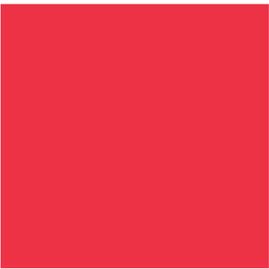
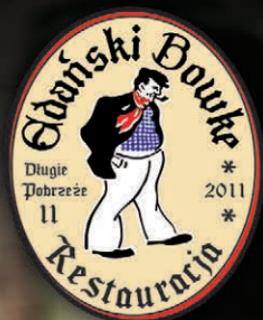




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24 hours in Gdańsk

9⁰⁰



Go sunbathing in Brzeźno

There aren't many cities in the world that can proudly boast such beautiful sandy beaches as Gdańsk. It's worth coming here even if only for a while to bask in the sunlight and breathe in the precious iodine from the sea breeze. The beach is surrounded by many fish restaurants, with a long wooden pier stretching out into the sea. It is ideal for walking.



12⁰⁰

Set your watch at the Lighthouse in Nowy Port

The Time Sphere is lowered from the mast at the top of the historic brick lighthouse at 12:00, 14:00, 16:00 and 18:00 sharp. It used to serve ship masters to regulate their navigation instruments. Today it's just a tourist attraction, but it's well worth visiting; what is more, the open gallery at the top provides a splendid view of the mouth of the River Vistula and Westerplatte.



13⁰⁰



Take a ride on the F5 water tram to Westerplatte and Wisłoujście Fortress

Nowy Port and the environs of the old mouth of the Vistula at the Bay of Gdańsk have many attractions. It would be a sin to skip them during your tour, which is why you should take the F5 water tram in the summer from the Lighthouse to Westerplatte, where World War II began, and to Wisłoujście Fortress, an extraordinary monument to the art of fortification.

16⁰⁰

Have a late lunch by the River Motława and take a walk up the Royal Route

The flavours of Gdańsk can be best appreciated at one of the restaurants with local cuisine at the Long Riverfront (Długie Pobrzeże). This is the heart of the old port. For centuries, after a long voyage, seamen would come ashore here and go directly to the nearby taverns in order to finally taste the delicacies they had been dreaming about when traversing the Baltic Sea. The tradition continues and they certainly serve great food at the Long Riverfront. After your meal, you can take a walk to see the most important monuments of the Main Town. Go through the Green Gate (Zielona Brama) into the Long Market (Długi Targ) to see the Main Town Hall, Artus' Court and the Fountain of Neptune.



18⁰⁰

Coffee at one of the many traditional coffee shops

Gdańsk's pastry shops and coffee shops have been rightly famous for centuries. Perhaps it's because one of the local traditions is to start a meal with something sweet. You must try the gingerbread here. It's tougher than that in Toruń but just as fragrant.



20⁰⁰

Visit historic Solidarity Square

Here, at the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers, the people of Gdańsk would gather at important historic turning points, while the three crosses with anchors remind us that the workers' revolt in Gdańsk Shipyard led to the rise of the Solidarity Trade Union. Next to it is the modern European Solidarity Centre building and Gate No. 2, a witness to those historic events.



22⁰⁰

Enjoy yourself at a club in the post-shipyard area

The city's latest attraction. Until recently, Gdańsk Shipyard had been a "city within the city," with its own transport and street grid between the industrial halls. Now, new tenants have moved into the abandoned halls, which are converted into lofts and industrial clubs, with music playing in the old factory interiors until the small hours.





24 hours in Gdańsk

An alternative

9⁰⁰



Beach. Sobieszewska Island. Gather amber or go jogging

Morning on the beach is the best time to gather amber nuggets that the night waves washed up on the shore. Sobieszewska Island has the most pristine beach in Gdańsk. Watch out! You might chance upon some seals when taking your morning jog or gathering amber there.

→ 12⁰⁰

Visit the European Solidarity Centre

The building at Solidarity Square refers to the area's shipbuilding legacy but inside there is a state-of-the-art interior. You should definitely see the permanent exhibition which shows the road Poland has travelled from deep communism to freedom. Most key events took place precisely at Gdańsk Shipyard.



15⁰⁰



Have a spoonful of art at the National Museum, 1 Toruńska St.

After a quick lunch, it is a good idea to nourish the soul. You can see the extraordinary and unique Last Judgement by Hans Memling on the Museum's first floor. But it's also worth coming here to take in the colours at the gallery of Dutch painting or contemplate the details of engravings by Albrecht Dürer (you can ask the Museum staff for magnifying glasses and special flashlights at the cabinet of miniatures).



17⁰⁰



Go amber shopping in Mariacka St.

No-one will explain better about how amber puts you in a better mood and how good it is for you with its negative ionisation than the vendors in Mariacka Street. In a short stretch between the River Motława and St Mary's Church, you can see (and buy) amber in every shape and form. From natural, honey-coloured nuggets to beautifully cut gemstones set in silver and gold. Here, you can buy extraordinary jewellery or get inspired to look for the "Baltic gold" yourself on the beaches of Gdańsk.



19⁰⁰

See a play or concert at the Shakespeare Theatre

After dinner at one of the charming restaurants in the Long Riverfront or Szafarnia Street, go to the other side of the River Motława and visit the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre. Based on the best Elizabethan models, the theatre is the pride and joy of the city today. The auditorium is equipped with a retractable roof which opens (or, in case of rain, closes) in just three minutes. Watching Shakespeare's plays you can transport your mind to 16th-century England when the actors performing the brilliant plays were illuminated by daylight.





The history of Gdańsk

The Gdańsk of today is a dynamically developing European city where you can feel a positive energy. Being in touch with traces of the past visible at every turn gives the locals a stronger feeling of belonging to a sequence of generations who have lived here, where Poland's largest river flows into the Baltic Sea, for over a thousand years. The city's complicated history is the price paid for this location at the meeting point of cultures, countries and traditions. Over the past millennium, Gdańsk went through many transformations. From the beginning it has been tied to Poland with the umbilical cord of the River Vistula as the country's most important trade route. It was often visited by the Kings of Poland (beginning with Casimir the Jagiellon, who granted the townspeople many privileges in the mid-15th century) and became the largest city and a window to the world for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which had to compete with the State of the Teutonic Knights (later German Prussia), Sweden and Russia in the region.

Archaeologists have found traces to indicate that a fishing settlement existed by the River Motława as early as in the 7th century. Later, a fortified town was built here, to be incorporated into Poland after a successful campaign by Boleslaus the Wrymouth in the 12th century. In 1308, the town was captured by the Teutonic Knights who ruled here until 1454, when Gdańsk officially returned to the Polish Crown. During the Partitions of Poland in the late 1700s, Gdańsk was incorporated into Prussia (later a united Germany). Over the twenty years between World War I and World War II, Gdańsk was supposed to be a Free City under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. However, from an economic and political standpoint, it remained under German influence. Officially, one of the reasons for the outbreak

of World War II was the intention to have the city annexed by the Third Reich. It was here, on 1 September 1939, that the first shots of the Second World War were fired. The War which annihilated the city in March 1945. Ninety per cent of the historical buildings in the City Centre were destroyed. After the War Gdańsk was incorporated into Poland and rebuilt. It was here, in August 1980, that Solidarity, the Eastern Bloc's first regime-independent trade union (and social movement) was born.

