robinia pseudoacacia* in Poland. Exotic trees have also proved resistant to the Polish climate and the test of time, especially 150-year-old sago palms, some of the oldest in this part of Europe, called – not without reason – “living fossils”. The Canary Island date palm is also not going to stop at its mere hundred years: the garden greenhouse has been expanded to allow it to continue growing.

However, the Botanical Garden is not the place for everyone to live to a ripe old age. This friendly reputation of the garden is spoiled somewhat by the presence of carnivorous plants that feed not only on

insects, but also on small vertebrates. Fortunately, people do not have to fear them, so it is worth taking a look at these unusual specimens of flora by directing your steps to the wet and sunny parts of the area. After such strong experiences, it's time to calm your shattered nerves. The beautiful collection of orchids – the oldest and richest in Poland – will have a soothing effect. While in the garden, it is also worth paying attention to the so-called “useful plants”, i.e., ones that have a beneficial potential for humans. In this group, we find interesting examples of flora, the benefits of which we benefit almost every day, to mention only cocoa and coffee plants, as they are commonly called. A visit to the garden is also a journey through unusual thematic, cultural or historical motifs. For example, there are plants with symbolic value, such as those described in the Bible. At each of them, there is a plaque with the appropriate quotation from the Holy Scriptures.

Entering the Kraków Garden, we cross a boundary behind which we confirm our belonging to Nature, even though a busy city street is right next to it. We are in an oasis where we are not the only ones who want to stay. More than 1,000 endangered plant species have found their refuge here. The garden is also home to rare fauna, such as the hoopoe and the redshank. From time to time, friendly foxes also have come to live here and have no desire to move away.

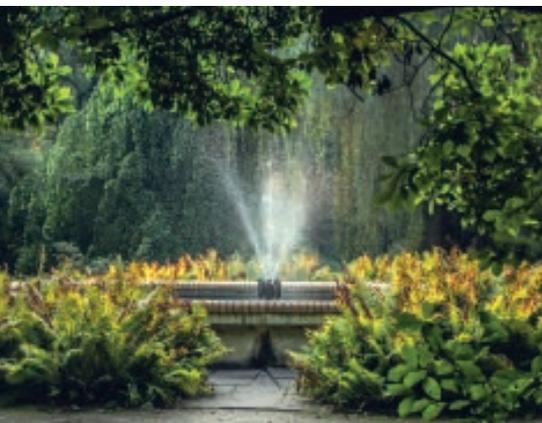
Although we are now leaving the Botanical Garden, we can take a taste of it home with us by purchasing – after a prior telephone reservation – one of the plants available for sale here. However, it is best to come to Kraków's Botanical Garden as often as possible. During the calendar year, there are quite a few opportunities for this, given that in the climate prevailing in this region of Poland, the period of intensive plant development is not short, lasting around 165 days. The most beautiful month is May, when the magnolias bloom here. The garden looks unreal then, especially if you let yourself be intoxicated by their vanilla-citrus scent.



PARK IM. HENRYKA JORDANA

With Children In Mind

Despite the fact that Park Jordana (Jordan Park) is located in the vicinity of Błonia and is crowded with Cracovians and tourists, it still remains one of the most popular parks in Kraków. What is the secret of its success? Undoubtedly, the intentions behind the creation of the park are part of it. Its history dates back to the late 19th century. Park Jordana was created on the site of the 1887 National Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition, the organisers of which had built a makeshift garden. It included roads to the exhibition pavilion and individual stands. Moreover, 24,000 trees were planted on an area of 10 hectares, while flowerbeds were planted and a section of the nearby Rudawa River was diverted. After the exhibition, Dr Henryk Jordan, a medical doctor, social worker and a pioneer of hygiene and recreation, submitted a plan to the City Council to adapt this area into a park for children and young people. The design of the park was drawn up by Bolesław Malecki, who was the caretaker of Planty Park at the time. The central section of the park, which included avenues and monuments commemorating distinguished Poles, was intended for people out for a stroll. Other parts of the project included playing fields and various gymnastic equipment for the children. In its heyday, there were as many as fourteen pitches of various shapes, sizes and purposes in the park. In 1901, nearly 40,000 young people took advantage of its offerings. With the outbreak of the First World War, the functioning of the park was practically interrupted, and it fell into disuse and devastation. The years of the Second World War are black pages in its history. All of Henryk Jordan's ideas and achievements were annihilated: the park was transformed into an urban garden accessible only to Germans. The only things that survived were the monuments, which were hidden in time to survive the turmoil of war. They were returned to their place just after the war, which was one of the signs of the gradual revival of the park. At present, the Avenue of Great





Poles consists of over fifty busts placed on plinths, and this collection is probably not done growing. The park has retained its recreational character even today. Its grounds, which are more than 21 hectares in size, include football pitches, volleyball, basketball and boules courts, a skate park, a climbing wall and a health trail. On summer days, the most frequented attraction is the water amusement park, located next to the toboggan hill.

Only the main avenue with a centrally located neo-Classical roundabout has survived to our times from the original appearance of the Jordan Park. However, the garden's memory is still guarded by old hornbeams, English oaks and even elm and lime trees that are over a hundred years of age. And as in the past, so today, it is abuzz with the voices of children at play.

