

Sports in Bydgoszcz



Bydgoszcz is a city which is frequently associated with sports. There are many sports clubs and institutions with deep-rooted traditions, known not only in Poland, but also worldwide. Numerous sporting facilities have witnessed historic events taking place in the city. The boat race course in Brdyujście, "Łuczniczka" Sports & Entertainment Hall and Zawisza Stadium are some of the local arenas hosting international sporting competitions. Bydgoszcz has produced and trained our most outstanding national champions, champions of Europe and the world, and Olympic winners.

A brief history of sports

Many generations of local residents have contributed to the positive image of Bydgoszcz sports. They include those, who nearly a hundred years ago, after the return of Bydgoszcz to Poland, celebrated their patriotism by establishing the city's first athletic associations, organizations and clubs. Sports activity was combined with patriotic education. It developed not only physical fitness, but also taught tradition, history, and respect towards the idea. Until 1920, the local Germans were predominately involved in organized sport. The city had football clubs, gymnastic societies, a tennis club, and the Frithjof rowing association, which was the best known rowing club in that period. The only counterbalance to the German dominance in this field was the Sokół Gymnastic Society, which was active in Bydgoszcz from 1886. It promoted hiking and biking trips, and organized gymnastic shows.

On the water

On March 16, 1920, the Tryton Rowing Association was founded, which was soon renamed the Bydgoszcz Rowing Association (BTW). It initiated a new, this time Polish history of sports in the city. Thanks to BTW, Bydgoszcz became one of the major rowing centres in Poland. During the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, the coxed four from BTW won the bronze medal, the first Olympic medal in the history of Polish rowing. After the war, the most popular athlete of the club was Teodor Kocerka, repeated Olympic bronze medalist from Helsinki and Rome, the nineteen-time champion of Poland, medalist of the Championships of Europe and the double winner of the Diamond Oars for victory at the Royal Regatta on the River Thames. In April 1920, on the initiative of the Terminators' Association, the Gwiazda Club was established, which popularized such sports as basketball, fencing, kayaking, and wrestling. It launched careers of such well-known Polish athletes as Stefan Majewski – footballer and coach, member of the Polish national team at the World Cup in Spain and Mexico; Marian Sypniewski – foil fencer, repeated Olympic medalist, and the 1978 world champion; Daniela Walkowiak – kayaker, a three-time Olympian, winner of the bronze medal in K-2 in Rome in 1960, multi-time national champion, who also represented the Zawisza Bydgoszcz Club. The "Gwiazda" Marina is located near the Gwiazda Stadium. This marina, meeting all European standards, was opened in 2009. Situated on the Bydgoszcz Canal, in the proximity of historic locks, it offers everything that is needed by water sports enthusiasts.

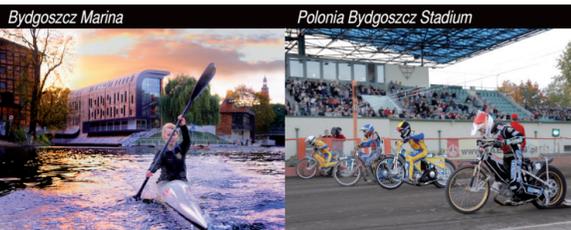
It should be added that a new, modern marina with a hotel was built on Mill Island, in the city centre. The Regional Rowing Association LOTTO-Bydgoszcz (RTW), the successor of the Railway Rowing Club, is a prominent rowing organization. RTW is a 25-time (until 2013) Team Champion of Poland. It has been successful in defending this title for over twenty years (starting from 1993). This result is quite unique in Europe.

