

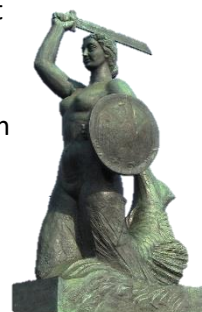


WARSAW *is* AWESOME



– a short guide

Warsaw - probably not a city on everyone's "top ten to see before I have bad teeth" list (even though it should be), yet an awesome spot on the European capital map. I always say: Going to visit Poland? If you like an open book – go to Krakow ;) if you like a bit of mystery and madness – choose Warsaw. It is not a place where things happen in one spot, usually you have to know where to go, usually you will get this knowledge guided by a local. Usually this knowledge changes rapidly... So my knowledge may be outdated, but do not hesitate to ask a random Varsovian for your way – they tend to want to show you where the fun is at.



Whether you want soc-realistic buildings, pre-war architecture, strolls in the park or wild party nights ... Warsaw can proudly stand up to the challenge.

Here is a short selection of some tour/sightseeing tips from a happily returning exile:

Pałac Kultury i Nauki: The Palace of Culture (and Knowledge) - a gift from Stalinist Russia (the Palace keeps dividing the Polish people) stands tall right in the centre of Warsaw, reminding its inhabitants of its grandiosity. Personally – I love it. Home to cinemas, theatres, swimming pools, crystal chandeliered ballrooms, conference rooms, and other crazy things one cannot imagine could exist on those xxx floors - It is a landmark of the city. Fancy a (probably foggy) view of town? Then the elevator up to the viewing deck may be an option. You can also visit the Palace itself (a tour need to be booked: <http://www.pkin.pl/en/zwiedzanie-pkin/zwiedzanie-z-przewodnikiem/>). They tend to have interesting exhibitions, so may be worthwhile to check it in the daily newspaper.

A selection of noteworthy museums:

POLIN: Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Based in a grandiose building on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto, a very interesting and relatively new museum. (There are no visible remnants of the Ghetto itself).

The Warsaw Uprising Museum: Did you know that all of Warsaw pause for a minute of silence, each year, on the 1st of August at 17.00. While all halts to a stop, and sirens sound across the city, Varsovians commemorate the commencement of the Warsaw uprising in 1944. Curious? You can find out more in this museum.

If you like art, peek into the following (just to mention a few):

Zachęta – The National Gallery of Art: usually showcasing interesting contemporary art. Next to Sofitel, based in an old pretty “palace”. <http://zacheta.art.pl/en/>

Muzeum Narodowe, The National Museum in Warsaw: The stable exhibition offer art from medieval times to the 21st century. Usually have interesting temporary exhibitions of old and new “masters”. One of its prides is the “Faras Gallery” – “featuring Medieval Nubian paintings from the Nile River Valley south of the First Cataract”. The building of the museum is in itself of beautiful, modernist architecture. For more crazy contemporary art, visit the “**Centre for Contemporary art**” at the Ujazdowski Castle.