BŁONIA

An Urban Meadow

Although Kraków is the second largest urban centre in Poland after Warsaw, there is a meadow just a 15-minute walk from the main square. Moreover, this is not just any meadow, but one with an area of 48 hectares. We have just arrived at Kraków's Błonia Park, or, according to the meaning inscribed in the name of the place: we have arrived at "a vast meadow". In the Middle Ages, it occupied an area that was probably a third larger than today. The name "Błonia" first appeared in 1402, in the records of the town's account book. The area was a remnant of the wide floodplain of the nearby Rudawa River. It was an extremely marshy area, surrounded by numerous ponds and lakes. When the water level became critical, Błonia turned into a huge reservoir.

The southern part of Błonia originally belonged to the Norbertine convent of Zwierzyniec in Kraków. However, in the 14th century, the sisters decided to exchange the meadow for a townhouse on Floriańska

Street (they could not then foresee that the building would burn down almost immediately after the signing of the purchase documents). From then on, Błonia became the property of the Kraków municipality. However, this did not stop all sorts of urban planners – both incorrigible visionaries and pragmatists – from being tempted by such a vast, empty site in the city centre.

The Nazis had been on the verge of annexing Błonia to the urban fabric. Already in 1939, there was a plan to build an exclusive government district here, where nearly 10,000 German officials were to work. This was an important part of a wider plan to transform Kraków into the "Nuremberg of the East". Fortunately, the concept was abandoned, because the architect in charge of the project, Hubert Ritter, had a certain urban sensitivity and finally decided not to interfere so much with the existing city structure. After the war, there was also no shortage of ideas to "develop" Błonia. In the 1960s, for example, the Academy of Fine Arts wanted to construct buildings here. Since 2000, however, nature lovers have been breathing a sigh of relief: Błonia Park has been entered in the register of historical monuments, so no one will ever build anything on this meadow.

Both in the past and in the present, Błonia has been the venue for events of great social and cultural importance: from the first ever plane take-off in the city in 1894, through great anniversary celebrations, such as the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald in 1910, to the meetings of Pope John Paul II with crowds of believers.

In its history, Błonia Park has played a variety of roles – recreational, cultural, military and even economic. In medieval times, the inhabitants of the surrounding villages grazed their cattle here. This function of Błonia as an urban pasture, was not definitively resolved until 1965. Cows and horses disappeared from the meadow at that time because





the prestigious Hotel Cracovia was built right next door. It is understandable that the hotel did not want to serve such a “view of Kraków” to distinguished hotel guests...

Today, the former Hotel Cracovia is owned by the National Museum, which intends to create an exhibition space in the building that is dedicated to Polish design and architecture of the 19th and 20th centuries. Together with other buildings situated on Aleje Trzech Wieszców, Cracovia creates a representative architectural complex, which grew out of the spirit of modernism. On the other side of the Błonia, we can see the classicist, monumental Main Building of the National Museum, whose twelve branches house some 900,000 exhibits. It is from here that we can start our walk around Błonia.

To “go around Błonia” means to walk almost 3.6 kilometres. There is no shortage of takers – this is one of Kraków’s favourite areas for sport and recreation. The meadow is surrounded by an asphalted lane, which can be used by walkers and joggers, as well as cyclists and in-line skaters. Walking along Aleja 3 Maja, it is worth making Cichy Kącik – a villa estate built in the interwar period, which is a model example of modernist architecture – your destination. It will not be a particularly strenuous walk, even on hot days, as the trees growing around the perimeter of Błonia provide shade and act as a natural barrier to street traffic. Most of the trees are lindens, with quite a few maples and ash trees. Its chestnut trees, and especially willows, are particularly charming. They have a symbolic meaning in Polish culture – they are an eternal sign of fertility, as well as a symbol of the Polish – especially Mazovian – landscape that is associated, of course, with the music of Fryderyk Chopin. However, the heart of Błonia’s nature is not the tree stand, but various species of grasses that coexist with the vegetation typical of their environment. The development of the grassland here takes place naturally, without any particular human intervention. This makes Błonia a veritable paradise for insects. They create a symphony of

natural sounds, especially on hot summer evenings. To hear the music of Mother Nature right next to one of the city’s busiest thoroughfares is an unforgettable, almost surreal experience. During your stay in Kraków, make sure you definitely take in such a concert.

LAS WOLSKI *aka Lasek Wolski*

Native Cracovians, who are famous for their fondness for diminutives, simply call Las Wolski (Wolski Forest) “Lasek Wolski” (Wolski Woods). Their intention is in no way to diminish the size of the Forest or its importance. Nor is the diminutive a sign of irony or, still less, mockery on their part. On the contrary – this is the way Cracovians manifest their very warm feelings towards the Wolski Forest: they have taken a liking to these woods as a place for meetings, walks and recreation. They visit it so often and in such crowds that it has already become one of the symbols of Kraków for them.

Wolski Forest is often referred to as the “green lungs of the city”. It used to be here that the inhabitants of Kraków would take shelter from the so-called “miasma” – forms of respiratory disease that haunted Kraków many times in the course of history. There is plenty of room to breathe in the Forest, as it is the largest green area within the city limits. It lies in its western part – in the Zwierzyniec district, eight kilometres from the centre. Covering 422 hectares, it is one of the largest urban forest parks, not only in Poland, but also in Europe. It is part of the Kraków-Wieluń Upland and grows on a series of hills of quite considerable size, the highest of which, Sowiniec, is 358 metres above sea level. This forest complex towers over the city, creating a natural counterpoint to the architecture of Kraków. Indeed, it rises almost 100 metres above the Main Square.



