

Bejsce. A knight's stronghold with a chapel and later a church existed in Bejsce most probably in the 10th century. The little town of Bejsce was subsequently in the possession of the following noble families: the Firlejs - since 1678, the Potockis - since 1767, Prince Hieronim Sanguszko - since 1796, the Badenis - since 1878, and the Byszewskis.

Sights:

The Gothic St Nicolas' Church founded between the 14th and 15th centuries by the first owners of Bejsce, the Firlejs. Adjacent to the southern wall is a chapel built in 1594-1601, patterned on the Zygmuntowska Chapel from the Wawel Cathedral. It's one of Poland's most valued example of the small sacral architecture.

The neoclassical Badeni family palace was commissioned by Marcin Badeni and raised in the years 1802-1804. It's not an coincidence that the building looks like the Belvedere Palace in Warsaw – it was designed by the same architect Jakub Kubicki

Bejsce Communal Office
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Bodzentyn The little town of Bodzentyn came into being through the urban settlement translocation from the nearby Tarczek by the Cracovian (Kraków) bishop Jan Bodzanta between 1348 and 1355. A Gothic collegiate church was founded by cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki in 1450. The local castle was converted into a palatial residence in the late-16th century. Following the administration reform of 1870, Bodzentyn lost its municipal rights and became a village. It regained its former municipal status in 1994.

Sights:

The origins of the castle in Bodzentyn date back to the 14th century, when the Cracovian bishop Jan Bodzanta had a wooden manor built upon River Psarka. This was replaced by a brick castle with moat commissioned by another Cracovian bishop Florian of Mokrsko, and was connected to the town fortifications. Only walls of the castle with window openings

survived till today; some of its window openings still have frames with the Nałęcz coat-of-arms on them. Another element relatively well-preserved is a portal made of red sandstone.

An example of specific architecture prevailing in little rural towns is a well-preserved farm of the Czernikiewicz family in 3 Maja Street.

In the mid-17th century the former wooden church was replaced by a brick building of the Church of the Holy Spirit. It functioned as a hospital church till June 1917, when a huge part of the town together with the church were destroyed by fire. Recently, some conservation works have been started on the ruins of the Church of the Holy Spirit.

The Gothic Collegiate Church of St Stanislaus the Bishop was erected in the years 1440-152, founded by cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki. Its nave features late-Renaissance vaults, while the older cross-ribbed vaults are still decorating its sacristy and treasury room. In the presbytery stands a Renaissance altar piece made in 1546, and originally designated for the Wawel Cathedral. Rich decorations of the church interior include Renaissance tombstones, a splendid early-Renaissance painting on wood known as the Bodzentyn Triptych (1508), a Gothic sculpture of Madonna with Child (ca. 1430), and a late-Gothic baptismal font.

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Chęciny. First mentioned in the records on 22 May 1275, the location of the present town of Chęciny is closely connected with the castle raised at the turn of the 13th century. Its importance quickly grew because it was not only a mighty fortress but also located at the very crossing of important trade routes. The nearby village Chęciny gave its name to all extra muros settlements that were inhabited by people servicing residents of the castle. The king and his knights often gathered in the castle. In 1363, king Kazimierz III Wielki (1310-1370) established a starosty in Chęciny and finished the construction of the parish church started by his father king

Władysław Łokietek (1261-1333). In 1368, he founded a monastery for the Franciscan order. Before the Swedish wars halted the development of the town in the 17th century, Chęciny went through a period of vigorous economic growth that started in the 15th century, when the town became an important center of mining copper and lead ores.

Sights:

Plac 2 Czerwca (Duży Rynek) – (Grand Market Square) constitutes a historical urban layout together with the network of narrow, medieval streets.

The castle was erected before 1306 and functioned as a high-sitting fortress. King Kazimierz III Wielki wanted it to become a residence for royal widows. His second wife Adelaide and his sister Elżbieta stayed there. At the end of the 14th century the castle was turned to a prison. One of the prisoners was king Władysław Jagiełło's brother Andrzej Wingold who revolted against the king. The Teutonic Knights were also among the prisoners. Three times destroyed during the ages, the castle never regained its original splendor, and today it is just a historical ruin.

