



AllWays

AllWays leading to Opole, Poland

www.allwaystraveller.com



Upper Silesia is a hidden gem of a Polish region

Opole, on the Oder River, the historical capital of Poland's Upper Silesia region.

One can get there in just under an hour by train from Wrocław, the capital of Lower Silesia.

This makes Opole an excellent twin city option with its larger neighbour.

Opole today is a vibrant city that embraces its Polish, German and Czech cultural influences, gained over the centuries, and with its Old Town district centred around the historic Market Square and University Hill particularly interesting.

Within the city Opole Zoo offers the chance to appreciate its animals in a natural environment.

Just beyond the city the Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture and Niemodlin Castle deserve a visit.

<https://visitopolskie.pl/> and <https://www.poland.travel/en/>

Ashley Gibbins
Commissioning Editor
AllWays traveller



Going the extra mile brings its just rewards

The Upper Silesian capital of Opole deserves to be discovered

By Ashley Gibbins

Ann and I have been visiting Poland annually for the last three years with our first trip to Warsaw, its capital, followed by a short break in Szczecin.

We were looking forward to visiting Wrocław. When it was then suggested we might consider adding a couple of days to the trip to take in Opole.

If we knew very little about Wrocław, the capital of Polish region of Lower Silesia, we knew even less about Opole, the historic capital of Upper Silesia.

This was incentive enough, particularly as Opole is under an hour from Wrocław via a comfortable train journey.

The overnight stay was in the excellent DeSilva Premium hotel (see below).

With every city break we take, Ann and I employ a tour guide, and doing so in Opole comes even more highly recommended.

It makes the difference between an enjoyable stay and a truly memorable one.

Particularly when the guide is Agnieszka Kreduszyńska-Kamionka.

During our one and a half days with Agnieszka, who is a wonderful ambassador for her city, we were able to do and see all we possibly could in the time we had.

We also got so much more from the visit by talking to Agnieszka about the history of the city and region and indeed family life here now and during the turbulent and traumatic times in Poland's more recent history.

She was our translator when meeting people and (as journalists) got answers to the many questions we asked.

Working to a well-planned itinerary we were able to stroll the historic Old Town and Market Square, get to the wonderful Opole Zoo and have a porcelain painting workshop that is far more interesting than it may sound.

On our second day we also made short excursion to the Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture and Niemodlin Castle, both so memorable in their different ways.

Catching the evening train back to Wrocław, we were so pleased we had gone the extra mile to enjoy a short stay in a city of real charm and character.



Opole Market Square



The Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture



Niemodlin Castle



Agnieszka Kreduszyńska-Kamionka

More information

Agnieszka Kreduszyńska-Kamionka at a.kreduszynska@gmail.com

https://www.instagram.com/opole_tourguide

<https://share.google/So85QwIKx6h3eyaGA>

Old Town Opole and University Hill

The Piast Tower

The Piast Tower, on the banks of Oder River, is what remains of the Piast Castle.

The castle, built between 1228 and 1260, and the cylindrical Piast Tower added some 40 years later.

The tower offers a glimpse into Opole's fascinating past along with fine views over the city today for those willing to climb the 163 steps to the top observation deck.

It is a good start any tour of Opole.

<https://www.opole.pl/en/dla-turysty/atracja/piast-tower>

The Market Square

The Market Square, known as the Rynek (the Polish word for market square), is heart of Old Town Opole.

Badly bomb damaged during World War II, it was rebuilt on its medieval layout and in the Baroque style of the 18th century.

Market Square is dominated by the Neo-Renaissance City Hall that was modelled on the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence.

The square is lined by restored, pastel-coloured tenement houses, with the Lion Tenement the oldest and dating back to the Middle Ages, restaurants and cafes and some delightful bakeries.

The Galeria Biały Kruk, which sells a range of artworks created by disabled artists, is well worth a visit.

<https://galeriabialykrak.pl/>

<https://www.opole.pl/en/dla-turysty/atracja/market-square-city-hall>

The Opole Tenement House

Also known as the Rent Tenement House presents the typical interiors of six burgher apartments between 1890 to 1965.

Reflecting the furniture and daily life of their times they bring together original furniture, kitchen appliances and household items.

<https://www.opole.pl/en/dla-turysty/atracja/rent-tenement-house>

University Hill

University Hill is an historical, cultural and educational part of the Old Town and the city's highest point the city's highest point.

