



48 HOURS IN

Krakow

COLD LIGHT · WARM WELCOME

EUROPEAN SERIES

Welcome to Krakow.

Krakow is the city other Polish cities apologize for not being. While Warsaw was leveled and rebuilt from rubble, Krakow survived the Second World War essentially intact — the medieval street grid, the Renaissance courtyards, the largest market square in Europe, all standing exactly where they've stood for six centuries. This isn't a reconstruction. It's the real thing, which is part of why the entire city center is UNESCO-listed and why Poles from every other city concede, if pressed, that Krakow is the country's most beautiful.

What Krakow has that no other city on this itinerary has: Wawel Castle, seat of Polish kings for centuries, perched over the Vistula on a hill with its own dragon legend; Kazimierz, a former independent Jewish town now folded into Krakow's most atmospheric neighborhood; a milk bar tradition — cheap, canteen-style Communist-era cafeterias — that still serves some of the best value food in the city; and a compact Old Town so walkable you can cross its longest point in twenty minutes.

Krakow rewards solo travelers who alternate between the postcard and the unpolished. Walk the Royal Route at dawn before the crowds. Queue for a proper pierogi at a milk bar. Spend an afternoon in Kazimierz's synagogues and vintage shops. Cross the river to Podgórze for the story Schindler's List made famous. This is the itinerary.

DAY ONE

Day One — Old Town · Main Market Square · Wawel Hill

Day One covers the medieval Old Town on foot — the largest market square in Europe, St. Mary's Basilica, the Royal Route, and Wawel Castle at the city's southern edge.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

St. Mary's Basilica

Main Market Square (Rynek Główny). Entry 18 PLN (~€4). A dramatic 14th-century Gothic church with a blue-and-gold altarpiece inside. Every hour, on the hour, a trumpet call (the Hejnał) plays from the taller tower and cuts off abruptly — a tradition tracing to a sentry allegedly shot mid-tune during a Tartar invasion.

INSIDER TIP

Enter via the side door for the interior — the main door is for worshippers only during services.

10:00 AM

Cloth Hall & Rynek Underground Museum

Main Market Square. Cloth Hall is the Renaissance trading hall running through the center of the square, now stalls selling amber and crafts. Rynek Underground Museum (36 PLN, free Tuesdays) sits beneath the square itself — an interactive museum of medieval Krakow accessed via stairs at the Cloth Hall's north end.

11:30 AM

The Royal Route (Grodzka Street)

Walk south from the square down Grodzka Street — once the route Polish kings used to reach Wawel Castle for coronation. Duck into Saints Peter and Paul Church (the crypt is worth the detour) and St. Andrew's Church along the way.

12:30 PM

Kanonicza Street

One of Krakow's oldest and most beautiful streets, just before Wawel Hill. Pope John Paul II's former residence (before he was pope) is here, marked with a large portrait. Quiet, historic, good for a slow final approach to the castle.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM – 6:30 PM

1:00 PM

Wawel Royal Castle & Cathedral

Wawel Hill. Castle grounds free; Cathedral free to enter (paid sites — Sigismund Bell Tower, Royal Private Apartments, Crown Treasury and Armoury — ticketed separately, roughly 15–30 PLN each). Home to Polish monarchs for centuries; the Cathedral holds the tombs of Poland's kings and national heroes. The Wawel Dragon's Cave is at the base of the hill.

INSIDER TIP

Tickets for the State Rooms and Royal Private Apartments are limited and cannot always be bought in advance — arrive at opening to secure same-day access.

3:00 PM

Boat Tour on the Vistula

Departs from the riverbank below Wawel Hill. ~€21, roughly 45 minutes. A relaxed way to see the castle and riverbanks from the water, with a heated observation deck in colder months.

4:00 PM

Kazimierz (Jewish Quarter)

20-minute walk south from Wawel, or a short tram ride. Once an independent town, now Krakow's most atmospheric neighborhood — synagogues on Szeroka Street, vintage shops, galleries, and Plac Nowy at its center, the old trading square now known for *zapiekanka* (Polish-style baguette pizza) at the round market stalls.

INSIDER TIP

Plac Nowy's rotunda stalls do what locals consider the best zapiekanka in Krakow.

EVENING · 7:00 PM – LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner: Pierogi MR Vincent

Kazimierz. Extensive pierogi menu — traditional, vegetarian, and inventive options, all cheap. €8–14 for a full meal.