The parish church of St Bartholomew is situated on a rocky terrace excavated in the slope of Mt Zamkowa (300m). Erected in the 15th century, the church acquired its present appearance during the last remodeling in the years 1830-40. However, its Gothic shape has been preserved. The early-Baroque altar and late-Renaissance stalls are the main elements of its interior decorations. A burial Three Kings chapel of the burgher Fotyga family was added to the southern side of the church.

The Franciscan church and monastery was founded by king Kazimierz III Wielki in 1368. The monastic complex acquired its present-day appearance during the remodeling ordered by starosta (elder) of Chęciny Stanisław Branicki after 1605. In spite of many reconstruction works, the church retained its Gothic shape.

The first church dedicated to St Mary Magdalene was raised with the funds donated by the mayor and councilors of Chęciny in the mid-16th century. Anunnery for the Bernardine sisters was soon added to the church. Kacper Fotyga built a house near the nunnery and donated it to the arriving Clare Sisters, who occupied the complex till 1930, when it became again the of the Bernardine

nuns. The church interiors received Baroque decorations; its cross-ribbed vaults (17thc.) are additionally ornamented with rosettes.

A Renaissance burgher house known as **Kamiennica Niemcówka** was erected in 1570. It was owned by a couple, Walenty and Anna born Niemiec. The house retained many interesting architectural elements in spite of serious remodeling works.

Kamienica Niemcówka – Tourist Information Center in Chęciny
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www.checiny.pl

According to legends, a several-kilometer-long underground corridor led from Ossolin via Klimontów to Ujazd during the rule of Zbigniew, Jerzy and Krzysztof Ossolinskis. Apparently, the founder of the town himself used to cover that distance in horse-drawn sleighs, first ordering the passage ground sprinkled with sugar.

Klimontów derives its name from the Cracovian castellan Klemens, who founded the locality in 1240. It was granted its municipal rights on 2 January 1604. At that time, Klimontów belonged to Jan Zbigniew Ossoliński, founder of the church dedicated to St Hyacinth. His son, Grand Chancellor of the Crown Jerzy Ossoliński, became its owner at the age of 28, and asked Lawrence Senes to design a project of new church. The parish church dedicated to St Joseph was erected in the years 1643-50. Klimontów preserved the urban layout and characteristics of a little town.

Sights:

The St Hyacinth's Church and the adjacent buildings of the monastery constitute a well-preserved monastic complex erected in 1617-20. The church has ogival windows and vaults with Renaissance-like stucco decorations. It contains an original wardrobe of the Rosary Confraternity with a scene of the Annunciation painted on its door.

The early-Baroque parish church dedicated to St Joseph was built on a little hill, north-west of the market square. Completed in the years 1643-50, the church was equipped with rococo interior decorations including a high

alter, pulpit and choir loft. With crucified Jesus as the central figure, the Holy Cross altar framed by the Jesse Tree was built before 1650. The church crypt shelters Baroque tombstones of the Ossoliński family.

The synagogue in Klimontów has a large prayer room and a portico with four columns. Beneath the section for women there is a vestibule, a part of which served as a classroom (cheddar). The front of the building is topped with a triangle gable with a tripartite window, or serliana.

Tourist Information Center in Klimontów
Public Library
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Nowy Korczyn. Originally, Korczyn was a trade settlement on the route leading from Cracow (Kraków) to Kiev Ruthenia. Next to it, duke Bolesław Wstydlwy established Nowe Miasto Korczyn granting it a location charter in 1258. In 1257, just before the location, the duke and his wife Kinga founded a monastery for the Franciscan order. King Kazimierz III Wielki had a castle erected in Nowy Korczyn (14th c.), and the town soon became an important royal residence. Unfortunately, the castle was destroyed during the Swedish invasions in the 17th and 18th centuries. After the January Uprising (1863-64), Nowy Korczyn lost its municipal status. Now, it's the seat of communal office and local administration.

Sights:

The Franciscan monastery and the church dedicated to St Stanislaus the Bishop were founded by duke Bolesław Wstydlwy (1226-1279) and his wife Kinga in 1257. King Kazimierz III Wielki had the castle reshaped and enlarged (14th c.). Later the church acquired a new Baroque interior and facade, but some fragments of the early-Gothic wall paintings from the 13th-14th centuries are still visible. The only preserved eastern wing of the monastery is now used as the church presbytery.