Despite this, Wolski Forest, as it is a forest, does not provide many opportunities to admire the panorama of the city – the trees obscure the view. However, there is a place there offering both a beautiful view of Kraków and the forest complex itself. This, of course, is the Józef Piłsudski Independence Mound, commonly known as the “Piłsudski Mound”, to which seven different trails lead through the Wolski Forest. It is the highest and also the youngest of Kraków’s five mounds, as well as the largest artificial mound in Poland. Its construction began in 1934. A year later, after the death of Marshal Józef Piłsudski, one of the most important Polish leaders of the 20th century, the Mound was named after him. The symbolic hill was built from the ashes and soil from the too many battlefields from 1794 to 1920 where Poles fought for the country’s independence. The work was completed in 1937, when the Mound reached a height of 35 metres. It is also called “Mogiła Mogił” (Grave of Graves), because earth from places of combat and martyrdom, including that of the two world wars and the communist regime, has been laid down at its feet.

The fate of Piłsudski Mound after the Second World War was both dramatic and extremely interesting. The Communist authorities tried very hard to make it fall into oblivion, as it served Poles as a reminder of historical events that were inconvenient for the new authorities. Attempts were made to destroy Piłsudski Mound in various ways, there were even an effort to flatten it with a tank. Paradoxically, however, the communist regime had no objections to the widespread use, also in official communications, of the name of the “Two Mounds” trail, one of which, ironically, was the Piłsudski Mound, which was to disappear from the national consciousness. The second on the trail is the famous Kościuszko Mound.

This mound is the oldest object of its kind in the city. It was built on the model of two prehistoric mounds – Krakus and Wanda – which have survived to our times, although they date back to the 7th century, when they probably served as places of worship or as watchtowers. In 1820, the Senate of the Republic of Kraków passed a resolution to erect a new mound that was to be a symbolic grave – a monument in honour of Commander-in-Chief Tadeusz Kościuszko, an 18th-century Polish national hero. After three years, the Mound, more than 35 metres high, stood on the hill of Blessed Bronislava. It was an expression of the “patriotic feelings and culture of 19th century Polish society”. It was built thanks to the involvement of almost the entire nation. Suffice it to say that the list of named donors to the Mound was probably the longest until the census of the casualties of the First World War was published.

In the mid-19th century, the Austrians built a fort around Kościuszko Mound, designed by distinguished architects. The fortress buildings were an important element of the strategy of transforming the city into a border fortification – “Kraków Fortress”. Currently, the fortress houses exhibitions dedicated to Tadeusz Kościuszko and other outstanding Poles who worked in the name of the country’s freedom. In 1936, the Mound was entered into the register of monuments, and in the 21st century, objects were deposited there – under a Tatra granite boulder – that symbolically commemorate important events from Poland’s recent history, such as a commemorative coin struck on the 20th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II.



Both the Piłsudski Mound and the Kościuszko Mound are excellent vantage points. From either mound, with a bit of luck – being blessed with cloudless weather, that is – you can see the contours of the Tatra Mountains and even the Beskid Mountains on the horizon. There is a beautiful view of Błonia Park, Jordan Park and, above all, Wawel Castle from Kościuszko Mound. On the other hand, the top of the Piłsudski Mound offers the best perspective in Kraków from which to admire Wolski Forest: down below, we can see that we are surrounded by a sea of green, which only ends at the line of urban architecture.

The view from the Piłsudski Mound provides a glimpse of the extent and natural beauty of the Wolski Forest, but does not fully reveal its inner diversity. Indeed, practically every time we take a walk there, this forest

complex appears to us in a different way, and by practising sports here we can discover many new routes. Even short forest trails are characterised by a considerable difference in elevation of up to 120 metres. As a result, the terrain is not only not monotonous, but actually surprisingly variable and rich. The landscape is made up of hills that appear as unexpectedly as they suddenly fall downwards in a sharp cut. Valleys, gorges, ravines – all these create the drama of the landscape.



In the Wolski Forest, the total length of recreational paths is 40 kilometres. Eight hiking trails have been marked out here. They can be traversed on foot, but also by bike, on horseback or even on skis. There were even ski jumping hills here until the middle of the 20th century. Competitions were held on them and their first record holder reached a distance of 18 metres.

Today, Wolski Forest offers many attractions, among which the Zoological Garden is very popular. It contains more than 1,400 animals, representatives of 270 species, of which around 100 are endangered. Another interesting facility in the area is the Astronomical Observatory of the Jagiellonian University, which houses, among other things, a radio telescope. While in this part of Kraków, you must also visit the Przegorzaly Castle, erected by the Nazis during the Second World War on a rocky arch near the Vistula River. The style and form of the building resemble the monumental blocks of German castle architecture. The Castle terrace offers a picturesque view of the river. You can also see the towers of the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary at the Camaldolese Hermit Monastery, and if the weather is good, you can see the outline of the Benedictine monastery in Tyniec. It is worth seeing this unique object in full focus by reaching it by bike or waterway.

In the same district as Przegorzały – Zwierzyniec – is Villa Decius; today it houses the Cultural Institute. The villa is surrounded by a park, just like many other buildings in this exceptionally green part of Kraków. The building was erected in the 16th century by Justus Louis Decius the Elder, an Alsatian by origin, a man of many talents and great knowledge, who was friends with such eminent personalities of his time as Martin Luther and Erasmus of Rotterdam. The architectural style of the residence,

as well as its purpose, was reminiscent of Florentine and Roman villas, where people spent time on intellectual disputes. It was a place full of openness and tolerance in Kraków, and it has remained such a place to this day. The MuFo Museum of Photography is located nearby, in the historic Strzelnica (garrison shooting range) building. It presents the Portrait permanent exhibition, as well as other temporary exhibitions. The museum is situated in a park, the arrangement of which thematically refers to the elements of a shooting range.