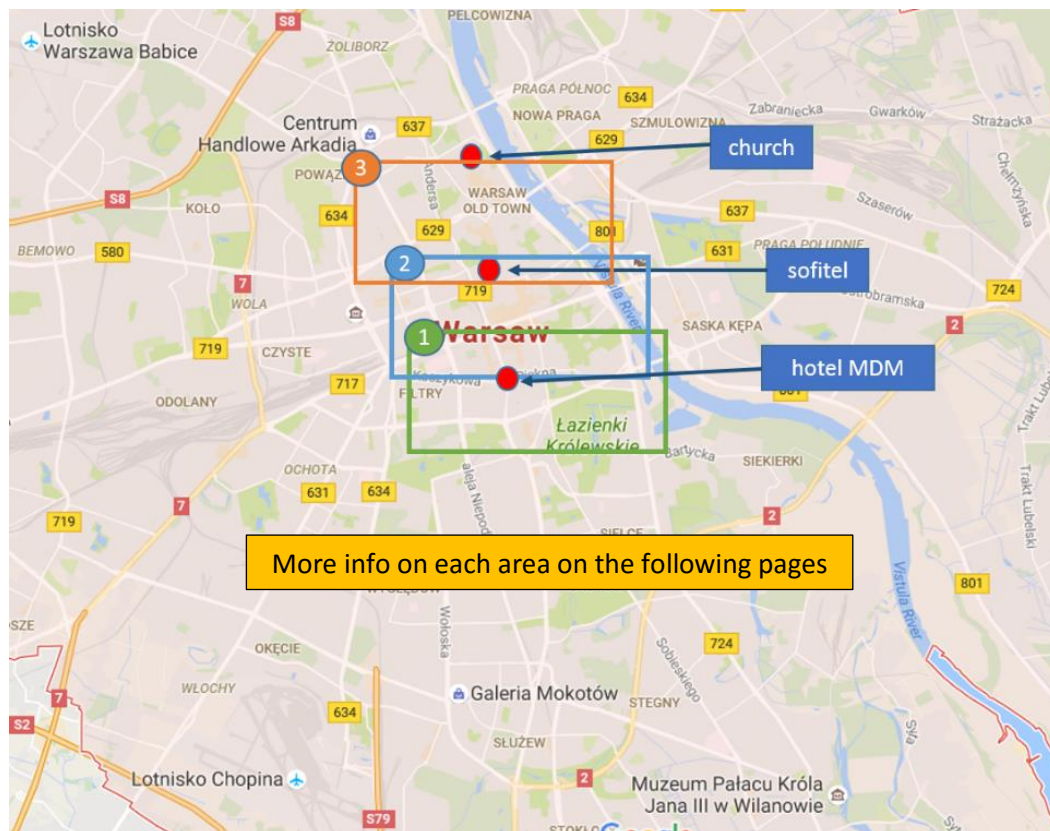
Muzeum plakatu: There is a distinct, well known and valued “school of polish posters” style in poster art – worth a visit if times allows. It is based a bit outside of Warsaw, in Wilanów, in a pretty palace garden. <http://www.postermuseum.pl/>

Galeria Karykatury: if you are in need of a laugh, or some absurdity... This small museum is based in a cute side street, not far from the old town.