Gdańsk has always been a multicultural city. Kashubian fishermen and Polish gentry mixed with German craftsmen from Lübeck. On top of that, there were settlers from Scotland and Scandinavian seamen blown down here by the north winds. In the Middle Ages, Gdańsk (and Toruń) belonged to the Hanse, a league of cities united by common cultural and economic heritage. But the Golden Age came for Gdańsk and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Second World War was without a doubt the city's greatest disaster. In April 1945, Gdańsk city centre was no different than Warsaw's in terms of the scale of destruction. By the decision of the victorious powers, the German population was forcibly removed and new settlers came in their place, often exiled from what used to be Poland's Eastern Borderlands. The new inhabitants brought their customs with them but three generations later Gdańsk has become their city and they feel part of its history.



Solidarity

It is no accident that the movement that began the dismantling of the communist system on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain began here in Gdańsk. Both its rich merchant traditions and the much greater openness to the world of this port city made for the fact that socialism did not become deeply rooted here. Paradoxically, however, it was the fierce protests of the workers, on behalf of whom supposedly the communists held power, that made the authorities bend under the pressure of the strikes. In December 1970, after a rise in the price of goods, the shipyard workers came out to the square in front of the Shipyard's Gate No. 2. The police and army opened fire. People were killed and blood was spilled. The massacre of the workers on the Polish coast had far-reaching repercussions throughout Poland and led to changes in the established order of the Polish communist party. It also led to the emergence of labour activists who, during the strikes that took place a decade later in August 1980, knew that it was only possible to enact change by working together and standing shoulder to shoulder with the protesting workers from other factories across Poland. You can see the original wooden board with the handwritten 21 demands of the striking shipyard workers on display at the European Solidarity Centre. The most important demand was that the government allow an Independent Self-Governing Trade Union to be established in all the workplaces in Poland. During the August strikes, this trade union adopted the name Solidarity (in Polish: Solidarność). The government did not choose to use force. Instead, they tried to break the strikers' unity by agreeing to meet the economic demands in selected factories. However, the determination of the leaders of the strike at Gdańsk Shipyard, supported by advisers mainly from the opposition Workers' Defence Committee (KOR), meant that the strike went on until the authorities consented to

signing an agreement on the last day of August 1980. The leader of the strike in Gdańsk Shipyard, electrician Lech Wałęsa, soon became the leader of Solidarity, which was formally a trade union but soon turned into a 10-million-strong civic movement with a goal to democratise communist Poland. The communist system began to crack. This period was later called the “Solidarity Carnival” because of the enthusiasm of the people who began to believe that the socialist reality could be changed peacefully. The enactment of martial law on 13 December 1981 by the First Secretary of the communist party, Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski, put a halt to the changes. Solidarity’s leaders were imprisoned. Poland remained in isolation for over seven years and the outlawed Solidarity Trade Union had to go underground. The next strikes broke out in Gdańsk Shipyard in 1988. The regime had to compromise once again. The Round Table Talks began and led to the first partially free elections of June 1989, the emergence of a government with the representatives of Solidarity and the change in Poland’s political system.



Culture

The cultural life in Gdańsk is flourishing. There are few Polish cities that can equal it in terms of what they can offer to culture vultures. The Baltic Opera, one of Poland's most prestigious stages, has been performing at 15 Zwycięstwa Avenue since 1950. The Baltic Philharmonic Hall was launched as early as in 1945, and since 2005 has had its home on Ołowianka Island, almost right across from Gdańsk's famous Medieval Crane. The concerts are held in a hall with excellent acoustics and a capacity for a thousand spectators. You can also listen to top-class music at the Cathedral in Oliwa. Among Gdańsk's more than a dozen theatres, the Wybrzeże Theatre (2 św. Ducha St.) and the recently opened Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre (Bogusławskiego 1), Poland's only Elizabethan-style theatre, are the best known.

Gdańsk's club stages have a lot going on. The city is rightly proud to be the place where Poland's (and in fact the entire former Eastern Bloc's) first rock 'n' roll concerts took place. Jazz was also pioneered here. Today, there are great concerts at venues such as the Stary Maneż (the Culture Garrison), the Żak Club and in the industrial interiors of the clubs in the post-shipyard area. The world's biggest stars perform at the football stadium and at Ergo Arena. Art lovers cannot fail to visit the Gdańsk Museum and the National Museum (1 Toruńska St.), where the Last Judgement, a Medieval masterpiece by Hans Memling, is displayed. Fans of 19th- and 20th-century painting and Polish sculpture simply must visit the former Abbots' Palace at 18 Cystersów St. in Oliwa, which houses a museum with a spectacular collection of paintings by Jacek Malczewski and Olga Boznańska. You can learn about contemporary history from the exhibition at the European Solidarity Centre. The splendidly equipped National Maritime Museum (9-13 Ołowianka St.) is also a must-see.



Festivals and the most important cultural events

St Dominic's Fair

has been held since 1260 and extends over the first three weeks of August. Craftspeople, vendors of handmade wares, jewellers, collectors and hobbyists all have their stalls there. In recent years, St Dominic's Fair has had an attendance of about five million visitors. It also features many concerts, performances and theatre productions.

Gdańsk Shakespeare Festival

takes place in August at the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre. Theatre companies compete for the Golden Yorick Prize. The productions are accompanied by many cultural side-events, meetings with artists and the Summer Shakespeare Academy, a series of educational workshops for schoolchildren and students.

Gdańsk Music Festival

is held every April, when the Artist in Residence, who is selected beforehand out of many distinguished musicians, invites artists and orchestras for a series of concerts he or she has scripted.

Mozartiana International Mozart Festival

takes place in the cosy interiors of the Uphagen House, on the open-air stage in Oliwski Park and at the Oliwa Cathedral, organised every August by the Polish Chamber Choir.



Solidarity of Arts

with events spanning all genres of art. Concerts, opera and theatre productions, exhibitions. The artists receive the Neptune Prizes from the Mayor of Gdańsk for distinguished artistic achievements and the promotion of the city. The event takes place each August.

International Organ Music Festival in Oliwa

Poland's oldest organ music festival, held since 1957 on Tuesday and Friday evenings in July and August at the Oliwa Cathedral. The Festival is organised by the Baltic Philharmonic and the Pomeranian Musica Sacra Association.

Music in the Monuments of Old Gdańsk

is held in the summer; the artists of the Baltic Philharmonic present classical and film music masterpieces in historical interiors. Chiefly in Gdańsk's churches but also in museums located in bourgeois living rooms and the rooms of the Town Hall.