Here you find the Artists' Square, with sculptures of Polish artists, poets, and public figures who are historically linked to Opole.

<https://www.opole.pl/en/dla-turysty/atracja/university-hill>



Artists Square



University Hill



The Upper Castle

The Opole Upper Castle, the second castle that stood in the city, was a royal residence and part of the medieval defensive walls.

Known as the Hilltop Castle (for obvious reasons) the Gothic square tower, which was the former gatehouse, is the only part of the castle to survive it still warrants a visit.

Particularly if one gets one of the staff here to explain the history on a brief tour.

<https://medievalheritage.eu/en/main-page/heritage/poland/opole-upper-castle/>



Market Square

Porcelain painting : a folk art stretching back centuries



At the Upper Castle visitor centre we had a hugely enjoyable porcelain painting workshop for a style of folk art unique to the Opole Silesia region.

While originating with the traditional *kroszonka*, the floral decoration of eggs, the process was adapted for porcelain the 1960s to preserve this folk legacy.

Ewa Zolna, who led us through the process, showed us how the hand-painted floral designs are created, with black ink outlines of flowers are then filled in vibrant colours.

While our first attempts were on a tile, the real artists produce a range of painted porcelain products including crockery and commemorative pieces.

While Ann and I were pleased with our first attempt, it did not compare with the beautiful pieces produced by Ewa and her group of artists who are keeping this tradition alive.

It is no wonder Ewa is invited to present the Opole folk art tradition to artists and porcelain experts worldwide.

More information

<https://cepeliaopolska.pl/>

Items of porcelain can be purchased in Opole shops or online at :
<https://cepeliaopolska.pl.>



The Opole Zoo



To be comfortable visiting a zoo, one must feel the animals it holds are treated as 'guests' rather than 'captives'.

This is certainly the case with the Opole Zoo, which is located within a park on Bolko Island, a very pleasant area on the Oder River,

The zoo's extensive collection of animals, including big cats, are held in enclosures that resemble their natural habitats as closely as possible.

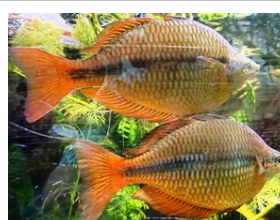
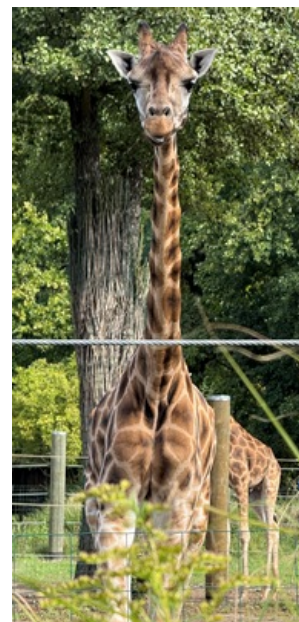
Wherever possible this involves the use of moats and natural barriers rather than cages, which blends perfectly with the island's lush landscaping of trees, shrubs and exotic plants.

Among its collection, the zoo is rightly proud of its large giraffe house, the aquarium and penguin enclosure along with the primate area that is home to monkeys and apes, including gorillas and chimpanzees.

Being able to enjoy the surrounding park as well as the zoo means one can easily spend most of the day at Opole Zoo.

More information

<https://zoo.opole.pl/>





The Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture

The Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture in Opole is a large ethnographic park near Opole.

By Ashlet Gibbins



When our guide Agnieszka suggested visiting an ethnographic park we agreed, while I was wondering just how interesting somewhere that related to 'the scientific description of peoples and cultures with their customs, habits, and mutual differences' would be.

How wrong I was.

The Museum of the Opole Village (Muzeum Wsi Opolskiej) is a more accurate description of this wonderful place, but even this does not do it justice.

The open-air museum features historic rural wooden architecture and the way of life in Upper Lilesia between the 17th to the early 20th century.





Fifty authentic buildings

The 50 or so buildings include farmsteads and cottages, an historic church and village school along with two windmills, a tavern and smithy.

Discovered throughout the region and often in a poor state of repair, these buildings have very carefully dismantled and restored before being transported to park and meticulously restored.

They have also been authentically furnished, with many items original to the building itself.

They now enjoy a protected status in the village and stand peacefully among the tall trees, shrubs and extensive landscaping in this delightful park.

Visitors can stroll through the village, and picnic in any number of pleasant places, while also admiring the buildings and taking a look inside.