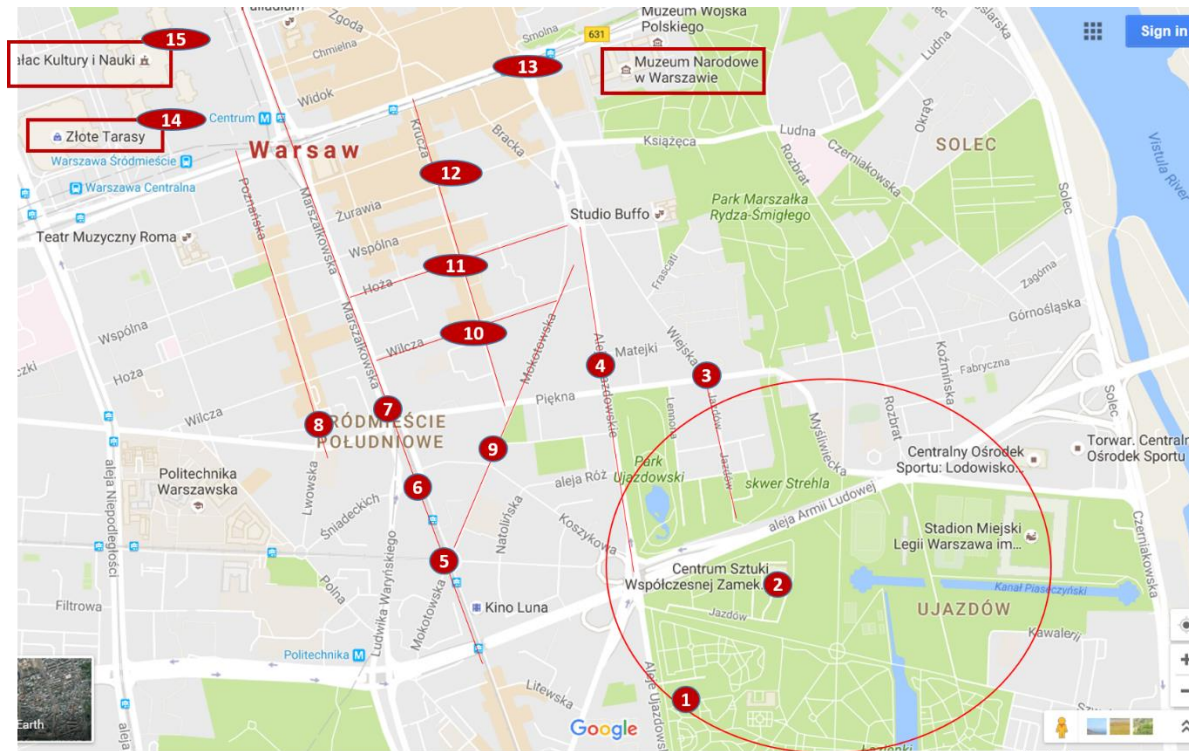
If you are ever in Warsaw in the summer months, you can enjoy a Chopin concert in the Łazienki park, which take place every Sunday between mid-May and end of September. If you want to get to know more about Chopin himself, you can visit the museum dedicated to him. Alternatively, pop into the Church of the Holy Cross, at the “Krakowskie Przedmieście”, to see where his heart is buried.

<http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/chopins-heart>

▲ closer look ... Warsaw "area by area"



Area 1:



1. The Łazienki Park – New York has Central Park, Munich its English Gardens... Warsaw has something just as lush. Stroll around in the park as the Royals used to do. (The Chopin concerts take place in summer in the park, by the Chopin statue (ps. the pond in front of the statue is shaped as a heart).

2. Instalacje Art Bistro – bar for drinks for Friday. Also houses the Centre for Contemporary Art and a terrasse with a lovely view of the park.

3. Osiedle Jazdów – a hidden gem behind the Ujazdowski Park, an area with small wooden houses, quite untypical to find in the centre of a big city. This small area also hides some interesting history:

<http://culture.pl/en/video/jazdow-a-village-enclave-in-the-middle-of-warsaw-video>

4. Aleje Ujazdowskie (Ujazdów Avenue) – a representative avenue of Warsaw, with many beautiful old buildings (noteworthy considering 90% of Warsaw was destroyed in the war) as well as home to many embassies (in case some of you get into trouble ;)).

5. Plac Zbawiciela - aka. Hipsterville. A square with loads of little cafes and bars. Used to sport a funky rainbow in the middle of the plaza,

(https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Plac_Zbawiciela_w_Warszawie_014.JPG) but was removed after being repeatedly burnt down (apparently some believed it was propagating gay rights). I still miss this piece of art in the middle of Hipsterville (the removal stripped it of a bit of oomph).

6. Plac Konstytucji/ MDM – The finest of the fine when it comes to monumental soc-realistic pieces of urbanistic planning and architecture.