On the raceway

Polonia Bydgoszcz, which was founded in May 1920, was initially a football club. Later, it added such sports as hockey, athletics, tennis, cycling, and speedway. Feliks Więcek, whose daily job was journeyman butcher, won the first Race Around Poland (known today as Tour de Pologne) in 1928. However, the deep-rooted history of the hockey team ended, as in many similar clubs, in 1989/90. Henryk Drzymalski, who is described as the second best tennis player in our history, just after Fibak, marked a beautiful chapter in the history of Polonia. In 1974, he was the best, beating his great rival and friend in the final of the Championships of Poland. However, the most successful group of Polonia Bydgoszcz was its speedway team, winner of Team and Individual Championships of Poland, in both junior and senior categories. Mieczysław Potukard was Poland's first speedway rider who competed in the final of Individual Championships of the World. Bydgoszcz has hosted international speedway competitions for many years. Some of the events organized at the Polonia stadium on Sportowa Street include the Individual Championships of Poland, since 1998 Speedway Grand Prix competitions, Speedway World Team Cup competitions, and since 1982 the Polish Speedway Cup competitions. In 2012, Bydgoszcz hosted the semi-final of the Speedway World Team Cup with the participation of the national team of Poland. The Bydgoszcz Polonia Club has its own speedway team in the Polish league, hosting speedway events at its stadium. In 2014, Polonia Bydgoszcz organized for the 16th time the Individual Speedway World Championship, Grand Prix. In 2014, Polonia also hosted the play-off of the Speedway World Team Cup.

There is only one queen

Athletics, "Queen of Sports", has reigned in Bydgoszcz for many years. One of the Honorary Citizens of Bydgoszcz is Teresa Cieply, sprinter and hurdler, Olympic bronze medalist in Rome, who won the gold and silver medals in Tokyo. Zdzisław Krzyszkowiak was named patron of the Zawisza sports stadium. He was an Olympic champion in Rome, champion of Europe, and a 3000 metres steeplechase world record holder. These two great sports personalities forged the way for new generations of Bydgoszcz athletes. The Military Sports Group, which was established at CWZS, includes pole vaulters Łukasz Michalski and Paweł Wojciechowski – Champion of the World, middle distance runner Marcin Lewandowski, hurdler Dominik Bochenek, and sprinter Mirka Popowicz. All of them have already won medals at cham-



pionships of Europe and the world. In addition, the Military Sports Group at CWZS Zawisza brings together other athletes, representing such sports as rowing, kayaking – champion of the world Piotr Siemionowski, shooting and weightlifting – champion of the world Marcin Dolega.

Over the net, under the basket, and between the goals

Three Bydgoszcz teams play in the top national leagues:

- Male volleyball players of Łuczniczka Bydgoszcz, who (as Delecta Bydgoszcz) were ranked fourth in the Premier League in the 2012-2013 season, which was their greatest accomplishment;
- Female basketball players of Artego Bydgoszcz were ranked second in the 2014-2015 season of the Polish Premier League;
- Bydgoszcz Women's Football Club currently plays in the Women's Premier Football League;

Football has had throngs of devoted fans in Bydgoszcz.

The older ones still remember the teams of Polonia and Zawisza that played in the Premier League in the 1950's and 1960's, whereas the younger ones recall the time of Miłoszewicz, Boniek, and Brończyk.

Not only first-class athletes

Starting from the late 1990's, the city has been hosting many prominent sporting events, particularly athletics meetings. It organized the First IAAF World Junior Championships for youth (under-18) athletes in 1999, the European Athletics Championships for athletes under the age of 23, SPAR European Cup, IAAF World Junior Championships, IAAF World Cross Country Championships, and the European Athletics Festival. The Zdzisław Krzyszkowiak Zawisza Stadium is a perfect venue for athletics competitions. Its fantastic atmosphere encourages athletes to achieve great results. The Zawisza Stadium is an advanced facility, modernized from scratch in 2007-2008, meeting the standards of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF). Its stands can seat over 20,000 spectators. The building under the new stand features conference rooms, restaurants, fitness rooms, and the Bydgoszcz Sports Gallery. During the last decade, the Zawisza Stadium has hosted several games of the Polish national football team. The city is also proud of its "Łuczniczka" Sports & Entertainment Hall, which was opened in 2002. Sports in Bydgoszcz are associated not only with competitions of athletes. Considerable experience, professional work, great results from preparations and excellent final results of sporting events hosted by the city have been recognized by participants and visitors invited from all over the world. Bydgoszcz was also recognized in the 76th Plebiscite of sports daily "Przeгляд Sportowy" and Polish Television. The city was awarded the Champion statuette and the title Poland's Sporting Events Host of the Year 2010.