While this is interesting in its own right, it is talking to the volunteers, in many of the properties, that brings everything to life and makes a visit to this open-air museum so memorable.

They are so knowledgeable about the buildings and the life and times of those who lived in them.

It is really fascinating hearing about 'village' life in the 19th Century.

The fisherman and his family, the bespoke tailor or a day in the village school.

But it was also truly poignant to understand the disruption and distress caused to who were displaced from their homes during the upheaval of the immediate post-war period.

As such, the *Open-Air Museum of Rural Architecture* rewards on so many levels.

More information

<https://www.opole.pl/dla-turysty/atrakcja/muzeum-wsi-opolskiej> and <https://muzeumwsiopolskiej.pl/>

Niemodlin Castle being restored to former glory

Niemodlin Castle, in the small town of Niemodlin, makes for a very interesting excursion from Opole writes Ashley Gibbins.

The castle, which was built by the Piast Dukes of Opole, dates back to the 14th century as a Gothic fortress.

During the following centuries it saw damage by fire and war but was always rebuilt with extensions in the architectural style that was prevalent at the time.

This is why we find today, a castle embracing Renaissance and Baroque style architecture.

This part of Upper Silesia was part of the German Empire and then Germany until the end of World War II.

It was then occupied by the Soviet Red Army and subsequently transferred to Poland.

Up to and during the War, Niemodlin Castle was owned by the German aristocratic Count Friedrich Leopold von Praschma and had been in his family for centuries.

The Count and his family fled the castle on the eve of the Red Army's arrival in 1945.

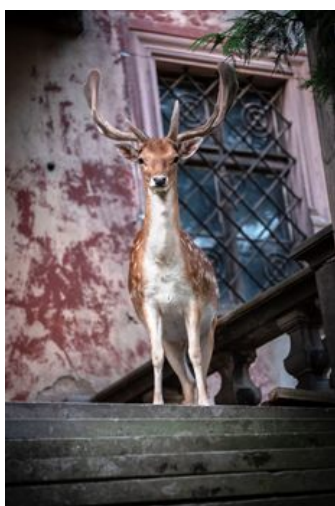
These Russian occupiers, showing little regard for its heritage, embarked on an orgy of vandalism.

During Poland's period under Soviet rule, the building served several uses including as school before falling into disrepair and becoming derelict.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union there were aborted attempts to restore Niemodlin Castle to its former glory.

Thankfully, in recent years the castle was acquired by entrepreneurs with time, resources and vision to bring it back to its former glory.

Work to achieve this is ongoing including converting the original staff quarters into an hotel, which will be a real asset to the castle and the region.



While this will all take time, the castle is already a major tourist attraction and well worth a visit.

It offers guided tours of the interiors, which house historical exhibits, and there is an excellent restaurant and café.

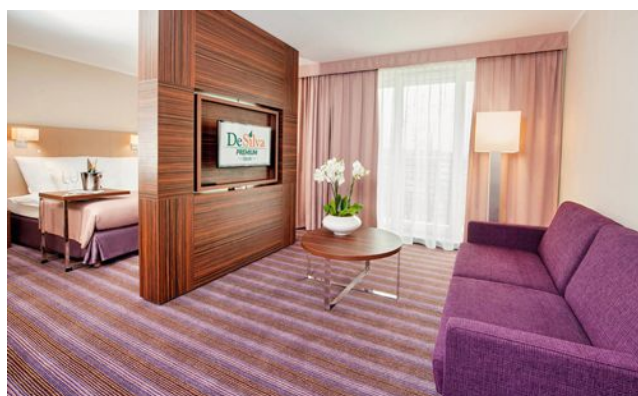
The grounds surrounding castle, where a herd of deer roam freely, have become the European Sculpture Park displaying a growing number of installations.



More information

<https://niemodlinzamek.pl/>

A place to stay in Opole : The DeSilva Premium



This is the place for visitors to this historic city

The DeSilva Premium, situated in the heart of Opole is just a short walk from the railway station and the old town making it a popular stopover for visitors to this historic city.



Comfortable, laid-back, modern and well-furnished, it offers everything needed for an enjoyable short stay.

Our room was large and airy with a fridge, tea and coffee making facilities and ample space to work or relax.

Staff are friendly, helpful and happy to store luggage for you at check-in or check-out so you can explore Opole baggage free.

There is a pleasant reception and cosy lounge area where guests can savour a coffee or, as I did, a pre-dinner cocktail— a classic margarita being my tipple of choice.