7. Ulica Marszałkowska – Warsaw's main ("parade") street, cutting across a large part of the city.

8. Poznańska street – home to a few funky bars: Geba, Tel Aviv, Kraaken Bar, Beirut, to name a few.

9. Mokotowska street– street with many funky and original shops.

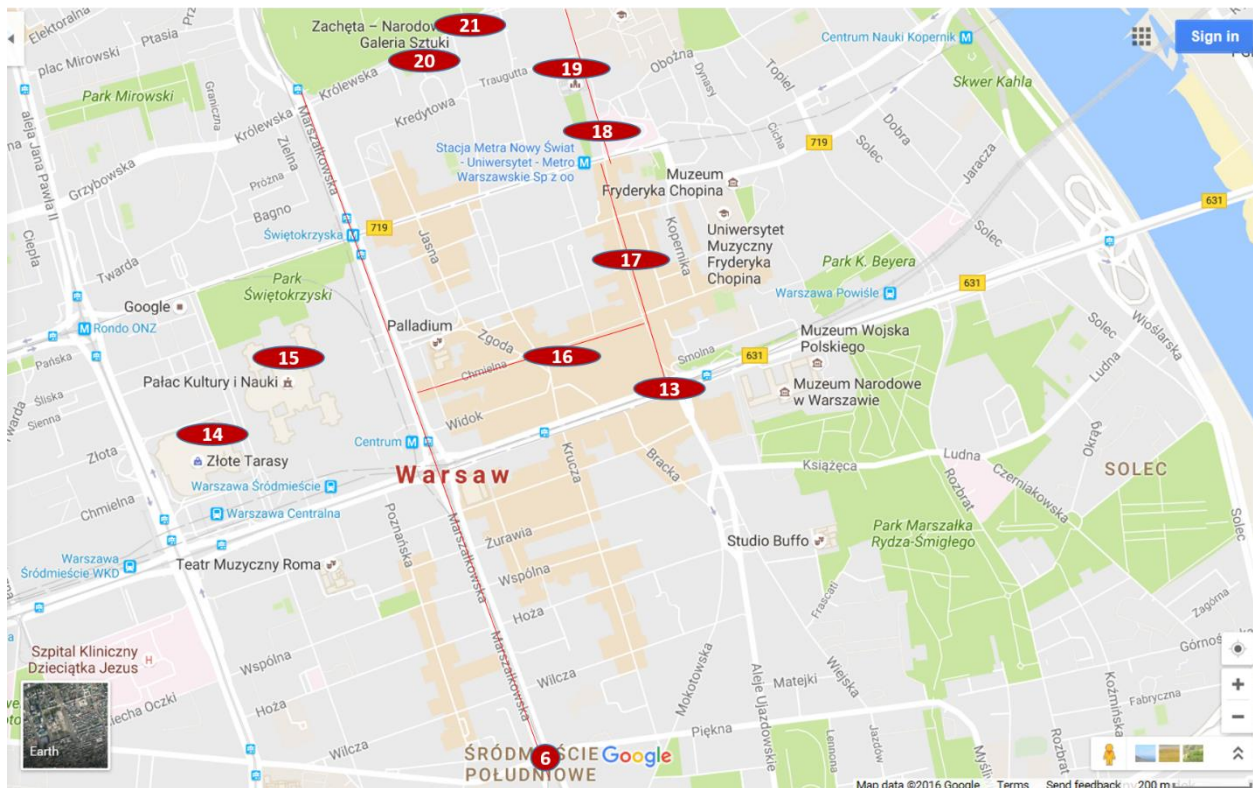
10. 11. 12. Wilcza-, Hoża-, Krucza streets – cute streets with bars/ restaurants.

13. Palm tree art installation in the middle of the bustling "Jerusalem Alea".

14. Złote Tarasy – big shopping centre

15. The Palace of Culture – see intro

Area 2:



16. Chmielna street – cute pedestrian street with bars/ snack bars/ shops. Getting closer to the tourist streak.

17. Nowy Świat – one of the main tourist streets. Start of a lovely walk towards the Old Town (Just keep walking straight on).