Bydgoszcz Specialties

During your stay in Bydgoszcz, it's worth finding time to try local specialties. There is something for everyone, including chocolates, goose meat, locally brewed beer, and bread with potatoes ...

Sweet history

The love of Bydgoszcz residents for sweets started before the First World War. Elegant, family-owned cake shops and bakeries were opened in the city centre. They were serving tasty and always fresh Danish pastries, cream puddings made from choux pastry, and flummary. At home, people delighted in the taste of chocolates made by the "Lukullus" Sugar and Chocolate Factory and the Tysler Brothers (both of them were nationalized after the Second World War, merged and named "Jutrzenka", which has been operating under this name to this day). Ask for fresh and tasty Danish pastries in the morning in the bakery of Katarzyna Erdmann at 2 Długa Street (over fifty years of baking tradition and an oven that remembers the First World War!) and the bakery of the Bigoński family, founded in 1924 at 87 Gdańska Street. Its interior design dates back to the interwar period; the décor features the coat of arms of the bakers – two griffins holding a pretzel.

Chocolates and baked goods made by Sowa

"Adam Sowa," a family-owned confectionery company founded in 1946, popular among Bydgoszcz residents, has become one of the tourist stops on the "sweet" map of the city. One of the attractions is the handmade chocolates, known for their unique flavour. Their secret is a thin layer of chocolate, underneath which is an aromatic, liquid ganache (filling). Residents and tourists also delight in cakes and layer cakes, which were the specialty of master baker Feliks Sowa, the founder of the company. In 1962, he made the first "flagship" chocolate layer cake in his bakery. Sponge cake, layered with jam and covered completely with melted milk chocolate set popularity records. While visiting the coffee house at 5 Mostowa Street, we can try a cup of house coffee – "Sowa Café" and take a look at reprints of photographs of old Bydgoszcz, taken a hundred years ago.



Bread with potatoes

Potato rye bread is one of the oldest culinary recipes from the Bydgoszcz area. In the past, bread was baked from flour processed at a farm or purchased from the mill. It was rather expensive. On the other hand, the basic nutrition of the local residents was based on cheap and generally available potatoes. Clever housewives quickly noticed that adding boiled and mashed potatoes to the bread dough increases the number of baked loaves and improves the taste of the bread. In addition, they reduced the perishability of the bread and extended its freshness. Today, the only establishment that preserves these old traditions is the Bydgoszcz bakery Murmiłto. Potato rye bread has a crispy, golden brown crust and is soft inside, having a flavour and aroma of roasted potatoes. The time of preparation of this bread is very long, 22 hours; its baking time is 1.5 hours. Thanks to its unique features and long history, the bread was registered on the list of traditional products of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. It can be purchased in the regional meat delicatessen, JD Spsychalscy, at 6 Batorego Street (while stopping at this shop, we recommend trying one of the house hams made using traditional methods), in the Murmiłto company store at 60 Sienkiewicza Street, and at Zimmer Café, 7 Gdańska Street.



Goose meat

Recently, the old-Polish traditions of eating goose meat have been restored in Kuyavia and Pomerania. It's not surprising, since the region is one of the biggest producers of this tasty meat that has been underestimated. The interest in goose meat is noticeable in particular in November, on the Feast of Saint Martin observed on November 11. This time is not accidental, since as early as the 19th century, goose breeding was seasonal and lasted between Spring and late Autumn, with slaughter carried out just before November 11. On the Feast of Saint Martin (the patron saint of birds, particularly geese), people ate roast goose, sweetly flavoured (with fruit). For winter, goose meat