The wood and brick **Church of the Holy Trinity** (16th c.) was raised for the Jesuit order. Noteworthy is the sumptuous Renaissance western facade and two arcaded gardens adjacent to the presbytery. A smaller chapel was added to



Bejsce – the Badeni family palace



Castle in Bodzentyn



Castle in Chęciny



Parish church in Klimontów



Church of the Holy Trinity in Nowy Korczyn

the church northern side. Its alter contains a late-Gothic bas-relief representing the Lamentation over the Dead Christ, a part of the lost triptych.

In the remains of the neoclassical synagogue (18th c.) is a large prayer room with Aron ha-kodesh.

The Długosz House (16th c.), or the Academy, stands in the corner of the large market square. Its ground floor is decorated with barrel vaults with lunettes.

On the opposite side of the market square stands a ruined house which was occupied by Józef Piłsudski in 1914. It was in Nowy Korczyn that the Polish national leader located his staff and headquarters

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Pińczów. Picturesquely situated Pińczów, once called the Polish Athens and today the highlight of the Ponidzie region, retained many historical monuments nicely fitted into its environs.

Sights:

The neoclassical Wielopolski family palace was erected in the late 18th century. There are neoclassical vases and two stone sculptures (18th c.) standing in front of the palace. A garden tower (16th c.) stands in the park surrounding main building. It was designed by Santi Gucci.

The same artists is the author of St Ann's Chapel built on the Monastery Hill in 1600. This late-Renaissance square structure is topped with a dome with lantern. A small porch was raised in front of the temple. It was the first free-standing chapel in Poland that had exclusively religious function.

The Dom na Mirowie rural-style building, known as the Arian printing house, was built at the turn of the 16th century. It is now occupied by a branch of the State Archives in Kielce.

What remains in Pińczów of the rich Jewish heritage is the synagogue erected at the turn of the 16th century. There are still remains of the stucco decorations on the vault, wall paintings in two places on the walls, portals and an elm-box in the women section.

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Szydłów - was a settlement situated close to the trade route running along the Vistula River. It was mentioned in the historical records for the first time in 1191. Due to its convenient location and historical developments, Szydłów prospered and received its municipal rights

from king Władysław I Łokietek in 1329. The castle and St Ladislaus Church were founded by king Kazimierz III Wielki in the mid-14th century. The town was also surrounded by fortifications with the gates: Krakowska, Opatowska and Wodna. The town's decline started in the 17th century following the fire set up by revolted hired soldiers in 1630, Swedish invasions, and the disastrous 'visit' paid by the army of duke György Rákóczi, a Hungarian ally of the Swedes. Szydłów suffered much destruction during the final years of World War II as well.

Sights:

Originally Gothic, the Krakowska Gate is the only surviving one of the three gates built in the 14th century in the town's defensive walls. Its upper parts were later remodeled in the Renaissance style.

In place of a wooden church, king Kazimierz III Wielki founded another one dedicated to St Ladislaus in 1355. Next to it stands an old belfry.

Only four sections (700m) of the Szydłów defensive walls (14th c.) survived till today. The walls were founded by king Kazimierz III Wielki and the town was added to the network of the country's strongholds.



Castle ruins in Szydłów

The main building of the Szydłów castle is in ruin. Of the partly preserved castle premises worth a visit is the Knights' Hall and the Skarbczyk (16th c.), now the seat of the Regional Museum.

The synagogue was built of stone in the mid-16th century. The wall-paintings and stucco decorations were added in the 18th century. Arms and foodstuffs were stored in the synagogue building during World War II. It was used for film projections after the war.

The Gothic All Saints Church (14th c.) stands outside the city walls. Its interiors are decorated with Gothic frescoes dating from ca. 1375.

Tourist Information Center in Szydłów
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www.szydlow.pl

Wiślica used to be one of the major urban centers in the Małopolska region. The oldest traces of a stronghold built during the reign of king Bolesław Chrobry (967-1025) were found on an island known as Grodziskowa. During the period of feudal fragmentation of Poland, Wiślica was in power of duke Henryk Sandomierski, who founded the second church in Wiślica after that of St Nicolas. The remains of that building as well as those of the next church are now in the foundations of the collegiate church (14th c.) ordered by king Kazimierz III Wielki. Pope John Paul II granted the church a status of Basilica Minor in 2005.

The town really flourished during the reign of king Kazimierz III Wielki, who also founded a castle and defensive walls with three gates: Buska, Krakowska and Zamkowa.