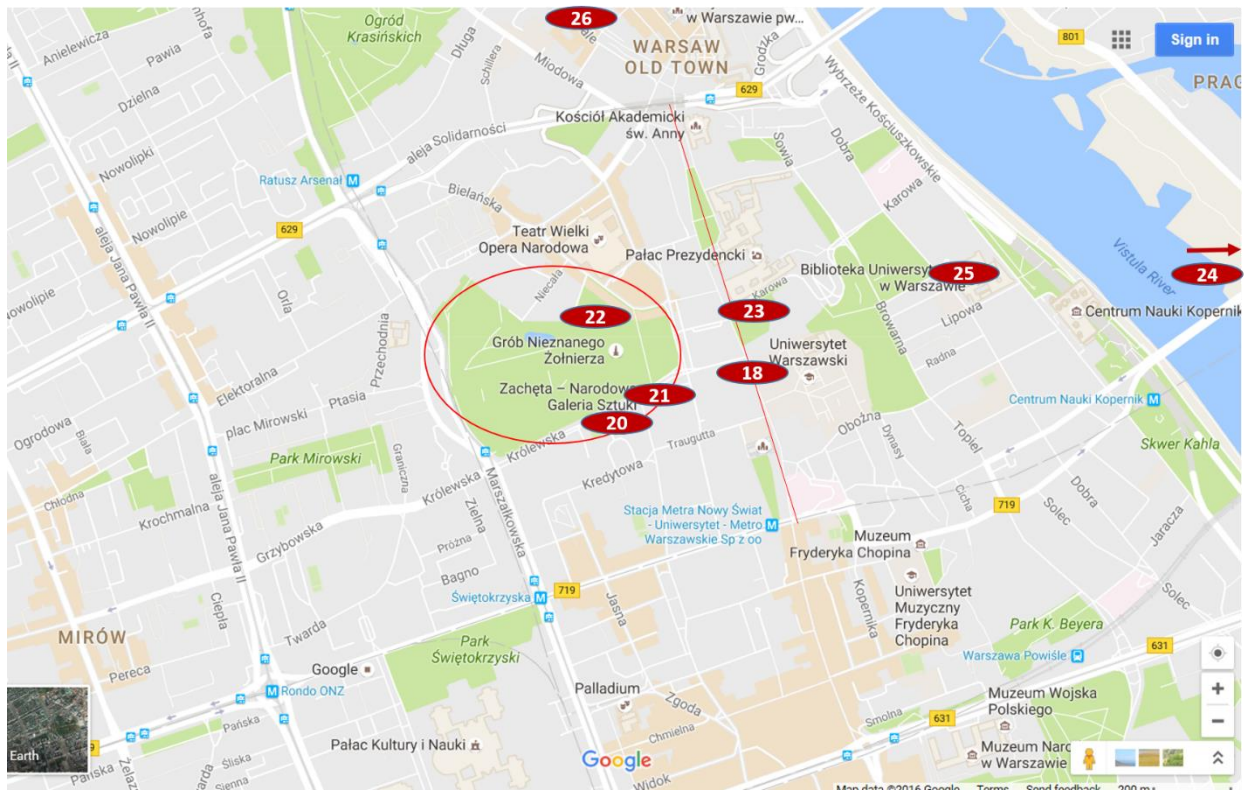
18. Krakowskie Przedmieście - A beautiful Avenue, and continuation of Nowy Świat, on route to Old Town. This avenue takes you along to the Copernikus Monument (for those Astrophysicists in the crowd ;)), the Adam Mickiewicz Monument (one of Poland most cherished romantic poets), the Warsaw University, Hotel Bristol, The Presidential Palace, pretty Churches etc etc, and ends with the prospect of a cold (and overpriced) beer at the Old Town square.

19. Church of the Holy Cross - Chopins heart is buried here.

20. Zachęta, The National Gallery of Art - (see intro page)

21. Sofitel

Area 3:



22. Ogród Saski (The Saxon Garden) - Park with walk ways and fountains, leading up to the Piłsudski Square. There you can find the guarded “grave of the unknown soldier”, and the statue of General Piłsudski watching over the square (he was the General who led Poland to regaining its independence in 1918). Close by is the Theatre Square, with the National Opera and Theatre.