Goldberg Festival

Its idea is to showcase interesting pieces of early music played on period instruments. The Festival's name refers to Gdańsk-born Johann Gottlieb Goldberg, harpsichordist and student of John Sebastian Bach, who was the first to perform one of Bach's most famous works, the Goldberg Variations. The Festival takes place in late August / early September.

Gdańsk Jazs Nights

take place in August at the Forest Theatre in Gdańsk-Wrzeszcz. The festival promotes young artists and has benefit concerts honouring artists of the Gdańsk music scene.



Jazz Jantar Festival

is one of the oldest jazz festivals in Poland, dating back to the 1970s. In the spring and autumn, a series of concerts by world-class jazz stars and young artists from the Gdańsk Academy of Music are held at the Żak Club.

FETA International Festival of Street and Open-Air Theatres

is held in July and organised by the Gdańsk Archipelago of Culture. The shows take place in various parts of the city to activate the local communities. FETA is one of the world's best street theatre festivals, which attracts faithful fans and new spectators every year.

Baltic Sail

In early summer, Gdańsk hosts an international tall ships rally with a festival to promote the city's maritime tradition. Regattas and parades are accompanied by sea shanty music, firework displays, sea battle re-enactments and meetings with sailors.

Siesta Festival

is a popular programme from Polish Radio Three that has its spring edition in Gdańsk. You can listen to artists playing world music and ethnic jazz live. The Festival's director is traveller and radio DJ Marcin Kydryński.

Actus Humanus

is an international early music festival held in the historic interiors of Gdańsk's churches and the stately halls of Artus' Court. Concerts by international stars, interpreters of primarily 16th and 17th century music, are often played on period instruments.

Christmas Fair

For three December weeks before Christmas, Gdańsk's Coal Market (Targ Węglowy) turns into a Christmas fair. The stalls are full of holiday gifts, Christmas trees and folk handicraft. The Festival also includes music, hot food, a wealth of attractions for kids and an ice skating rink.





Amber

The Slavs called it yantar and thought it to be the fossilised tears of the goddess Jurate, who was punished for her infidelity by her husband, Perkunas, the god of thunder. The Greeks discovered and described its magnetic properties, where it attracts lint when rubbed with a cloth. From antiquity to the present day, people have valued its beauty and medicinal properties. Amber from the Baltic Sea is one of this mineral's purest forms.

Amber is a fossil resin that formed 40-50 million years ago. Scientists cannot agree on the exact processes that caused the resin (mainly from coniferous trees) to flow in such great amounts, often trapping pieces of plants, insects and even small vertebrates. These are called inclusions and the amber nuggets that contain them are the most valuable; Gdańsk's Amber Museum is proud to have a lizard encased in amber. The University of Gdańsk at 59 Wita Stwosza St., houses the Museum of Amber Inclusions with 5,320 pieces of amber containing 13,569 inclusions. It is one of the largest such collections in the world and consists almost entirely of donations from collectors and amber lovers.

You can find pieces of amber on the beaches of the Bay of Gdańsk, on the Vistula Spit and the Hel Peninsula, especially after winter storms, when the turbulent sea washes it up from the shallows.

Amber has been used in medicine for centuries. By negatively ionising the air, it makes us feel better. Nicholas Copernicus (who had a background as a physician), prescribed amber powder to his patients for heart ailments. In the 20th century, Father Klimuszko, the well-respected herbalist and natural medicine promoter, recommended amber tincture to strengthen the body's

constitution. In the Middle Ages, people burned amber dust in the rooms where those sick with the plague had lived. It was also used to disinfect wounds.

Today, amber is commonly used to make cutting-edge cosmetics: creams, scrubs and shampoos.

However, it is the beauty of the Baltic Gold that truly ignites people's passions. It is no accident that the first trade route to run across Poland was called the Amber Road. Amber was made into amulets, set in gold, silver and ivory. It was made into prayer beads, crucifixes and rings. In the 19th century came a fashion for amber pipes and cigarette-holders (amber was thought to neutralise the adverse effects of nicotine). The Amber Room, made by Gdańsk amber artisans for Frederick I, the King in Prussia, became the stuff of legend. Gifted to Tsar Peter the Great, it was stolen by the Germans in World War II and held in Königsberg. Hidden from the approaching Red Army, it has never been found.





Gdańsk cuisine

Gdańsk cuisine is one of the most unique in Poland. This is due to both the city's location and its tradition of a multi-cultural port town to which every ethnic group brought its culinary preferences. Most of all, however, the people of Gdańsk have always taken their food very seriously. The fronts of the old bourgeois townhouses had stone platforms above the sidewalk (which you can still see today, for example, in Mariacka Street). In the summer days, tables would be set there so that the passers-by could marvel at how grandly the merchants dined. Obviously, the healthy Gdańsk diet was mainly based on fish, both those from the Baltic Sea and freshwater species. Cod and salmon in the winter, flounder and pikeperch in the summer. However, the king of the table was herring (even if especially in less affluent households). Most commonly, it was eaten Kashubian-style, in a sweet and sour marinade. It is still well worth asking about the appetisers at Gdańsk restaurants. If they offer herring, it is best not to refuse.



A typical Gdańsk meal began with a sweet cake or gingerbread. This legacy was left by Medieval migrants from Lübeck. The marzipan made in Gdańsk also comes from Germany. But Kashubian strawberries, the best in all of Poland, are very local and are on the EU's list of products with protected geographical indication (PGI). The forests of Pomerania have always been full of deer and wild boar so game had a permanent place on the tables of the Gdańsk bourgeoisie. As regards poultry, duck and goose were preferred here. All this was washed down with Gdańsk beer from one of the local breweries. Brewers were very well respected and they could afford to provide their children with a good education. This was the case with John Hevelius, a son of one of Gdańsk's most eminent brewers. With the prosperous business he inherited from his father, he could devote himself to public affairs (as a city councillor) and his passion for astronomy. Every meal in Gdańsk was topped off with a glass of Goldwasser, a strong liqueur with flakes of 22-karat gold, or with Machandel juniper vodka served with a prune on a toothpick.



Family Gdańsk

Top 6 Gdańsk attractions for the entire family

1

Gdańsk Zoo 3 Karwieńska St.

One of the best zoos in Poland. Its location in a diverse landscape lets you get close to nature and see many endangered species, which can very seldom be seen in the wild (e.g. a pygmy hippopotamus). Gdańskers love the lions the most. They live in a lion pen, which is not only a reference to the city's emblem, but also the pride of its people. Another big attraction is the petting zoo where kids can not only see but also touch or even feed the tame and harmless animals.



2

Hevelianum 6 Gradowa St.

An interactive science museum that helps young people understand physics, maths, history, biology and but most of all astronomy. It is close to the Main Railroad Station, at the Gdańsk Fortress Culture Park.



3

National Maritime Museum 9-13 Ołowianka St.

Four facilities situated on both sides of the River Motława, right by and across from the medieval Crane. The Museum has a wonderful section with interactive fun for the kids that helps them to understand the principles of sailing, sea currents, how seaports function and shipbuilding.