Dining at the DeSilva Premium

The restaurant is bright and stylish with an open kitchen so the skilled chefs can be seen at work.

We had a delicious prawn and coconut soup followed by a tasty, perfectly cooked whole trout with hot, crispy fries and a crunchy, white cabbage salad.

The portions were generous and the food well-presented and prepared, using seasonal and regional Silesian produce.

To accompany our meal, we chose a very acceptable chilled glass of white Riesling.

Breakfast

Breakfast here is a real treat, with the buffet full of colourful, enticing food to choose from.

As well as cereals, dried fruits, nuts, seeds, yoghurts, cold meats, cheeses, salads, fresh fruit, olives, pate and crusty breads, there is a hot selection of frittata, scrambled eggs, sausages, baked beans and black pudding.

Room must also be left for the buttery pastries and traditional polish cake.

There is no need for lunch, this feast of a breakfast will keep you going all day.

My advice is full up and then walk it all off seeing the city sights.

More information :

<https://www.desilva.pl/opole/en/>



Katarzyna and Zbigniew Lindner



A unique restaurant full of fine food and character

Wegeneracja is a great and totally unique little vegan only restaurant tucked away in the old town of Opole.

Vegan or not, this place is for you if you like good quality, hearty, well prepared meals using fresh local produce.

The restaurant itself is quaint, cosy, quirky and full of character.

This makes a visit to Wegeneracja feel like walking into the home of rather eccentric but stylish friends.

It has a mix of 50s, 60s and 70s furniture, shabby-chic chairs and tables, potted green plants and whitewashed brick walls displaying colourful posters from various festivals.

An upturned umbrella acts as a light shade, stone floors are warmed by scattered, patterned rugs and books, toys and records can be found littering shelves or tucked away in boxes.



Many items in this collection of lifestyle appliances, tools and artifacts donated by the restaurants many regulars.

There is plenty to look at and catch the eye during lunch.

We were welcomed by owners Katarzyna and Zbigniew Lindner who are passionate about Wegeneracja and the vegan food on offer.

They described what dishes were being served that day and the ingredients used.

There is no fixed menu here, with different creative, flavour-filled dishes are available daily. So there is always something new to try.

We started with a hot and truly satisfying pumpkin soup topped with crunchy seeds.

To follow, I had a generous portion of crispy tofu in breadcrumbs with rice and salad.

Ashley chose a pasta dish with soya sauce, chickpeas and salad along with a very good craft beer.

On leaving, he was given the honour of signing his name on the wall of fame along with other, lesser well-known celebrities who had had the pleasure of dining at Wegeneracja.

More information

<https://www.facebook.com/wegeneracja>

If you liked Opole



AllWays leading to Lower Silesia

Lower Silesia, one of Poland's historical regions, offers more just beyond its capital Wrocław.

While its largest city and gateway to the region is Wrocław, there is much to see beyond its historical capital.

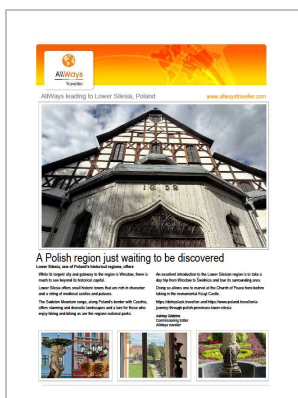
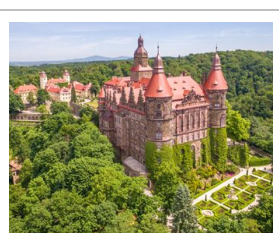
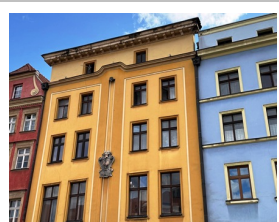
Lower Silesia offers small historic towns that are rich in character and a string of medieval castles and palaces.

The Sudeten Mountain range offers stunning and dramatic landscapes and a lure for those who enjoy hiking and biking as are the regions national parks.

An excellent introduction to the Lower Silesian region is to take a day trip from Wrocław to Świdnica and tour its surrounding area.

Doing so allows one to marvel at the Church of Peace here before taking in the monumental Książ Castle.

<https://dolnyslask.travel/en> and <https://www.poland.travel/en/a-journey-through-polish-provinces-lower-silesia>



AllWays Traveller to Lower Silesia :

<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/allways-features/lower-silesia-a-polish-region-just-waiting-to-be-discovered>



AllWays leading to Wrocław

Wrocław (pronounced roughly Vrots-wahf), the historic capital of Poland's Lower Silesia region does not disappoint.

