

SANDOMIERZ, None of Poland's towns can boast such a wonderful location as Sandomierz. Occupying a few hills and a high escarpment from which unfolds a splendid view over the Vistula valley, the town has more than 120 monuments of architecture. Most of them date back to the Middle Ages and that's why Sandomierz is considered a real gem of the Świętokrzyski region. It's difficult to mention all town's attractions but even the most demanding visitors will not leave Sandomierz unsatisfied.

The highlight of the town is its old town with the Renaissance town hall standing in the middle of the market square. The ground floor of the town hall is occupied by the exhibitions of the Regional Museum; they reveal to us the historical development of Sandomierz. Interesting are old burgher houses that line the market square. Worth a special attention is the Oleśnicki family house (16th c.), Mikołaj Gomółka house (16th c.), St Andrzej Bobola boarding school (17th c.), and the House Under Ciżemka (16th c.).

Very beautiful view of the market square can be enjoyed by those who enter the town through Opatów Gate (Brama Opatowska), one of Poland's best pre-

One of the legends tells us that more than a thousand years ago Prince Sędomir from Moravia arrived to the area where now stands the town of Sandomierz. He was looking for the promised land – a fertile, sunny and peaceful place, where he could settle down together with his people. Remembering a story told by one of his guests, the prince set off seeking a way to the Biedrzycha stronghold in the land of Lędzianie, located on white hills and upon a river. He never reached the stronghold, but enchanted by green hills upon a river (environs of Sandomierz), the prince decided to settle down there. The prince and his people lived peaceful and prosperous life, and their stronghold grew bigger from year to year. When Sędomir died, the grateful inhabitants raised a magnificent grave-mound for their ruler known today as the Salve Regina Hill and decided to give the name of Sędomir to the town.

Another legend has it that Halina Krępianka died a hero's death in the town basements in the 13th century when Sandomierz suffered from Tatar raids. She had an ingenious idea of getting into the invaders' camp and setting up a trap. She got outside the town walls and let herself be captured by the enemies. Brought to face the Tatar chieftain she declared that she held a grudge against somebody in town and wishing to avenge herself she was ready to lead warriors into the town through underground passages. The chieftain agreed and as soon as the last of the Tatar invaders disappeared in the underground corridors the defenders sealed the entry with rocks and mud. Furious with anger, the Tatar chieftain pierced Halina through the back with a spear. However, all Tatar warriors got trapped for ever and the town of Sandomierz was saved.

Walking along ul. Mariacka towards the Vistula river, we reach the 14th century cathedral founded by Kazimierz III Wielki (Casmir III the Great). This massive church has preserved much of its Gothic interior as well as the Russo-Byzantine frescoes (1421) and the unique alters and por-

served medieval city gates. There were four such gates incorporated in the medieval defensive system of the town, but only Opatów Gate survived. Visitors can admire the panoramic view of the old town from its top (30 m).

The Sandomierz market square can also be admired from the underground level. One of the town's star attractions is the Underground Tourist Route (470 m in length, 12 m in depth), which leads through a chain of 30-odd cellars beneath the houses around the market square.

Tourist Information Center
PTTK Branch in Sandomierz
ul. Rynek 12, 27-600 Sandomierz
tel. +48 15 832 2305, tel./fax. +48 15 8322682
www.pttk-sandomierz.pl

Diocesan Museum of Sacral Art
ul. Rynek 1, 27-600 Sandomierz
tel. +48 693 378 799
www.zamek-sandomierz.pl
Open: April – October, Tue-Sat 9am – 4pm,
Sunday and holidays 1:30pm – 4pm,
November – March, Tue-Sat 9:30am – 3pm,
Sunday and holidays 1:30pm – 3pm.

tals (17th and 18th cc.) made from black marble and decorated with pink marble. King Kazimierz III Wielki was also the founder of the Royal Castle, which originally had four wings encompassing the court yard decorated with columns. Only the western wing survived the Swedish invasion of 1656; the Swedes dynamited the fortress during the siege. It now accommodates the Regional Museum.

Underground Tourist Route
ul. Oleśnickich 1, 27-600 Sandomierz
Kontakt PTTK, ul. Rynek 12,
27-600 Sandomierz
tel. +48 15 832 23 05, +48 15 832 26 82
www.pttk-sandomierz.pl
Open: May – October, daily 10am – 6pm,
September – April, daily 10am – 5pm.

The late-Romanesque St James' Church (1226) is considered the most important sacral monument in Sandomierz. It's believed to be the first brick church in Poland and is particularly renowned for its Romanesque northern portal. Sandomierz can be admired not only from above and under the ground, but also from the water. Taking a cruise along the Vistula, we discover quite a new face of the town. Firstly, we notice the white building of the Collegium Gostomianum (17th c.) located on top of the Vistula escarpment. In the well-preserved former school wing of the Jesuit college functions one of Poland's oldest secondary schools. The adjacent plot is occupied by the red brick building of the Długosz House from 1476. Inside, the Diocesan Museum features furniture, tapestries, ceramics, crafts and archaeological artifacts, and a collection of religious art.