The area around the Wolski Forest cannot, however, compete with the forest itself in terms of the degree of preservation of its original natural character. There is a great wealth of flora here – many unusual plants can be found in this forest complex, such as the silver linden tree, which produces poisonous nectar, or the lesser celandine – a miniature of the sunflower. Of the 32 tree species, deciduous trees predominate, mostly birch, beech and oak. In the vicinity of the Piłsudski Mound is the Tadeusz Mazowiecki Freedom Oaks Avenue, named after the first Polish prime minister elected after the political breakthrough of 1989. On the first anniversary of the appointment of the Mazowiecki-led government, ten oak trees were planted in the Wolski Forest to symbolise the ten years that had passed since the start of Poland's gradual political transformation. This gave rise to a tradition that is cultivated to this day: every year, another oak of freedom is planted.

The terrain of the Wolski Forest has been shaped by limestone rocks. Their most beautiful formation is Panieńskie Skały (Maiden Rocks), which are one of Kraków's five Nature Reserves – along with the Bielańskie Skałki, Skałki Przegorzalskie, Skołczanka and Bonarka. There is a legend

connected with the Maiden Rocks: the Norbertine nuns, known as the "Maidens of Zwierzyniec", had to flee to save themselves from being disgraced by the Tatars, who invaded the town in 1241. In an act of both faith and desperation, the nuns begged the Blessed Virgin Mary to protect them from the barbarians. The Holy Mother listened to their pleas and surrounded the Norbertines of Kraków with a safe ring made of rocks.

The story of the maidens of Zwierzyniec corresponds to the fact that historically, Wolski Forest was a wilderness – just like Bielany – which over time formed a single forest complex with the Wolski Forest. Wildernesses are forests without strictly defined boundaries, often growing on the territory of a former primeval great forest. They often inspire the creation of legends that add mystery to the charms and mythologise their image in people's imagination:

*In the morning mist and silence sleep the hundred-year-old forests,
Full of dark secrets. In the middle a clearing
Covered with green grasses and flooded with sun*

So begins a poem by Lucjan Rydel, a poet of the modern era. This work was inspired by Fauns, a painting by Jacek Malczewski, one of the most outstanding representatives of symbolism in art at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The painter was to take a liking to a clearing in the Wolski Forest, where he not only rested, but also created. Today, this clearing bears his name and is one of six that are located in the forest complex.

Malczewski created in a forester's lodge that once stood in his favourite clearing in the forest. Supposedly the artist received this building as a gift from the Czartoryski family. Originally, Wolski Forest belonged to Prince Marcei Czartoryski, a collector and connoisseur of art, and who, for over 20 years, was president of the Society of Friends of Fine Arts in Kraków. In 1917, his heirs sold the Wolski Forest to the Kraków Savings Bank, which in turn donated it to the city. The forest was then given the status of a people's park.

The nature of Wolski Forest has always been, and still is, a source of inspiration for artists. Nowadays, they have also found their place here in Ekosamotnia, a former ceramics workshop and today a guesthouse, where many eminent artists, including Stanisław Lem, have stayed and worked.



However, Wolski Forest is not only an enclave for artists, but also a refuge for those who have devoted their lives to spiritual and religious matters. Since 1604, in the heart of the Forest, on Srebrna Góra (Silver Mountain), stands the Camaldolese Hermit Monastery, set apart from the outside world by many kilometres of stone wall. The name Silver Mountain comes from a pile of silver plates, for which Mikołaj Wolski, Grand Marshal of the Crown, was to buy the land on which the monks he brought to Poland from Italy had settled. Legend has it that Wolski supposedly practised magic, but at the end of his life, as an act of redemption, he founded the Camaldolese monastery. After his death, his body was dressed in a monk's habit and laid to rest at the entrance to the monastery church. Wolski Forest took its name from Mikołaj Wolski. The area where the monastery complex was built is called "Bielany" after the white habit worn by the Camaldolese monks.

For centuries, the Camaldolese Monastery has had a strict enclosure: the day begins at 3:30 a.m., the monks live in seclusion in hermitages or alone in the cells of the monastery, they devote themselves to prayer, contemplation and reading, they fast and do penance, and they keep silence, breaking it only three times a week for short conversations with their fellow monks. The rules of religious life are strictly observed, including when it comes to contacts with the outside world. Men can enter the gates of the monastery every day, but at specific times and only for the purpose of contemplation. Women are only allowed inside the walls on 12 feast days during the year. It is worth visiting Srebrna Góra at these times, above all to see with your own eyes the beautiful monastery church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The towers of the church in Bielany can be seen from the centre of Kraków. After dark, a red light appears on top of them – a warning for planes heading towards the nearby Balice airport. Woe to those who are about to depart from Kraków. Happy are those who are only just arriving.



VISTULA BOULEVARDS

With the Flow of Time, With the Flow of the River

Throughout its history, Kraków has always developed in symbiosis with the flow of the Vistula. However, the river sometimes also posed a threat to the city – it has repeatedly overflowed its banks, causing huge losses. This misbehaving element has been troubling the inhabitants of Kraków since the Middle Ages. In 1903, it made its presence clear in a particularly acute way: the Vistula flooded the surrounding villages and also entered the Old Town with gusto and destroyed Planty Park. In view of the scale of the losses and the danger of the disaster recurring, there was no turning back: the construction of flood defences, which had been decided on two years earlier, now became an urgent necessity.

