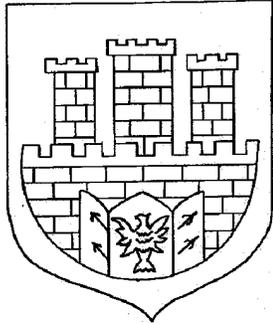


Cracow (Krakow)



KRAKOW

Cracow (Krakow in Polish) is a city that lies on the Vistula River in south-central Poland and has a population of over 750,000. Cracow first gained importance during the 8th and 9th centuries because of its strategic location at the crossroads of the European - Asian trade routes. In 1037, it became the capital of Poland and the scene of royal coronations. The 14th and 15th centuries witnessed its peak

development. During this time new defense walls were built around the city, which included a number of large and important buildings. In 1364, a university was founded by King Casimir the Great. Cracow then became a scholarly center of international fame. One of those who studied at the Academy of Cracow was Nicolaus Copernicus.

During this period the city grew considerably. Magnificent structures such as the Sukiennice or Cloth Hall, the Mariacki or St. Mary's Church with its great altar carved by Wit Stwosz in the years 1477-1489, and many other churches and residences were built.

In the 16th century, Cracow became the focal point of Renaissance influences. At this time, the Gothic Royal Castle on Wawel was also built at this time, and the Cloth Hall had a second level added to it in the Renaissance style.

When the capital was transferred to Warsaw in 1596, the political and economic importance of Cracow decreased considerably, but it remained the cultural center of the country. During the period when Poland lost its independence it was in Cracow that the 1794 national uprising under Tadeusz Kosciuszko was proclaimed.

Following the Third Partition of Poland in 1795, Cracow fell under the domination of Austria. During the years 1809-1815 it was part of the Duchy of Warsaw. For the following 31 years it was a free city, called the Republic of Cracow but later was again incorporated into Austria.

In the period between the two world wars, Cracow became the capital of the province, and along with Warsaw, a main center of education and culture in the country. It survived destruction during World War II

At present, Cracow is a city of museums and a storehouse of national treasures as well as a center of art, learning, and industry. Poland's greatest metallurgical complex in the city of Nowa Huta arose on what were once outlying fields and is now a district of Cracow. The city manufactures chemicals, drugs, leather, textiles, and processed foods.

People from all over the world visit Cracow, the altar at St. Mary's Church (Mariacki), cultural events including the Krakow Jazz Festival and the Alternative Theater Festival of Arts. The Cloth Hall has the largest concentration of folk hand crafts of every type, including folk costumes, lacework, embroidery, wood carvings, wycinanki (paper cutouts), dolls, reverse paintings on glass, and amber jewelry.

Cracow has eleven institutions of higher education including Jagiellonian University established in 1364, scientific centers, theaters, world class museums and historical sites which testify to its leading position in Poland's cultural and intellectual life.

Thus present day Cracow, city of legends and relics of by-gone days, is a link binding together Poland's past with the present.