Beer from the local brewery

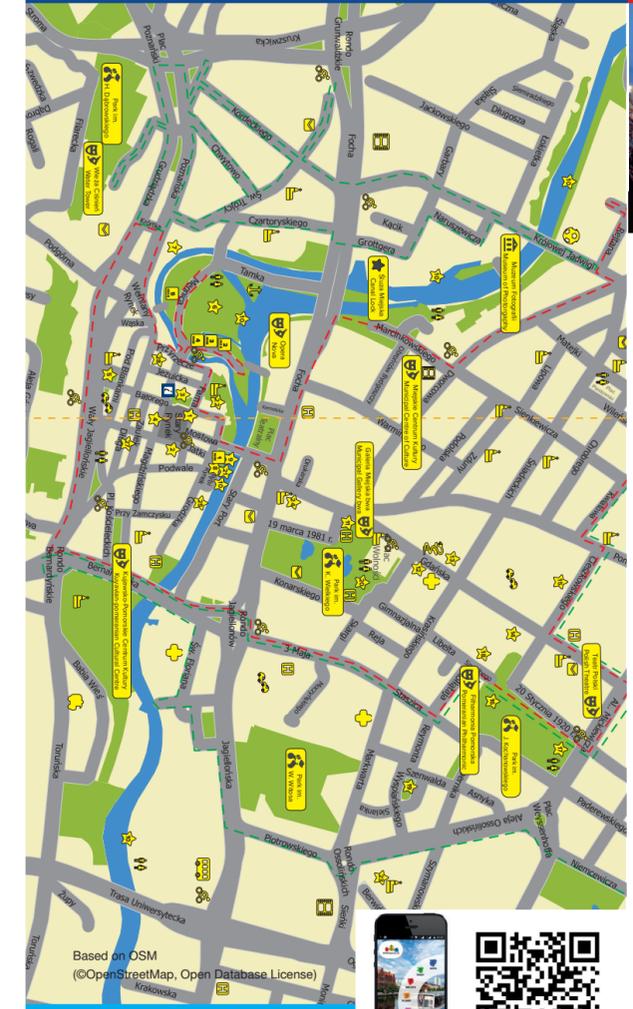
The traditions of Bydgoszcz brewing date back to the origins of the city. In the 14th century, every townsman, owner of a lot within the city walls, had the right to brew and sell beer. Bydgoszcz beer was served in inns, in the area stretching from Wielkopolska to the Baltic Sea. In the following century, this gold beverage, due to its exceptional taste, was one of six in the country exported abroad. This boom continued until the mid-17th century. In addition to the castle brewery, brewhouses operated in local inns and taverns. At the turn of the 20th century, Bydgoszcz had as many as 13 breweries. The biggest of them, Juliusz Strelow's brewery on Ustronie Street, set a record in filling bottles at 1,800 an hour in 1920. After the war, his property was nationalized and turned into a facility producing the famous Kujawiak beer. Unfortunately, not much remains of the magnificent old breweries. However, Bydgoszcz has been proudly continuing its beer making traditions through the Regional Brewery (8 Poznańska Street), founded in 2011, whose terraces are situated in the romantic Bydgoszcz Venice. Beer lovers can select from among four types of local beer, including Pils Wenecki, Kozłak Bydgoski, Kasztelan z Bydgoszczy, and Pszeniczne Młyńskie. Kozłak is a unique, strong and dark beer of Bavarian type (Bock), made seasonally, in winter.



Legend has it that this drink, brewed by monks, was supposed to brighten the long and ascetic period of Lent. On the other hand, the name of Kasztelan z Bydgoszczy is related to the first written record about the city. Kastelanus de Budegac, if we can trust the records, was the founder of the city on the River Brda. While in brewery, we also recommend asking about the dark honey ale, which is the specialty of the restaurant. All of the mentioned varieties of beer are not always available, since they are brewed in only two vats. When drinking a beer, we can enjoy the beautiful view of the entire Mill Island or tour the inside of the establishment. For beer connoisseurs, it can be a fascinating journey through time. The Hop Room features a permanent exhibition dedicated to the history of Bydgoszcz brewing and souvenirs related to beer, presenting also a sizeable collection of labels. The Bydgoszcz Venice has links not only to beer making, but also to the production of alcoholic beverages. In 1827-1945, in the area of 2-4 Czartoryskiego Street, was C.A. Franke's distillery, which delivered to the residents of Bydgoszcz and the region the famous chocolate liqueurs and Advocaat (daily production of the company amounted to 10,000 litres of pure spirit). Warm water generated during the rectification process was used in the bath owned by the company.