The concept of the Vistula Boulevards, which were to protect both Kraków and the Free City of Podgórze against floods, was prepared by Roman Ingarden, the outstanding hydrotechnician and author of the design for Kraków's waterworks. Not only were they a work of engineering art, but they were also aesthetically pleasing – the architect Jan Peroś, took care of that. The engineering and construction work took a long time and proceeded with varying success. The course of the Vistula as we know it today was finally shaped in 1955. Both the design and its implementation were indeed of the highest order and excellent quality: the Vistula Boulevards have resisted the great onslaught of water even in modern times, most recently in 2010.

Already during the Second World War, the area along the Vistula began to be adapted for walkers. You can walk along the avenues laid out by the river, choosing the lower or higher parts of the promenade, which are connected by stairs. Starting our walk on the left bank of the Vistula, at the mouth of the Rudawa River, we find ourselves on **Rodła Boulevard**.

If you turn your head to look back for a moment, you will see the mighty walls of the convent of the Norbertine Sisters, the oldest women's order in Poland, which settled here as early as in the 12th century. Due to its location, the convent was not spared from historical storms and natural disasters: it was plundered by Tatar hordes in the 13th century, and the Vistula River tried to breach its thick walls many times in history. Although there was no shortage of fires, either, it was primarily these two elements that influenced the history of the convent, sometimes tipping the scales of truth from historical fact to myth.

Every year, during the first octave of Corpus Christi, it is also here, at the Norbertine convent, that the traditional Lajkonik parade makes a stop – led by the symbolic figure representing the Tatar and deadly enemy of Kraków. According to legend, in June 1287, a Tatar cavalry unit stopped for the night at the foot of the walls of the Norbertine convent, intending to invade Kraków the next day at dawn. The warriors, in deep sleep, were captured by local raftsmen, thus saving the city from the conflagration of war. The story does not end there: the conquerors of the Tatars decided to make fun of the Cracovians, and not in a good way: they dressed themselves in Tatar robes, smeared their faces with soot, mounted their captured horses and galloped into Kraków. One can only imagine the horror the masqueraders caused the locals.

The Tatars – as negative characters – also appear in another legend that is connected with the Norbertine Sisters' convent. In this story, the destructive element of the Vistula plays an important role. According to one version of the legend, one night, the nuns were terrified to see merchants fleeing on horseback from a Tatar pursuit. They headed towards the marina where the ferry usually docked. They did not know that the raging wind had broken the rope and the ferry had drifted down the Vistula. When the current of the river subsided, it was also possible to get to the bank on horseback. This time, however, the water level was high... The galloping riders fell into the depths of the Vistula and almost



everyone – merchants and Tatars alike – drowned. Only one man survived – a merchant, who decided to donate a bell to the convent as a token of gratitude for his rescue. It had to be cast three times, but each time a crack appeared in its heart. It was said to be cracked in the same way as the lives of the unfortunates who were swallowed by the Vistula current were broken in half. Every evening, the mournful tone of the disfigured bell called the nuns to pray for the souls of the drowned. This lasted until the Tatars attacked the convent again and sank the bell in the Vistula. On Midsummer Night, its waters are said to part, the bell emerges from the river's depths, emits its painful tones, and at midnight falls back into the dark abyss.

The Norbertine Sisters' Convent has survived both the Tatar storms and the floods of the Vistula, thus writing its exceptionally colourful history. Today, it impresses with the size and almost fortified profile of its architectural mass.

Continuing along Rodła Boulevard towards Wawel Hill, we walk between strips of land that are overgrown with grass and where the terrain gently slopes towards the Vistula. We also pass the sports club marinas. There are very good sailing conditions here.

Just after Dębnicki Bridge, we reach **Czerwieński Boulevard**. There are barges moored at the shore here where you can enjoy coffee or dinner; on warm evenings, there is also dancing. And if you want to let yourself be carried away by the waves of the Vistula, this is where the main stop of the water tram is located. Cruise ships also depart from here for Tyniec, where since 1044, a Benedictine monastery – one of the largest in Poland – has stood unmoved on a cliff.

Czerwieński Boulevard is dominated by the royal Wawel Castle. And at its feet, as if under a spell since 1972, is the Wawel Dragon. This protagonist of one of Kraków's most famous legends is represented by an expressive 6-metre-high bronze sculpture set on a limestone rock. The author of the monument is the distinguished artist Bronisław Chromy. The sculpture stands at the gate of the so-called "Dragon's Den", a unique cave that was created as a result of the circulation of warm waters in the rocky matter of Wawel Hill. The corridors of the cave have a total length of 271 metres,



part of which is open to the public. The Wawel Dragon guards the access to the cave, breathing fire on average every 4-5 minutes – artificial, of course. According to city legend, the Wawel Dragon terrorised Kraków until it was defeated by an ingenious shoemaker: the boy gave the flying reptile a sulphur-laden sheep to devour. After consuming such a "calorie bomb", the Dragon had no choice but to explode.

In the Middle Ages, the Dragon's Den was probably an inn for fishermen and rafters, and perhaps also a house of frivolous pleasures, since the Rybaki district, where breweries and fishermen's houses used to stand, lay at the foot of Wawel Hill. Now, at its foot, there is an avenue of stars where eminent artists – the modern queens and kings of our imagination – leave their handprints. Those who have left their personal marks at the foot of the Castle include Jane Campion, Céline Dion, Luc Besson, Andrzej Wajda, and Peter Weir, among others.