4

Seaside beaches

Gdańsk has several beaches with lifeguards with excellent transport links to the city centre. Brzeźno is the oldest bathing beach on the entire Polish coast. People bathed by the Brzeźno Spa House already in the early 19th century. The two beaches in Jelitkowo have great infrastructure. There are many fish and chips shops, restaurants and taverns. Stogi is famous for its dance parties. People go sunbathing during the day and to the lively local clubs at night. Sobieszewska Island has the most pristine beaches. Here you can get away from the crowd, find amber nuggets washed up on the shore and watch the birds and the Baltic seals.

5

National Sailing Centre at Górkach Zachodnie 20 Stogi St.

Here you can take your first steps on the road to becoming a seadog. Learning to sail should begin at the age of seven. Kids can learn to manoeuvre and catch the wind on Optimist dinghies, sailing on the calm currents of the River Wisła Śmiała. Grownups can charter a larger boat or listen to sailors' tales at the tavern.



6

Solidarity Square

The three tall crosses that tower over the Shipyard's Gate No. 2 are one of the icons of Gdańsk. But the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers is only part of Solidarity Square. There is also the building of the European Solidarity Centre with its walls lined with rusty COR-TEN steel. A children's playground, called the Play Department, takes up a good deal of the ground floor. While the kids play educational arcade games under the watchful eye of the ECS staff, older children and parents can visit the exhibition to learn about Solidarity, the trade union and civic movement that transformed Poland and Europe.



Shopping

Gdańsk has lived by trade for centuries. It was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's window to the world that exported Polish grain, honey and timber, as well as Gdańsk-brewed beer to Western Europe. The August St Dominic's Fair was an opportunity for the East to meet the West. But Gdańsk's role was more than just about a middleman in trade contacts. No one could imagine leaving here without buying amber jewellery. Gdańsk jewellers were renowned as unparalleled masters of fashioning the Baltic Gold. It was they who made the Amber Room, the largest ever amber artefact. Amber furniture, although possible to make, is rather impractical to use. Sturdy oak Gdańsk furniture was much more durable. Large closets and richly decorated dowry chests were especially treasured. Today, it is best to look for amber jewellery along Długa Street, the Long Market (Długi Targ), the Long Riverfront (Długie Pobrzeże) and Mariacka Street, which is called the Amber Fifth Avenue.



Today, like centuries ago, you can still buy remarkable mementos at St Dominic's Fair. But Gdańsk has more places to buy original keepsakes. The Garnizon housing estate in Wrzeszcz features the Sztuka Wyboru shop where you can find ceramic mugs with shipyard cranes or bags with Gdańsk monuments. It is well-worth looking for products with the Gliniana Kura (Clay Chicken) logo in the Main Town's boutiques. There are t-shirts, mugs and tea towels with comic-book style images of the Crane or the Fountain of Neptune. You can also find unique souvenirs at the Szafa Gdańska boutique at 4/1 Garbary St. And this is only the tip of the iceberg. Gdańskers can even turn drinking beer into an art form. You can sample the local brewing tradition in places such as the Pułapka Pub at 2 Straganiarska St. where you can find a variety of beers and ciders from small local craft breweries. The pub's owners can talk about the ways beer is brewed for hours on end. You can also get excellent brews at the Brovarnia at Hotel Gdańsk (9 Szafarnia St.), the PG4 Pub at Hotel Central and at the Piwnica Rajców.



Gdańsk by bike

Gdańsk's several hundred kilometres of cycling lanes and paths is an absolute record in Poland. Gdańsk is consistent in its pro-environmental stance by supporting schools and businesses in "switch from car to bike" campaigns. Gdańskers are increasingly keen on cycling and that includes the youngest kids. In some schools, as many as 70 percent of the students commute by bike. Bicycles are an excellent vehicle for tourists, especially along the recreational areas by the seaside. It is best to ride a bike to Wisłoujście Fortress or Westerplatte. The path by the boulevards in Brzeźno can take you to the beach and further in the direction of Sopot.



You can ride from the City Centre through the districts of Wrzeszcz and Zaspka to Przymorze and Żabianka. You can also reach the cathedral and zoo in Oliwa. The cycling lanes that run along the main streets are of excellent quality, made with specially reinforced asphalt, and are wide enough for cyclists going in opposite directions to easily pass each other. You can collect a free bicycle map at the City Office or download it from www.rowerowygdansk.pl. This map is not only for cyclists but also for all lovers of a healthy lifestyle. The maps also include open-air gyms that can help you plan your jogging routes. You can also rent a bike at one of over a dozen rentals or ask for one at your hotel or B&B.





The Art Route

The people of Gdańsk have valued and supported artists and art for centuries. Nature itself gifted them amber, the valuable Gold of the Baltic, which they still make good use of today. But artistry can be spotted basically wherever you look.

Old Town Hall 33/35 Korzenna St.

The late-Renaissance building opened in 1595. Sessions of the town council and trials took place there. The astronomer John Hevelius (his statue stands right by the town hall), who lived in the same street where the Town Hall is located, became a town councillor in the mid-17th century. Today, you can visit the reconstructed Mayor's Office, the richly decorated Vestibule and the Grand Burgher Room. The Town Hall is the home of the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre. There is a restaurant and pub in the basement, with a book shop and gallery on the ground floor.

St. John's Centre 50 Świętojańska St.

In partnership with the Gdańsk Archbishop's Curia, the Baltic Sea Cultural Centre, a local government institution, set up a cultural centre in the Gothic St. John's Church. The sacred and the profane coexist in harmony in the same space. Concerts, exhibitions and other art events are held here, as well as church services: the church provides pastoral care for people of the arts and culture.

St Nicholas Church 72 Świętojańska St.

The St Nicholas Basilica was the only Gothic church in Gdańsk spared by the Red Army, which took the city in March 1945. Owing to this, the interior has largely survived. In 1587, it was in this church that the act of election (Poland had elected kings) was presented to Swedish prince Sigismund who then began his reign as King Sigismund III Vasa. The Basilica's most valuable possession is a 14th century icon of Madonna the Victorious which, according to legend, was given to the Dominican friars in 1260 by Constance, the wife of Lev, Duke of Halych (the city of Lviv was named after him).

The Grand Armoury 7 Tkacka St.

Take a walk down a street that changes its name with every block: Pańska, Węglarska, Kołodziejska, Tkacka. Across from the exit of Piwna Street is one of Gdańsk's most magnificent marvels of architecture: the Mannerist Grand Armoury from 1605. In the 17th century, weapons and munitions were stored there in case of war with Sweden but even then it had a museum of military items exhibited on mannequins (the arms were kept in good condition so that defenders could use them in case of attack). Today, you can see exhibitions of art by the students of the Academy of Fine Arts at the Art Armoury on the building's ground floor.