Archaeological digs carried out in the 1960s and 1970s revealed facts which allowed the scientists to put forward an assumption that the Wiślica land inhabitants were baptized ca. 880, nearly a hundred years before the ruler of Polish tribes, duke Mieszko I, accepted Christianity in 966. According to the so-called Pannonian legend relating the activities of SS Cyril and Methodius in the Wiślanie State (Wiślanie – people living close and along the Wisła River, or the Vistula River in English), the "powerful pagan ruler residing in Wisła" was forced to get baptized by the Great Moravian ruler. The gypsum baptismal font (4.5 meters in diameter) discovered in Wiślica is believed to be the first Polish baptistery.

Russo-Byzantine frescoes are preserved on the church walls. In the northern wall, there is a bricked up small Gothic window; according to tradition, this is the window from which the so-called Wiślica Statutes were announced in 1347. It was the first code of laws for the Małopolska province enforced on the initiative of king Kazimierz III Wielki.

The Długosz House was founded by the well-know chronicler Jan Długosz in 1460, and designated for canons and vicars. Now, the one-storied building houses a presbytery and an exhibition prepared by the parish and staff of the Regional Museum. There are a few Gothic wall-paintings in the house interiors.

Regional Museum in the Dom Długosza
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According to tradition, Jan Długosz, tutor to sons of king Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, was conducting classes in one of the rooms on the first floor. All his royal students turned to be outstanding personalities: Władysław became the king of Bohemia and Hungary, Kazimierz – a saint, Jan Olbracht, Aleksander and Zygmunt – kings of Poland, and Fryderyk became a cardinal and the head of the Gniezno archbishopric.

Sights:

The Slab of Orants, or Tablica Orantów, also known as the Wiślicka Plate, belongs to Poland's most important historical monuments representing Romanesque art. Most probably made in the years 1166-77, it is divided into two square fields in which one can see praying groups, each of three persons. The whole is framed with a border featuring symbolic floral and animal motives.

The Basilica Minor in Wiślica. In its high alter, there is a late-Romanesque sculpture (ca. 1300) of Our Lady known as the Madonna Łokietkowa. Over the southern entrance to the basilica, a foundation plate was built in. It shows king Kazimierz III Wielki on his knees before Our Lady with Child. Very rare in Poland



Slab of Orants in Wiślica

The origins of the name Psia Górka (Dog's Hillock) in Wiślica go back to the 14th century scandal. A certain Gniewosz of Dalewice publicly accused queen Jadwiga of being unfaithful to her much older husband, king Władysław Jagiełło. The queen asked for a trial, and it proved her innocence. Gniewosz was sentenced to pay a fine and eat his own words. Willy-nilly, Gniewosz had to get under a bench, say: "I lied as a dog", and bark a few times. Ever since that time the place where the sentence was announced is known as the Dog's Hillock.

Zawichost. was for the first time mentioned in the records in ca. 1148. There was a castle and a trade settlement located close to the river-crossing over the Vistula. It's assumed that Zawichost obtained its municipal charter before 1255. When it became a royal town in the 14th century, king Kazimierz III Wielki founded a fortified castle which was supposed to protect the nearby river-crossing. Zawichost was situated on the trade route leading from Krakow to Lithuania in the 15th and 16th centuries. The town suffered damaged during fierce fights for the control of the river-crossing in 1944.

Sights:

The parish church of the Ascension of the Holy Virgin Mary was built of stone on the Greek cross plan. A few times destroyed during the Tatar and Swede invasions, it was restored by Cyprian Lange in the 18th century.

The former Franciscan church dedicated to St John the Baptist (13th c.) once belonged to the nuns of the order of St Clare and was their first seat in Poland. Founded by prince Bolesław Wstydlivy, the church and the nunnery were the dowry of the prince's sister Salome who entered the order and came to live in Zawichost.

A long time ago the Vistula strong current washed off a Romanesque chapel dedicated to St Maurice and erected in the early 11th century. A fragment of the church apse survived and can be visited.

Only a Romanesque portal in the northern wall has been preserved of all the original elements of the Holy Trinity Church (early 13th c.). Its interior decorations are kept in the rococo and late-Baroque styles.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKI REGION



Pińczów

HISTORICAL LITTLE TOWNS

Bejsce, Bodzentyn, Chęciny, Klimontów, Nowy Korczyn
Pińczów, Szydłów, Wiślica, Zawichost