Czerwieński Boulevard, just like Poleski Boulevard on the opposite bank, is sometimes the stage for spectacular artistic and cultural events, especially the section called "Zakole Wisły". This is aided by the terrain – formed by grassy hills that seem to almost flow down towards the river. This creates a natural space reminiscent of an amphitheatre. It fills with spectators, for example, during the summer solstice, when Czerwieński Boulevard becomes the stage for Kraków's "Wianki" – an annual event inspired by Slavic rituals. Originally, at its climax, girls would throw garlands of flowers and herbs onto the water. They believed that they would be fished out by boys destined to love them forever. Sitting on Czerwieński Boulevard, as if in an amphitheatre, you can also watch a multimedia spectacle – the Parade of Dragons. Every year,

huge animated dragons, whose artistic designs are inspired by cultures from the four corners of the world, appear on and by the Vistula River. However, the raids on the city by the foreign flying reptiles do not at all mean that the Wawel Dragon will finally abdicate: there is only one Dragon King in Kraków – forever and ever.

Between Grunwaldzki Bridge and Józef Piłsudski Bridge lies **Inflancki Boulevard**. The natural landscape here is still dominated by green grass, but it has been interestingly counterpointed by the stone texture of the wall, erected at the beginning of the 20th century. This separates the part of the Boulevard located just above the Vistula River from its upper level. A similar wall also appears in other places, creating the aesthetic dimension of the Vistula Boulevards. In this part of Kraków, attention is drawn to the Pauline monastery with the Basilica of St Michael the Archangel and St Stanislaus the Bishop and Martyr, located on Skałeczna Street and hence commonly called “Skałka” or the Basilica “Na Skałce” (Basilica on the Rock). The monastery complex stands on a site where the first traces of settlement appeared as early as 2,000 years before Christ. However, the most important event in the history of the monastery is connected with the martyrdom of Stanisław, Bishop of Kraków, in 1079, caused by a conflict between the clergy and the secular authorities. According to the account of the chronicler Wincenty Kadłubek, the bishop was dragged in front of the altar by King Bolesław the Bold during a service in St Michael’s church. The ruler dealt Stanisław a blow with his sword and then cut his body into pieces. The death of the clergyman became the stuff of legend: passed on by word of mouth, it said that parts of his body miraculously grew back together, with two eagles standing guard. The cruel death of the bishop reverberated so strongly and widely that it became the cause of a civil war. In 1253, Stanisław was canonised. Every year in May, a procession with the saint’s relics takes place, proceeding from Wawel Cathedral, where his remains rest, to the church “Na Skałce”.



We could continue the walk along the left bank of the Vistula for a good couple of hours. However, we could just as well end it on **Kurlandzki Boulevard**. From there, we will go left into the Kazimierz district, which was inhabited by the Jewish diaspora until the Second World War, or we can cross to the right side of the Vistula River – via the Father Bernatek Footbridge or the Powstańców Śląskich Bridge.

We have made our decision: we are now on the right bank of the Vistula – on **Podolski Boulevard**, which occupies the area from the railway bridge in Zabłocie, to the mouth of the river Wilga. In this spot, a beautiful architectural structure from 1980 – Cricoteca – draws our attention. It is a museum and research space devoted to the work of the eminent artist Tadeusz Kantor, who is known throughout the world primarily as a creator of experimental theatre. The seat of Cricoteca is an unusually creative combination of a municipal power station building, existing here since 1900, with a modern architectural mass. The whole piece is inspired by Kantor’s work; primarily by the artist’s drawing entitled Man with a Table. Viewed from the other side of the Vistula, the contemporary part of the construction does indeed resemble a table. Under its “counter” are the buildings of the former power station. They form a compositional group – a separate reality, so to speak – which the modern elements of the building seem to protect. The architectural space of Cricoteca is multiplied and dynamised by reflections of surfaces in mirror-like fragments of the building and in the surface of the Vistula river. In this way, the boundaries between reality and fiction become fluid, just as the boundary between the audience and the stage lost its sharpness in Tadeusz Kantor’s theatre.

Heading along the right bank of the Vistula, towards Grunwaldzki Bridge, we now reach **Wołyński Boulevard**. It is dominated by the former Forum Hotel building. The hotel’s construction took 16 years – longer than it functioned, as guests were received here for only 13 years. The opening of the hotel in 1989 coincided with the change of the





Polish political system. The hotel was seen as a model of modernity, in fact, until its closure in 2002. Today, it serves as a cultural and recreational space and is still one of the last examples of architecture in Kraków referring to modernist forms.

Further away, on **Poleski Boulevard**, almost opposite Wawel, stands another architecturally interesting building. This is the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology. The institution was established on the initiative of Andrzej Wajda. It is involved in disseminating knowledge about the Far East; it contributes to the development of relations between Poland and Japan. The museum's collections include not only contemporary Japanese and Korean art, but also Poland's only collection of paintings inspired by Japanese culture.

The undulating shapes of Manggha's architecture correspond to the proximity of the river, which at one point is crossed by the 19-metre-wide Dębnicki Bridge. It forms the boundary of the Poleski Boulevard, which, however, can be crossed with confidence and we can continue our walk for a long time along the line of the Vistula River. It's worth it – Kraków is still beautiful farther down.