Amber Museum 26 Targ Węglowy

Continuing down Tkacka Street, you will reach Długa Street: the Main Town's most popular promenade. Regardless of the time of year, you can always hear buskers playing music there. Next, turn right, cross under the Golden Gate and take a dozen steps or so to stand before a Gothic tower that was once the city dungeon, and is now home to the Amber Museum. Its five floors display not only rough unworked fossil resins from all over the world but also works of art made in Baltic amber, which has fascinated people since time immemorial and has been a source of handsome income for Gdańsk. The Torture House also has a collection of torture devices in a separate wing of the museum. There you can see an exhibition that shows what went on in the Prison Tower for centuries.



Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre 1 Wojciecha Bogusławskiego St.

Wojciecha Bogusławskiego Street will take you from the Prison Tower to the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, one of Poland's most unique cultural institutions. Its massive brick edifice conceals a reconstructed timber interior of the Gdańsk theatre from the 17th century, topped with a retractable roof, so the performances can take place in daylight in the open air, just like in the Elizabethan theatres of the 16th and 17th century. In August, the Shakespeare Festival is held here, which attracts artists and spectators from all over the world.



National Museum 1 Toruńska St.

An underground passageway will take you under Podwale Przedmiejskie St., then along Okopowa and Świętej Trójcy St. you will get to a brick building at the back of the Franciscan church. This is the location of the National Museum in Gdańsk, which is mainly famous for its excellent collection of Medieval art and gallery of Dutch painting. Its most valuable exhibit is the Last Judgement by Hans Memling. The triptych was commissioned from the Netherlandish painter for a church in Florence. In 1473, it was stolen by the Gdańsk privateer Paul Beneke and so it came to St Mary's Church. Napoleon Bonaparte seized it and took it to the Louvre (the painting returned to Gdańsk in 1817), and in 1945 it was taken as spoils of war and exhibited at the Hermitage in Leningrad. In 1958, the Last Judgement was returned to Poland and put on display at the Pomeranian Museum, which in 1972 changed its name to the National Museum in Gdańsk.

Uphagen House 12 Długa St.

In his last will and testament, Gdańsk merchant Jan Uphagen forbade his heirs from making any changes to the interior décor of his home in a stately townhouse in Długa Street. The décor survived World War II and so the public can tour Poland's only (and one of Europe's few) Museum of Bourgeois Interiors, a branch of the Gdańsk Museum.

Market Hall 1 Dominikański Square

Across from Jacek Tower is a market hall from 1896, built on the site of a razed Dominican friary. Inside are stalls with fruit and food, and surrounding it are many small street eateries full of tourists and young people, fashionable beer bars and craft workshops. It's a place where young people meet, teeming with life until late in the evening.



The High Route

Although Gdańsk is located by the sea, visitors are often surprised by its topography. They expect a flat terrain stretching to the beach but find that a good deal of the city is covered with forested steep hills. Oliwa is one of the very hilly districts of Gdańsk.

Gdańsk Zoo 3 Karwieńska St.

The zoo in Oliwa is one of the best in Poland. Established in 1954, it attracts almost half a million visitors every year. Species that are practically not found in their natural habitat, such as the bongo antelope, are the biggest attractions. The zoo is also the perfect place to go for a walk with the family.

Pacholek Hill

Walk further down Karwieńska Street to Spacerowa Street (it takes about 10 minutes). From there, comfortable stairs will take you up through the woods to the hilltop. There is an open-air gym with ladders and bars to exercise by the side of the path. The beautiful scent of the mixed forest will make up for your effort in climbing to the top of the hill, 101.5 m above sea level. There used to be a brickwork observation deck at the top of the hill that was blown up by the retreating German army in March 1945. Recently, a fifteen-metre metal platform, which rises above the treetops, was built in its place. From the top you can see the panorama of Gdańsk, as well as a good deal of the shoreline and, weather permitting, also the Hel Peninsula. The hill, which once belonged to the Cistercian Order, used to be called Olive Hill. Perhaps this is where the name of Oliwa comes from.

Oliwa Cathedral 5 Biskupa Edmunda Nowickiego St.

Continue down a gentle path marked with a triangle with a black dot to Tatrzańska Street, turn right and a few dozen metres later you'll reach the Cathedral.

The first church was built here as early as in the 12th century, right after the Cistercians first came to Gdańsk. The abbey was destroyed many times during invasions by the pagan Prussians and also during the war between Gdańsk and the Commonwealth in 1577. This is why today's Cathedral is mainly the work of 17th century builders. You can find many valuable works of art here. The magnificent organ from 1788 is the grandest of them all. The instrument with 5,100 pipes was the world's largest at the time. It is still impressive not only because of its size, but also the purity of its sound, while concerts at the Oliwa Cathedral are some of the biggest musical events in Poland. Every day, you can hear short performances with a display of the Angel Orchestra: mobile figures of angels that move during the performance.

Oliwski Park

The Park is right behind the Cathedral. The Baroque French-style garden contains the old monastery buildings which today are home to the Ethnographic Museum and a Department of the National Museum in Gdańsk with a collection of 19th and 20th century art. The Museum's two floors house one of Poland's best collections of master painters from Piotr Michałowski and Jan Matejko, through Jacek Malczewski and Olga Boznańska, to Edward Dwurnik.



The Solidarity Route

Gdańsk has always treasured freedom. Even in the hardest of times, it was a port town where different cultures and languages mixed, with sailors and merchants coming from distant lands. It is no wonder that it was Gdańsk that gave rise to Solidarity, the trade union that turned into a 10-million-strong civic movement which changed the political system. The first step on the way to the fall of communism was taken in Gdańsk in the August of 1980. Let's take this route.

St Bridget's Church

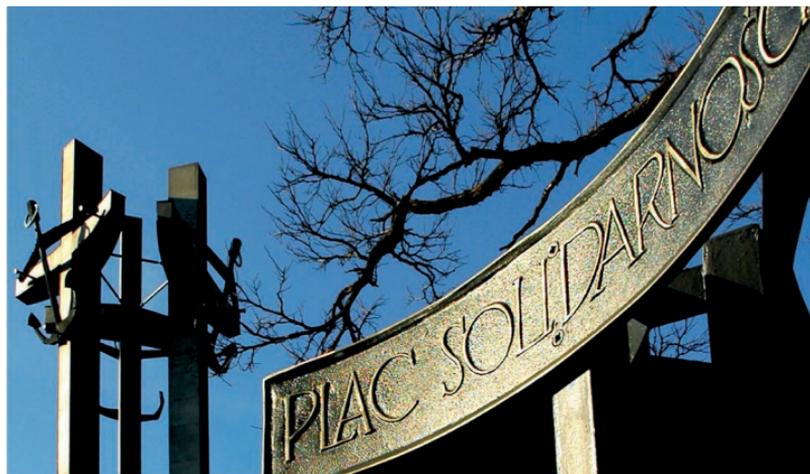
The church dates back to the 14th century, when the body of St Bridget, foundress of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour, was transported from Rome through Gdańsk to Sweden. Badly damaged during World War II, it was restored in the 1970s. It was the parish church of the nearby Gdańsk Shipyard. In August 1980, Father Henryk Jankowski, the parish priest at St Bridget's, strongly supported the striking workers, and when martial law was enacted in Poland on 13 December 1981, he looked after the families of the imprisoned. It was here that Western politicians, such as Zbigniew Brzeziński and Margaret Thatcher, met with Lech Wałęsa, the leader of the underground Solidarity. Today, you can see many mementoes from that time, along with a magnificent amber altar.