23. Karowa street – continue down this cute street to see a beautiful “Paris-like” bridge, with the view to the ...

24. National Stadium - The Stadium was rebuilt in preparation to the Euro cup in 2012. Prior to that it used to be called the 10th-Anniversary Stadium, and be home to one of the biggest black markets in Europe. Lined with Vietnamese kitchen stalls, here you could buy anything your heart desired – latest pirate copy of the Ace of Base cassette? Here you go. A string tanga made out Egyptian camel hair? Oh, be my guest. A Kalashnikov – no problemas, we have a tonne of those in store, just beind this flower printed curtain. <http://www2.polskieradio.pl/eo/print.aspx?id=54441>

25. For a little break, step into the **Warsaw University Library**. Or, on top of it, more likely. The roof of the library is home to a luscious garden (“one of the largest and most beautiful roof gardens in Europe with an area of more than 10,000 m2, and plants covering 5,111 m2”) where you can relax for a moment and take in the view of Warsaw and its Vistula river.

26. Old Town - Stroll around the narrow streets, and be amazed by the fact that what you see is de facto a replica – the Old Town was completely destroyed during WWII, and reconstructed (to large part by Warsaws inhabitants) after its end. Much of the rebuilding was based on the painting of Italian painter Bernardo Bellotto.

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/apr/22/story-cities-warsaw-rebuilt-18th-century-paintings>

<http://style.time.com/2013/04/04/rebuilding-warsaw-five-ways-to-see-a-resurrected-city/>

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30>

Other things not to miss:

- The other side of the Vistula River – especially **Praga** (the more “alternative part of the town), and **Saska Kępa** (with restaurant-lined Francuska Street).

<http://theculturetrip.com/europe/poland/articles/the-top-8-things-to-do-and-see-in-praga-warsaw/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2008/aug/27/warsaw.poland>

(the guides give a general outline, the “updateness” of the information must be checked)

- Do your tastebuds a favour and visit the fabulousness of a **Bar Mleczny** (milk bar). These eateries were very popular during communist times, and offered cheap, tasty, homemade meals served and enjoyed by all - the young and old, professors and members of the proletariat, party members and party opponents the like. A "kotlet mielony", with some "ziemniaczki" (alternatively "kartofle"), a marchewka z groszkiem and a side of some "surówka", slurped down with a hot "kompot" (served in a thin glass making it impossible to drink, and with some undefinable soggy fruit swimming at its bottom), with ones face wiped down with tissues thin as bible paper, and shiny and unabsorbent as a (prices up for grabs for best metaphor) at the end of the meal → Heaven!!! (and I am not being sarcastic here). Suggestions for milk bars: Żłota Kurka Bar, Bambino, Prasowy, Bar Familijny.



Tissues, lookin' all innocent, pretty and absorbent (they're everything but that). They tend to be camouflaged in these kind of holders.



Surówkaaaaaa!!!



- Enjoy a drink or two on the **riverfront of the Vistula River** (for example: “Cud nad Wisła”, “Temat Rzeka”, “Plazowa”). (You may have to come back in summer for this one)

<http://culture.pl/en/article/a-hipster-guide-to-warsaw-summer-edition>

- Have a **vodka shot** (or five), while crunching on a side of pickled cucumbers, herring or a bite of pate (alternatively go all in with a steak tatar). Some recommendations: “Pijalnia Wodki i Piwa”, “Meta, Seta, Galareta” etc etc (<http://www.warsawinsider.pl/top-shot-bars/>).
- Pop into the inner courtyards of pre-war Warsaw buildings to view some of the adorable “**Kapliczkas**” (decorated, religious shrines). If you see an old building with an inner court, chances are it has one of those. Can be perceived as a sign of devotion, can also be seen as an artwork "painted" in the most unexpected of places, a travel in time and ... a chapeau bas "to times gone".



Enjoy!