KRAKÓW FORTRESS

The Conquest of Greenery

In the 19th century, Kraków witnessed a marriage, or rather a misalliance, between the God of War and the Goddess Flora. Indeed, from time immemorial, Kraków had been a fortress: first it was surrounded by ramparts, then by walls and bastions, and finally by armoured redoubts, some of the most powerful in Europe. The construction of the latter was decided by Emperor Franz Joseph in 1850 in an attempt to turn the entire city into a fortress.

The fortifications – forts, entrenchments, batteries, barracks and firing ranges – were masterpieces of architecture and engineering in the age

of the Second Industrial Revolution, the age of steam and electricity. They were masked from enemy sight by circles of greenery. Fortress Kraków was designed and built mostly by Poles, financed by the taxes paid by our great-grandfathers. They probably paid them without enthusiasm, but in the knowledge that the fortifications would protect Kraków from the intentions of an aggressive Russia. When, in the last decades of the 19th century, concrete fortlets with long-range cannons began to replace the city ramparts, cannons were already being aimed using telescopes from high vantage points. It was necessary to provide cover from such observers, not just for a single post or even bastion, but for the entire militarised area measuring nearly 20 by 20 kilometres. The rows of trees planted behind individual strongholds meant that the silhouette of the buildings did not stand out against the sky. Green strips, known as “side masks”, connected



the tree plantations with the greenery of manors, farmsteads and river valleys, creating a dark strip of Nature on the horizon. This created the disorientating illusion of a “wilderness” for the enemy, and made the fortified area resemble giant theatrical backdrops, albeit ones composed by gardeners and surveyors.

Beyond the aforementioned, the roads were planted with tens of kilometres of ash, robinia and chestnut rows to disguise the traffic and improve the plight of people and draught animals marching in the summer heat.

Nature was the material of the fortress. Special grasses maintained the fortress slopes, thorny bushes served as natural barbed wire in case of attack, and the tangled roots of hawthorns prevented the construction of trenches. More than 25,000 *acacia robinia* saplings created a kind of giant Venetian mirror that provided a glimpse of the foreground, but prevented potential invaders from penetrating it with fire.

When, at the end of the 19th century, observers gained new aerial positions – in the form of tethered balloons and later the cabins of the first military aeroplanes – the geometric, “theatrical” planting in Kraków changed its character: Fortress Kraków was now masked to hide it all from above, creating a kind of large naturalistic park. All of this was done

with the aim of making the enemy army succumb to the illusion that what was seen was the accidental result of Nature's creativity and the work of farmers, rather than a great work of defence.

Wearing its "green mask", the Fortress entered on the stage of the First World War. In 1918, it passed into Polish hands and continued to serve the Republic. After the Second World War, it lost its military importance. However, the old trees remain. In the 1960s, the green ring around Kraków was so clearly visible that urban planners did not hesitate to call it the "Great Planty" of the Kraków of the future. It has not survived to the present day in its full form, but much of it has been preserved: more than a hundred fortress buildings, 222 ha of old trees, about 10 ha of the so-called "inter-field masks" and nearly 50 ha of greenery along the fortress roads can still be found. The areas of post-fortress Nature areas and open spaces amount to a further 800 ha. For 21st century Kraków, this means approximately 5.84% of the city's green space – in total, more than a thousand hectares of beauty. Thus, in Kraków, there is plenty of room to stroll about with children in tow or go for a bike ride. Moreover, there is somewhere to look out from in the hills surrounding the city, with the fort-parks on their summits. The Green Fortress of Kraków is waiting to be conquered.

POLISH AVIATORS PARK DRAGON SQUARES KRAKOWIANKI PARK *or, a Park in Everyone's Pocket*

In recent years, Nowa Huta has become increasingly popular with visitors. It is absolutely unique, although it is the youngest of Kraków's districts. It was founded in 1949 as a new town that was designed from scratch. It was built in the countryside near Kraków and followed communist ideological and aesthetic models that referenced the Renaissance model of the "ideal city", a "garden city" whose form resembles a well-tended garden. The city was intended as a place to live and work for the labourers employed in the then new metallurgical complex, named after V. Lenin. In 1951, Nowa Huta was incorporated into Kraków. Its complicated history, coinciding with the dramatic history of post-war Poland, has left numerous traces in the architectural, cultural and social fabric of Nowa Huta. It is worth following their trail all the way to modern times – the district is as intriguing today as it was in the past.

Travelling from the Old Town towards Nowa Huta, one cannot deny oneself

the pleasure of seeing one of the youngest parks in Kraków – Czyżyny Aviation Park. It was built in 2020, on the site of the former Municipal Transport Company and on a section of the former taxiway for aircraft. This is an interesting example of how a concrete landscape can be transformed into a pleasant green space, complete with sports and leisure facilities. The only reminder of the area's original function are the silhouette drawings of buses and planes that can be seen on the park's alleys and playing fields.