Regional Museum in the Castle
ul. Zamkowa 12, 27-600 Sandomierz
tel. +48 15 644 57 57 tel./fax. +48 15 832 22 65
www.zamek-sandomierz.pl
Open: May – September, Tue-Fri 10am – 5pm,
Sat-Sun 10am-6pm
October – April, Tue-Fri 9am-4pm
Sat 9am – 3pm, Sun 10pm – 3pm.

Farmers of Sandomierz and its environs are known to be the second Poland's most important producers of fruits and vegetables. They cultivate on the total area of approx. 50 thousand acres, of which $\frac{3}{4}$ are occupied by apple trees. The remaining acreage is covered by orchards of sour-cherry, pear, plum, sweet-cherry, peach and apricot. Melons and watermelons as well as grapes and nectarines are also planted here thanks to favorite climatic and soil conditions. The sea of white flowers of apple trees in bloom can be admired at the turn of April, but the autumnal time of fruit harvest is also very picturesque.

Historical monuments, churches and old houses are not the only attractions of Sandomierz. Located in the middle of the loessic soil region, the town environs are rich in monuments of nature. The most attractive is the Queen Jadwiga Gorge (500 m in length, 10 m in depth in places) cutting between St James' and St Paul's Hills. The entrance to the gorge is near St James' Church. Another interesting excursion will lead you to the nature reserve of the Pepper Mountains (Góry Pieprzowe) that can be reached when following the trail with red markings starting from the old town market square (2,5 km). Built of Cambrian shales (rocks 500 million years old), this range features a number of elevations; their color and shape resembles pepper grains. The reserve also hosts many sites with xerothermic and steppe plants.

Diocesan Museum of Sacral Art
ul. Długosza 9, 27-600 Sandomierz, tel. +48 15 833 26 70
www.domdługosza.sandomierz.opoka.org.pl
Open: April – October, Tue-Sat 9am – 4pm,
Sunday and holidays 1:30pm – 4pm,
November – March, Tue-Sat 9:30am – 3pm,
Sunday and holidays 1:30pm – 3pm.

Boat Cruises on the Vistula
Tadeusz Prokop
ul. Kochanowskiego 10, 27-200 Sandomierz
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The Pepper Mountain, sometimes called the Rose Mountains, are known to be the largest natural habitat of rose shrubs in Poland. Out of 25 varieties that exist in Poland, 12 are found here. May and June are the best months to admire their beautiful flowers, and their pretty red fruit look really attractive in late summer or early autumn.

O**PATÓW**, is the oldest stronghold of the Sandomierz region. Once known as Żmigród, it is located near the national road number 74 from Kielce to Lublin. First in possession of the Benedictine order, the town went subsequently into the hands of the king and the prince. The heyday of Opatów came in the early 16th century when the town was owned by Crown Chancellor Krzysztof Szydłowiecki. It was then that the town was surrounded by defensive walls with four gates and provided with a water system. The only one to survive till the present time is the Warsaw Gate built in the years 1520-30. It's topped with the reconstructed Renaissance attic, and there are loop-holes in two of its walls. Passing through the arcaded gate opening visitors reach the highlight of Opatów historical buildings – its Collegiate Church of St Martin the Bishop. It's believed that the Romanesque-style church was erected



Castle founded by King Kazimierz III Wielki



Collegium Gostomianum



Queen Jadwiga Gorge in Sandomierz



Pepper Mountains



Collegiate Church in Opatów

of stone in the 1130s. This large three-nave basilica with transept retained many Romanesque elements in spite of frequent remodellings. They are visible in its southern tower, transept, and apse as well as in its presbytery (windows). It also has Romanesque portals. Of particular interest are the tombstones of chancellor Szydłowiecki and his family. The chancellor's tombstone is made of two bas-reliefs. One of them is known as the Opatów Lament: it shows Opatów residents mourning the deceased owner of the town.

Roman-Catholic Parish of St Martin the Bishop
ul. S. „Grota” Roweckiego 8,
27-500 Opatów
tel./fax +48 15 868 27 64
www.kolegiataopatow.sandomierz.opoka.org.pl

The town center is an excellent example of a medieval urban layout with its town hall from the turn of the 16th century standing in the middle of the market square. The highlight of Opatów is its Underground Tourist Route (300 meters long) leading through the basements of the former burgher houses surrounding the market square. The basement rooms (46) occupy three levels and go to the depth of 14 meters. When Opatów prospered these basement served to the local merchants as store rooms for their goods, especially for wine.