St Katherine's Church

Go down Katarzynki Street to Rajska Street and turn right. On your right, you will pass St Katherine's Church with the grave of John Hevelius. Above a modest slab on the floor, by the pillar, there is an obelisk with a medallion and epitaph founded by the great-grandson of Gdańsk's most famous astronomer. Outside the church, right in front of the main gate, there is a small door (mind your head, low beam) that leads to the Museum of Gdańsk Science, formerly the Museum of Tower Clocks, (which has 17 clocks on exhibit, the oldest dating back to the 14th century) with 252 steps to the observation deck. From the top you can see the city's distinctive skyline and the contrasting shipyard cranes. Be warned, steep openwork stairs lead to the observation deck so it's probably not for you if you have a fear of heights. The church tower has the largest carillon in Central Europe, with as many as 50 bells. The instrument is not only impressive in its pure tone but also in its weight: 17,115 kg. One of the Museum's most interesting items is the clock in its tower with the world's longest pendulum (almost 32 metres).

Solidarity Square

Pass the Great Mill, a Gothic building that stands over the Radunia Canal, come to a large intersection and turn right into Wały Piastowskie. The street corner features fragments of the old Shipyard wall and the Berlin Wall that direct you towards Solidarity Square. Three 42-metre-tall crosses with anchors tower over the Square. This is the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers killed by the army troops and the police (Milicja Obywatelska) in 1970. The Monument was unveiled on the tenth anniversary of these tragic events. This is an iconic place for the people of Gdańsk. The outlawed Solidarity held demonstrations by the Monument in 1982-1988.





European Solidarity Centre

Right next to the Monument, you can see a massive building that looks like a hull of an ocean liner covered with rust. This is the European Solidarity Centre. The complex received the European Heritage Label and the Museum of the Year Award from the European Council. The ECS is a meeting place, a centre for the exchange of ideas and research on social justice in the world. The ECS's goal is to advance the heritage of Solidarity. You can see the permanent exhibition on the first floor. Its seven rooms show the story of how the Solidarity Trade Union began and how the movement's influence led to the fall of communism and the birth of a free Poland in 1989. The ground floor has rooms for temporary exhibitions, a shop, café, restaurant and a large children's playground.

Gate No. 2

From Solidarity Square, go through Gate No. 2 to the area which once belonged to the Shipyard. The Gate is decorated with flags and banners commemorating the events of 1980.

The historic BHP Hall

To the right, you will see a short red brick building. It was here that a workers' delegation led by Lech Wałęsa negotiated with the communist authorities and where on 31 August 1980 an agreement was signed that led to the founding of the Solidarity Trade Union. It is worth mentioning that in 2003, the boards with the 21 demands of the Gdańsk Inter-Factory Strike Committee became part of UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. In 2014 the historic ensemble of Gdańsk Shipyard buildings (the BHP Hall, historic Gate No. 2, Solidarity Square with the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers) and the European Solidarity Centre received the European Heritage Label.

The post-Shipyard area

When you cross to the other side of Popieluszki St., you will enter the post-shipyard area which is changing very quickly today. Turn left into Narzędziowców St., then right into Elektryków St. Although large fragments of this place still have a post-apocalyptic appearance, it is a place that teems with life. New clubs, galleries and cafés are being opened in the old shipyard halls and in often dilapidated concrete barracks. A new revolution is taking place before our very eyes. When you look up, you can see the shipyard cranes and hear the sound of hammers and gantry cranes. For Gdańsk Shipyard, although much smaller than in the 1970s and 80s, is still working and gives the city its maritime character.



The Seaside Route (cycling route)

Brzeźno Beach

One of Gdańsk's most popular bathing beaches. The first bathhouses were set up here already in the early 19th century. Before World War II, Brzeźno had a 250-metre wooden pier and as a spa it competed with the neighbouring Sopot. Today, there is a 130-metre pier surrounded by a life-guarded beach, considered one of the loveliest on the Polish coast. It is rather crowded here during the summer season but it's easy to get almost to the beach itself by public transportation or by bike. There are many fish and chip shops and cafés here.

Lighthouse in Nowy Port 6 Przemysłowa St.

Go cycling through the J.G. Haffner Brzeźno Park, then along Krasiciego and Oliwska Streets, until you reach the quay of the Port Canal.

The 31-metre brick lighthouse tower was built in 1894. One of the first shots of World War II were fired from a window of this lighthouse in the direction of the Polish sentry post at Westerplatte on 1 September 1939. The building has been open to tourists since 2004. It is well-worth climbing to the top (the final steps up a stepladder) into the lighthouse's interior. The narrow observation deck offers a view of the port, Westerplatte and on Gdańsk itself.



Wisłoujście Fortress

Near the lighthouse, there is a Gdańsk Water Tram stop. You can take your bike on board and sail across to the very foot of the historic fortress. This is one of the few such fortresses that remain on the southern Baltic coast.

For centuries, Wisłoujście Fortress guarded access to Gdańsk from the sea. The heart of the fort is a cylindrical Gothic tower, which today has an observation deck at the top. The brickwork circle was expanded into a vast system of fortifications that are partially open to visitors today. The reconstructed room of the fortress commander is especially worth seeing. Wisłoujście Fortress was often attacked and besieged. It came down in Polish history as a haven for the Royal Navy in the 17th century.

Westerplatte

By taking the cycling lane along Majora Henryka Sucharskiego St. you will reach a place that is an icon of heroic resistance. It was here that World War II began at 4:45 a.m. on 1 September 1939. In spite of being overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Germans, air bombed and shelled by the battleship Schleswig-Holstein and two motor torpedo boats, a handful of Polish soldiers guarding the Military Transit Depot on the peninsula at the mouth of the Port Canal withstood thirteen assaults. With no hope of relief and the wretched condition of 50 wounded soldiers, Major Henryk Sucharski surrendered Westerplatte only on 7 September. Today, you can tour the ruins of the barracks, Guardhouse No. 1, which has been converted into a museum, and the Monument where the outbreak of the Second World War is commemorated each 1st September.



The History Route

Not many cities can boast such a concentration of magnificent historical edifices. A short walk along several streets in the Main Town is a long march through history, dark mysteries, glorious victories and the work of generations of diligent townspeople who belonged to the largest and most independent town of the Polish Commonwealth.

Golden Gate

In spite of its name, it is built of light-coloured stone. The lavish 1612 building opens Długa (Long) Street, Gdańsk's most famous pedestrian walkway. The Gate has a Latin inscription that says: "In agreement small republics grow, in disagreement great republics fall." The façades have figures that symbolise peace, freedom, wealth and fame on the Coal Market side, and agreement, justice, piety and prudence on the Long Street side.