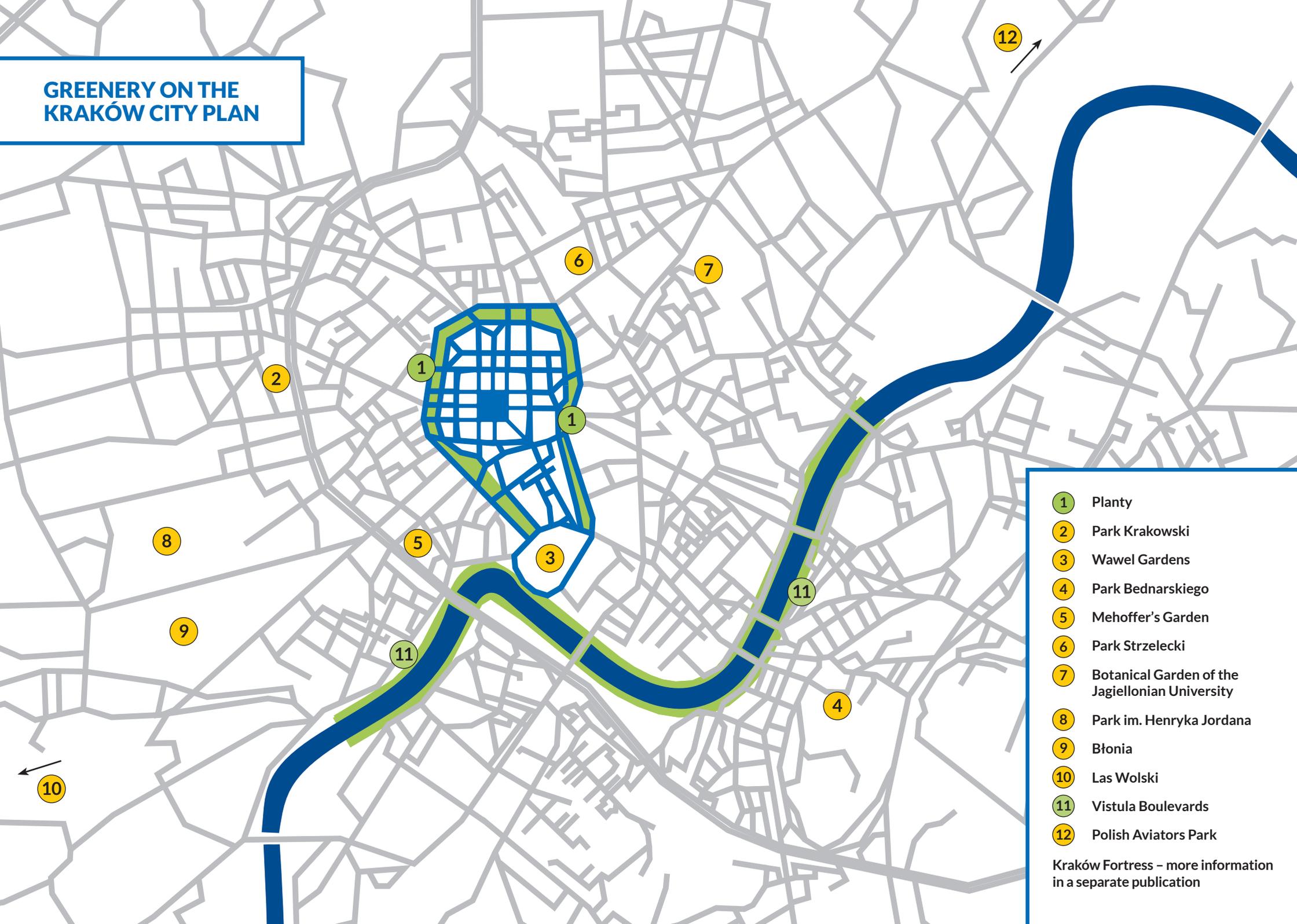
This area is home to the Polish Aviation Museum, one of the oldest institutions of its kind in Europe. Here you can see, among other things, an exhibition of aircraft dating from 1910 to the 1960s. However, the subject of aviation does not end there – the aeronautical theme is also continued in the Polish Aviators Park, which occupies an area of nearly 60 hectares in the Vistula valley. One of the largest parks in Kraków, it owes its name to two monuments erected on its grounds, dedicated to the

memory and glory of Polish airmen. The area also includes the Science Garden, a sensory educational garden where the laws of physics are taught in an interactive way, as well as one of the so-called Dragon Squares – playgrounds for children, with a form that relates to the legend of the Wawel Dragon.

Inventiveness is also the key word with which we open up the meaning and role of yet another type of green space – the Gardens of the Cracovians. They are co-created in various parts of Kraków by the inhabitants themselves. The initiative comes from local communities: all it takes is an idea for a garden to feel like a group of people united in a common cause.

The Gardens of the Cracovians are small in size. They are called "pocket parks" because they usually do not exceed an area of 5,000 m². They can even be the size of a monument, such as envisaged by the project of the Garden of the Women of Kraków, which is to be a "natural monument" reminding us that Poland, in 1918, was one of the first countries in the world to grant women the right to vote. Such a "living monument", unlike one cast in bronze or carved in stone, will grow and develop. And that's a good thing, let's keep Kraków green – until everyone has their own "pocket park". Andrzej Sikorowski, the Kraków bard, sings in one of his songs that here in Kraków, "one walks with the moon in one's buttonhole". So why shouldn't we also carry the park in a pocket?

GREENERY ON THE KRAKÓW CITY PLAN



- 1 Planty
- 2 Park Krakowski
- 3 Wawel Gardens
- 4 Park Bednarskiego
- 5 Mehoffer's Garden
- 6 Park Strzelecki
- 7 Botanical Garden of the Jagiellonian University
- 8 Park im. Henryka Jordana
- 9 Błonia
- 10 Las Wolski
- 11 Vistula Boulevards
- 12 Polish Aviators Park

Kraków Fortress - more information
in a separate publication

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