Sitting on both banks of the Oder River, the city has grown over the centuries by embracing 12 small islands now linked by 120 bridges.

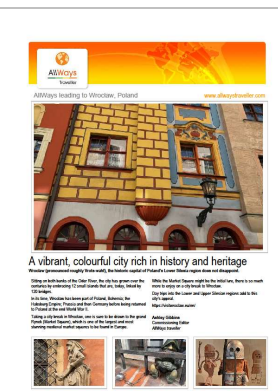
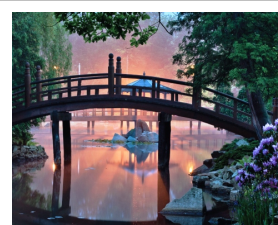
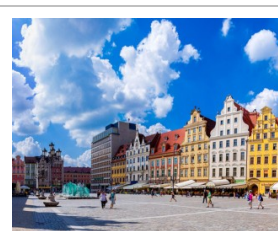
In its time, Wrocław has been part of Poland, Bohemia; the Habsburg Empire; Prussia and then Germany before being returning to Poland in 1945.

Taking a city break in Wrocław, one is sure to be drawn to the grand Rynek (Market Square), which is one of the largest and most stunning medieval market squares to be found in Europe.

While the Market Square might be the initial lure, there is so much more to enjoy on a city break to Wrocław.

Day trips into the Lower and Upper Silesian regions add to this city's appeal.

<https://visitwroclaw.eu/en/>



AllWays Traveller to Wrocław :

<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/allways-features/wroclaw-a-vibrant-colourful-city-rich-in-history-and-heritage>



AllWays leading to Warsaw

This is very much in contrast to the city's relatively recent history.

Warsaw was ravaged during World War II with Poland itself repressed, as a Soviet bloc country, for forty plus years afterwards.

With democratic change in the early 1990s, Warsaw has embraced its new lease of life and has come truly into its own.

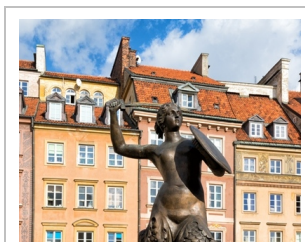
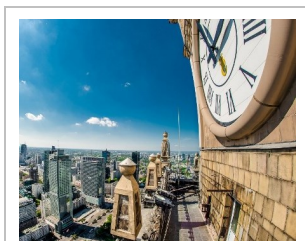
Discovering Warsaw, today, it is easy to understand why the city was voted *European Best Destination of the Year 2023*.

Warsaw is a city of great historic and cultural heritage, with splendid parks and gardens, fine dining opportunities and an excellent transport network.

The old town is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site

The city also wholeheartedly embraces Frederick Chopin as its favourite son.

www.go2warsaw.pl



AllWays leading to Szczecin

The port city of Szczecin is located on the Oder River in northwest Poland.

When Poland opted for a democratic future in the early 1990s, Warsaw Poznan, Krakow and Gdansk were the first to welcome international visitors.

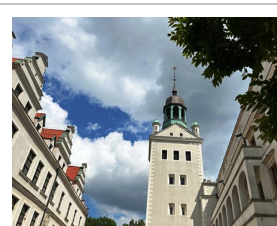
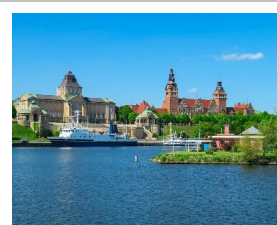
The city of Szczecin needed more time to establish itself as a short break destination but, in recent years, has made a genuine commitment to laying the foundations of its tourism infrastructure.

It now offers a warm visitor welcome in a fascinating city with excellent accommodation and dining options.

This makes Szczecin an alluring and rewarding city break in its own right.

It can also be paired with day trips to the seaside resorts along the bracing Baltic Sea or as a base for discovering the fine wines being produced in West Pomeranian wineries.

<https://visitszczecin.eu/en>



AllWays Traveller to Warsaw :
<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/continents/europe/warsaw-is-soaring-upwards-and-onwards>

AllWays Traveller to Szczecin :
<https://www.allwaystraveller.com/continents/europe/warsaw-is-soaring-upwards-and-onwards>



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www.allwaystraveller.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.

www.itwalliance.com



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