**Underground Tourist Route
& Tourist Information Center
PTTK Branch Office in Opatów**
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27-500 Opatów
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There are many legends about the Opatów underground passages and cellars. According to one of them, the Tatars decided to break into the town and plunder the goods kept by the Opatów merchants in the cellars. The Tartar khan and his riders pillaged and burnt all villages on their way to Opatów. Fear-stricken residents deliberated how to defend themselves against the Mongol attackers. An ingenious idea came from Staszko, a blacksmith's apprentice, who saw a little mouse making a burrow and hiding hazelnuts inside there. His idea was to construct cellars and corridors underground to protect people and their belongings. Thus, when the invaders entered the town, they only found empty, deserted houses. They set fire to wooden dwellings and disappointed left the town. The Opatów residents liked the idea so much that they built more basements interconnected by passages and in this way created a real underground town.

Another famous sacral monument of architecture worth seeing in Opatów is the Bernardine church and monastery complex. It's located on the left bank of River Opatówka, where once stood a medieval stronghold known as Żmigród. The first church was erected in the 12th century. When it was taken over by the Bernardine order in 1471, a new monastic complex was started; first built in the Gothic, it was later remodeled into the Baroque style. Its present rococo interior contains interesting sculptures by a Lviv artist Maciej Polejowski. They are to be found in the high altar and in the side alters as well. A powerful Gothic crucifix and old epitaphs can be seen in the monastic part of the complex.

Interesting collections have been gathered by the Museum of Geodesy and Cartography seated in the Powiat Starosty. Classified and prepared for touring visitors are huge geodetic devices for processing of photos as well as small measuring instruments and a rich collection of cadastral maps.

Museum of Geodesy and Cartography
ul. Sienkiewicza 17, 27-500 Opatów
tel. +48 15 868 47 77
www.muzeumgeodezji.opatow.pl
Open: Mon-Fri 8am-3pm,
Sat-Sun on telephone request

Zawichost upon the Vistula is located some 18 km north-east from Sandomierz. In the Middle Ages Zawichost was ruled by a castellan and was an important stronghold protecting the river crossing. In 1257 duke Bolesław Wstyliwliwy donated the town with surrounding localities to the local convent

of Poor Clares founded by his sister Salome. Both the nunnery and the Church of St John the Baptist were her entrance dowry. The interiors of the early-Gothic brick church are decorated with cross-rib vaults and stellar vaults in the presbytery. Only the eastern wing of the monastic buildings survived till the present time. The Church of the Ascension of Our Lady was built on the site of the former Romanesque temple in the years 1738-1744. The archaeological digs conducted at the turn of 1992 proved that originally it was a three-nave basilica with transept closed with an apse and vaulted chapels on both sides. Romanesque fragments of the original church are still visible in the crypt. A nice, panoramic view over the Vistula unfolds from the cemetery located in the churchyard.

The Trójca is a district of Zawichost where stands the Holy Trinity Church erected most probably in the 12th century, and remodeled many times afterwards. In its late-Baroque interiors one can admire the painting of the Holy Trinity by Franciszek Smuglewicz placed in the high altar consecrated in 1798.



Church of St John the Baptist in Zawichost

CZYŻÓW SZLACHECKI. Traveling from Zawichost to Ożarów one comes to a little village of Czyżów Szlachecki famous for its perfectly renovated palace from 1740-1751. It was built for castellan of Połaniec Aleksander Czyżowski in place of a Gothic fortress destroyed by Swedes. The late-Baroque building has two stories, arcaded ground floor in front, and richly ornamented portal. Surrounded by remains of the former landscape park, the palace houses



Palace in Czyżów Szlachecki

es a rest and recreation tourist center with suites, restaurant, and conference rooms. There are also sports grounds, fish ponds, and stables with horses, sometimes used for purposes of hippotherapy. Tours of the palace for tourists and other visitors are available on request. The Zielonka forest reserve is not far away. It is home to 100-year-old oaks, linden trees, birches, elms and features deep loessic ravines inviting for long walks and outdoor recreation activities.

The Gothic Church of All Saints was probably erected in the early 15th century, but fifty years later it was converted into a Calvin chapel. Returned to the Roman-Catholic parish in 1615, the church acquired its present late-Baroque appearance in the mid-18th century. It contains a few interesting art pieces (sculptures, paintings), some of them signed by Tomasz Hutter.

Palace in Czyżów Szlachecki
Czyżów Szlachecki, 27-630 Zawichost
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Photographs: A. Drzewiecka, A. Łypacz, M. Paszkowski, K. Pęczalski, P. Pierściński, Archiwum Doliny Gądoży
Publisher: Regional Tourist Organization (ROT) of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, ul. Ściegiennego 2, 25-033 Kielce,
(Bldg of the Voivodeship Culture Center, Room 32), tel. +48 41 361 80 57
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THE ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE VOIVODESHIP

Project of the Promotional Campaign for the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship co-financed by the European Union Regional Development Fund.



HIGHLIGHTS OF
THE ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKI
REGION



SANDOMIERZ AND ITS ENVIRONS