9:00 PM

Kazimierz Nightlife

Kazimierz has Krakow's best cocktail bars and contemporary art scene — a quieter, more atmospheric alternative to the Old Town's louder pub-crawl circuit. Starka Restaurant's homemade ginger vodka is worth seeking out.

DAY TWO

Day Two — Ghetto History · Schindler's Factory · Podgórze

Day Two moves across the river into Podgórze for the story of the Krakow Ghetto and Oskar Schindler, then back to the Old Town riverside for sunset views of Wawel.

MORNING · 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Breakfast: Cafe Camelot

Old Town. Fluffy scrambled eggs, frothy coffees, candlelit interior even by day — a well-loved local breakfast institution in the heart of the Old Town.

10:00 AM

Ghetto Wall Fragment, Lwowska Street

One of the only remaining fragments of the Krakow Ghetto wall, created March 1941. A brief, important stop before the day's heavier history.

11:00 AM

Oskar Schindler's Factory Museum

Podgórze, across the Vistula. The story of Schindler and his wife Emilie protecting their Jewish workforce during WWII, and a broader picture of wartime Krakow. Allow 2 hours. Book ahead in peak season — this sells out.

AFTERNOON · 1:30 PM – 6:00 PM

1:30 PM

Lunch: Kazimierz Milk Bar

Any traditional bar mleczny (milk bar) — Communist-era cafeteria-style dining, cheap and hearty. Pierogi, barszcz (beetroot soup), bigos (hunter's stew). Under 30 PLN for a full meal.

3:00 PM

Galicia Jewish Museum

Kazimierz. Entry 17 PLN (~€3.70). The history of Krakow's Jewish population before, during, and after WWII, told through letters, artefacts, and photography. Allow ~2 hours for a proper visit.

5:00 PM

Riverside Walk

Walk the Vistula riverbank back toward the Old Town — the view of Wawel Castle from across the river, especially at golden hour, is one of Krakow's best free experiences.

EVENING · 7:30 PM – LATE

7:30 PM

Dinner: Pod Wawelem (rooftop)

Near Wawel Castle. Fuses Caribbean, Mediterranean, and traditional Polish cooking; the real draw is the rooftop view south over Wawel and, on clear days, the Tatra Mountains on the horizon. €20–35.

9:30 PM

Wodka Cafe Bar, Rynek Główny

A well-regarded spot on the Main Market Square for a final-night drink — good people-watching, solid cocktails, a fitting last stop in the square where the day began.

WHERE TO EAT

Krakov's Table

RESTAURANT	NEIGHBOURHOOD	PRICE
Pierogi MR Vincent	Kazimierz	€8–14
Milk bars (Bar Mleczny)	Various	Under €7
Pod Wawelem	Near Wawel	€20–35
Cafe Camelot	Old Town	€6–12
Cheder Café	Kazimierz	€4–8 (coffee/light bites)
Hamsa	Kazimierz	€10–18
Starka Restaurant	Kazimierz	€15–25

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Krakow

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Old Town's longest point is a 20-minute walk; nearly everything on Day One is on foot.
Tram	~4–6 PLN/ride	Best for reaching Kazimierz quickly or covering longer distances; buy at kiosks or via card on board.
Taxi / Uber / Bolt	Metered	Preferred over unmarked taxis, especially from the station or airport.
Airport (Kraków Balice)	Train or bus, ~20–30 min	Regular rail and bus connections to the city center.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Before You Go

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	John Paul II International Airport Kraków–Balice, ~11km from the city center; train or bus into town.
Best Time	May–September: warm weather, ideal for outdoor sightseeing. June–August is the most crowded; May and September balance weather and crowds.
Solo Dining	Excellent — milk bars and the pierogi/food-stall culture are naturally solo-friendly and inexpensive.
Language	Polish; English widely spoken in tourist areas and among younger residents.
Useful Apps	Google Maps (offline download), Jakdojade (Polish transit planner), Uber/Bolt.

Krakow awaits.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

Final Checklist

- ❑ Book Wawel Castle interior tickets online where possible — limited daily capacity
- ❑ Book Oskar Schindler's Factory Museum ahead in peak season — regularly sells out
- ❑ Try a milk bar (bar mleczny) at least once — cheap, authentic, and a genuine slice of Polish daily life
- ❑ Keep bags secure in the Main Market Square and on trams — Krakow's main pickpocketing hotspots
- ❑ Use Uber or Bolt over unmarked taxis, especially from Kraków Główny station
- ❑ Confirm horse-carriage prices before boarding in the Market Square — a documented overcharging spot
- ❑ Download offline maps before arrival

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/krakow

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