Long Street and the Long Market

The sightseeing heart of the city. It is a pedestrian precinct where you can find shops, cafés and restaurants, not to mention organ grinders, magicians, jugglers and buskers. It was painstakingly rebuilt after horrific wartime destruction. Today, it is again brimming with life and delightful in the richness of its townhouse façades.



Main Town Hall 46 Długa St.

Walking in the direction of the Fountain of Neptune that is always surrounded by tourists and amateur photographers, on the left you will see the Main Town Hall, which today is the seat of the Gdańsk Museum. You can climb up its tower which has a spectacular view of the Long Market and St Mary's Church. The pride of the tower is its modern carillon with 37 bells. The first such instrument was installed here 450 years ago but it was destroyed during the Red Army offensive in March 1945.

The museum displays exhibits from eight centuries of the city's history. Especially noteworthy are the painstakingly reconstructed interiors, where the town councillors debated, and the mayor's office. The Red Hall has a ceiling with majestic plafonds by Izaak van den Blocke from the early 17th century. The most famous one is the Apotheosis of Gdańsk, an idyllic panorama of the city on a triumphal arch, under which a Gdańsk patrician shakes hands with a Polish nobleman.

Artus' Court 44 Długi Targ St.

From the Town Hall onwards, Długa Street widens into the Long Market (Długi Targ). The first building on the left is Artus' Court, the historic meeting place of the Gdańsk elite. This was where the heads of the town's merchant guilds and city patricians would congregate, often fuelled by copious amounts of beer. The most eminent guests were received here too, including the Kings of Poland. There is an eye-catching 11-metre-high stove, made of 520 tiles decorated with portraits of 16th-century European sovereigns. The building was damaged in World War II and was restored as a department of the Gdańsk Museum. Today, it is also a ceremonial venue.



Fountain of Neptune

The bronze statue of the King of the Seas was erected in front of Artus' Court in 1633. The antiquity-inspired sculpture soon became one of Gdańsk's icons. Initially, the Fountain was turned on only occasionally (it was necessary to first fill the water tanks in the attics of the Town Hall and Artus' Court). Since the city got its waterworks running in the second half of the 19th century, the water cascading round the statue can be seen all summer.

Green Gate

Go from the Fountain of Neptune in the direction of the River Motława. This is the most bustling place in Gdańsk, surrounded by restaurants and souvenir shops, with buskers playing in the street and organ grinders walking by. Sometimes vendors put up stalls or open-air events take place here.

The vista of the Long Market closes with a row of decorated townhouses with a large gate through which you can see a bridge across the River Motława. A gate that led into town from the Motława wharf was here as early as in the 14th century. In the late 16th century, the stately Green Gate was built to serve as a residence for the Kings of Poland. Although no Polish sovereign ever lived here, the building has maintained its majestic character.

Long Riverfront (Długie Pobrzeże)

Go through the Green Gate and turn left to find yourself on the Motława riverfront, which used to be the heart of the Gdańsk port of old. This is where merchant ships moored, carrying wares from the entire known world. Today, this is a bustling promenade, often filled with stalls. Some well-known Gdańsk restaurants are situated here. Across from the Long Riverfront, behind Granary Island, is the Gdańsk marina.

The Crane

Walking from the Green Gate, you will see a wooden building ahead, which looks a bit like a sail-less windmill. This is the restored 15th-century port crane. There is a clever mechanism inside the building: two pairs of treadwheels, cylinders driven by human power. The Crane had a capacity to hoist two tonnes up to a height of 27 metres. Most often, the Crane was used to hoist beer and wine barrels, stone ballast or masts. Today, it is a branch of the National Maritime Museum. Please note that tickets can be bought in the neighbouring Maritime Culture Centre (Ośrodek Kultury Morskiej).

Maritime Culture Centre 21-25 Tokarska St.

The Maritime Culture Centre is the most recent part of the National Maritime Museum in Gdańsk. Here you can buy tickets to all four of the Museum's branches, the other three being: the Crane, the Main Branch in the old granaries across the River Motława (there is a ferry service from the Museum) and the Sołdek Ship Museum. In the modern Maritime Culture Centre building you can see an interesting sailing exhibition but its real hit is the education room on the first floor, where kids of all ages can learn how the wind and waves work, how to steer sailing boats and even tie sailing knots.





Mariacka Street

Turn back a couple of dozen steps from the Maritime Culture Centre to a gate that leads from the Motława riverfront towards St Mary's Church and you will find a veritable kingdom of amber. You can buy the precious fossil resin set in silver and gold: rings, bracelets, pendants and brooches. On sunny days, the shops set up stalls with their wares out in the street. Take a look at the majestic gargoyles and the stone porches in front of the townhouses. Wealthy townspeople would eat here for their neighbours and the passers-by to marvel at the sophisticated and expensive foods that the merchants were able to afford.

St Mary's Church

Mariacka Street will take you from the River Motława to the back of St Mary's Church. The main entrance is on the other side of the building. With a cubic capacity of 155,000 cubic metres and an 82-metre-tall tower, it is one of the largest brick churches in the world. St Mary's Church took over 150 years to build, starting in 1343. The church's Gothic severity still dominates downtown Gdańsk today. You should climb up to the top of the tower (turn left past the main entrance). First go up the 150 narrow stone stairs inside a slender pillar, then there is a wide and comfortable staircase to the top. From the top you can also see how Gothic crystal vaults were built. St Mary's Church has many valuable works of art but is the astronomical clock in the left transept that is the most impressive. It was built by Master Hans Düringer of Toruń in 1464-1470 and was one of the world's state-of-the-art timepieces at the time.

World War II Museum 1 Władysław Bartoszewski Sq.

The World War II Museum is a state-of-the-art institution that tells the story of the War as the most terrible cataclysm of the 20th century by combining the Polish perspective with that of other European nations. It focuses on the story of individuals, communities and nations to convey the unique tragedy of the World War II experience where civilians were the ones who suffered most. The heart of the Museum is its main exhibition, 14 metres underground, one of the largest displays in any of the world's historical museums. The building's modern architecture blends into the Gdańsk cityscape, with its body and colour inspired by the gothic towers and brick churches which soar above the Main and Old Towns of Gdańsk.



Young People's Route (cycling route)

Leaving the historic centre of Gdańsk behind you, you can look for places where the past merges with the future in harmony. Gdańsk's young generation doesn't want to radically break off with their heritage. It creatively transforms the space it lives in and creates new places that charm visitors and are comfortably liveable.

Culture Garrison (Garnizon Kultury)

The quarter between Szymanowskiego, Słowackiego, Chrzanowskiego and Grunwaldzka Streets. With an area of 30 hectares, the former military barracks near the city centre posed a true challenge for architects. The massive red brick buildings became an inspiration to create a modern housing estate that perfectly blends into the historical space. The heart of the estate is the Old Riding School (Stary Maneż) building, which is now a café, a meeting place and a concert venue. It also features a local craft brewery and a winery.

Zaspa - Mural Gallery

Take a ride to the high-rise residential blocks in Zaspa by way of Braci Lewoniewskich and Hynka Streets. Prefab concrete housing estates like this one sprang up in Poland from the 1960s to 1980s and were commonly thought to have brought a sense of anonymity into the cities. Labyrinths of high-rise buildings, with no distinguishing features, reflected the socialist idea of society treated as a collective, instead of individuals, that was prevalent at the time. Fortunately, this idea wasn't enough to turn the residents of Gdańsk's Zaspa district into lovers of socialism. On the contrary, it was here in Zaspa, in a high-rise at 17 Pilotów St., that Lech Wałęsa used to live. The monumental walls of the residential buildings became a rewarding backdrop for art. In recent years, many gigantic and expressive murals have been painted here to give the anonymous blocks of flats their own unique character, which is how the estate became Poland's largest open-air art gallery and one of Gdańsk's most interesting tourist attractions.

Wajdeloty Street

Take a ride along Żołnierzy Wyklętych Ave. to Galeria Bałtycka, one of Gdańsk's largest shopping malls. Then go straight along Romana Dmowskiego St. and right after you pass the Gdańsk Wrzeszcz train station, go under the train tracks to Wajdeloty Street. The contrast between the monumental social realism of the neighbouring Zaspą and the charm of the beautifully restored century-old townhouses of Wrzeszcz is striking. Wajdeloty Street has been partially turned into a pedestrian precinct that is eagerly visited by young people. It is full of small cafés and street-food stalls. There are hairstylists, fashionable barber-shops and small general stores that look like straight out of London's Notting Hill. If you turn from Wajdeloty St. into Grażyny Street, you will get to Wybickiego Square. There you will find a plaza with a bench with Gdańsk-born writer Günter Grass and Oskar, the hero of Grass' Tin Drum sitting on it. There are fountains and a figure of a small ballet dancer with an openwork umbrella nearby.

Ergo Arena 1 Plac Dwóch Miast Sq.

A state-of-the-art sports and entertainment hall on the border between Gdańsk and Sopot. It has a maximum capacity of over fifteen thousand. Besides track and field events, handball and volleyball games, it is also a venue for big concerts by big stars, such as Ozzy Osborne, Lady Gaga, Sting and Iron Maiden.

Energa Gdańsk Stadium 1 Pokoleń Lechii Gdańsk St.

Ride along Konrada Wallenroda Street to Lelewela Street, and then along Mickiewicza, Kochanowskiego and Narwicka Streets, to a structure which looks like an enormous amber nugget. The Energa Gdańsk Stadium is one of the venues that hosted the UEFA Euro 2012™ European Football Championships and is now Gdańsk's centre of sports and recreation. It is a venue for concerts by world-class music stars, big games and events but there is also an everyday range of recreational attractions such as a go-cart track, a trampoline park, bungee jumping, a zip line, a skating and inline skating track and many more.





The Nature Route

Within the city limits, you can find extraordinary places where nature comes first. Walking the cobblestone streets in the shadow of the historic townhouses in the bustling city centre, you can easily forget that Gdańsk is first and foremost a coastal city. That is why it is good to go to the city's eastern outskirts to take a breath of the sea breeze full of life-giving iodine and experience unspoilt nature.

Górki Zachodnie

In the winter of 1840, an ice jam caused the banked-up waters of the River Vistula to break through the strip of land that separated it from the Baltic Sea. This is how the Wisła Śmiała (Bold Vistula), which separates the district of Stogi from Sobieszewska Island, came to be. It is a very picturesque place that became the Polish centre for sailing when the National Sailing Centre opened in Górki Zachodnie (Western Hills). The youngest sailors train under the watchful eye of their instructors on the calm waters between the River Martwa Wisła (Still Vistula) and the Bay of Gdańsk. Yachts from all over the world moor at the marina. If you have a sailing licence, you can rent a sailboat or take on as a crew member for a voyage along the wild shores of Sobieszewska Island.



Sobieszewska Island – Birds' Paradise

Drive across the bridge on Road 501 that connects the mainland with Sobieszewska Island, turn right and go to the end of Nadwiślańska Street. Leave your car in the car park and continue on foot. There is a fork in the sandy path. On the left, along the bank of the Vistula, there is a narrow path that leads to a weir which separates the river's waters from the lake overgrown with rushes. If you go right, you will enter the Birds' Paradise reserve (Ptasi Raj). Not only ornithologists will love this place. You can see over two hundred species of birds here, including the tern and the plover. There are also impressive flocks of ducks and seagulls, sometimes over a hundred thousand strong. The beautiful forest that grows on the sandy dunes is full of birdsong, knocking, hooting and the fluttering of wings. The sandy path will take you past small ponds all the way to the beach.

Sobieszewska Beach

The farthest and most pristine of Gdańsk's beaches. Although when you look to the left, you will clearly see the port cranes, around you there will be only silence, yellow sand and perhaps some beachgoers walking here and there. This is also the best place to look for amber nuggets washed up on the shore after a stormy night. Even on warm summer days, when the beaches in Stogi or Brzeźno are crowded, the shores of Sobieszewska Island will allow you to get away from the crowd.

Seagull Sandbank (Mewia Łacha)

The farthest fragment of Sobieszewska Island, enclosed to the east by the waters of the Vistula Canal and the Baltic Sea to the north. Seals love this beach. Once there were as many as 160 of them but there are no less than thirty lying about almost every day. Rare terns fly in circles above. The whole area is strictly protected but there is a path that runs through the reserve. There are also observation decks. The mouth of the Vistula looks different every year because the river carries sand that makes new sandbanks, while the winter storms change the shoreline. Just like the Birds' Paradise, the Seagull Sandbank is often visited by flocks of birds migrating to the north in the spring and to warmer climes in the autumn.



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Publisher:

Gdańsk City Hall, Mayor's Office,
Gdansk Tourism Organization

e-mail: bp@gdansk.gda.pl www.visitgdansk.com www.facebook.com/gdansk

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Maciek Nicgorski, Stanisław Składanowski, Patryk Kośmider, Iwona Kowalska, Maciej Szajewski, Marcin Pierożyński, Grzegorz Mehring, Roberto Polce, Dawid Linkowski, Jakub Głowala, Jacek Kwiatkowski, Matteo Piazza, Łukasz Unterschuetz, Marek Angiel, Gdańsk Nowy Port Lighthouse archives, Hevelianum archives, Gdańsk Museum archives, ECS archives, Department of Promotion, Information and Social Communication archives, Mikołaj Bujak.

We would like to thank the following institutions for providing photographs:

Gdańsk Nowy Port Lighthouse, European Solidarity Centre, Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, Gdańsk International Fair Co., Hevelianum, National Sailing Centre, Gdańsk Museum.