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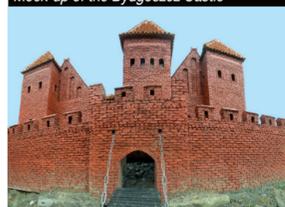
History of Bydgoszcz



Old Town

Bydgoszcz appears for the first time in historical records on June 28, 1238. The Annal of the Chapter of Gniezno features the Bydgoszcz Castellans called Sulistaw. Although the name "Bydgoszcz" is not mentioned, we know that the quoted Budegac is the city on the River Brda. Bydgoszcz, as a city protecting the crossing over the river, was founded most likely in the early 11th century in the area of the present Saint Andrew Bobola Church. A settlement outside the city walls developed in the south. Here, in the 13th century, the oldest church of the city was built, which was St. Giles' Church (no longer in existence). At the beginning of the 14th century, the Bydgoszcz Castellans became part of the Duchy of Bydgoszcz and Wyszogród, the northernmost part of the borderland between Poland and the Teutonic State. During one of the Polish-Teutonic wars (1327-1332), the most important cities of the Duchy were burnt by the Teutonic Knights. As a result, they were annexed along with Kuyavia by the Teutonic Knights. Based on the 1343 Treaty of Kalisz, Casimir the Great regained Kuyavia along with Bydgoszcz, for which he had great plans. It was supposed to become the main city of northern Kuyavia. On the other hand, Wyszogród was never rebuilt after the damage it suffered in 1330. King Casimir III chartered Bydgoszcz as a town on April 19, 1346. The foundation charter was issued in Brześć Kujawski, granting to the township the Magdeburg law. The new settlement was supposed to develop on an uninhabited plain, located west from the existing city. Casimir the Great wanted the city to be named Królewiec (Koenigsburg); however, the new name did not gain popularity among the locals. Bydgoszcz received a number of privileges from the king, including the right to involvement in navigable trade and the right to mint coins. At the request of the king, a brick castle was built in the area occupied by the early settlement, serving as the seat of the local castellan. In 1370, the Bydgoszcz Starosty was inherited by the grandson of Casimir, Każko of Słupsk. Bydgoszcz Castle became his favourite residence, where he frequently stayed. He also died here in

Mock-up of the Bydgoszcz Castle



1377. Consecutive centuries, in particular the 15th and 16th, marked fast growth of the city. In that time, Bydgoszcz became one of the biggest cities in Poland.

In 1397, thanks to the efforts of Queen Hedwig, the Carmelites arrived to the city, opening their monastery in it. After Gdańsk and Kraków, it was the third monastery of this order in Poland. Bydgoszcz played a significant role in the Great War with the Teutonic Order (1409- 1411). One of its heroes was Bydgoszcz starost, Janusz Brzozogłowy, a knight of King Ladislaus Jagiello. During the Thirteen Years' War with the Teutonic Order, King Casimir IV Jagiellon frequently stayed in Bydgoszcz. Brick city walls were built, enclosing Bydgoszcz from the South, and a Gothic parish (Fara) church sitting on the corner of the Market Square, close to the Brda River. The city grew at a fast pace thanks to river trade. The main goods exported from the city were pottery and Bydgoszcz beer. In 1480, the Bernardine Order arrived to the city, playing a very important role in its history. In the immediate proximity of the monastery buildings, the Bernardines erected a Gothic church (today, the site is occupied by the Garrison Church of Our Lady, Queen of Peace). They also established a sizeable library, some collections of which have survived to this day. In that time, the office of Bydgoszcz starost had been held by members of a very affluent and influential local family, the Kościeleckis (they resided in the Bydgoszcz castle for nearly 150 years).

In 1594, King Sigismund III Vasa's favourite, Stanisław Cikowski opened a private mint on Mill Island, which in the early 17th century was turned into a royal mint. In 1621, in order to commemorate Poland's victory over the Turks in Chocim, one of the most valuable and biggest coins in the history of Europe was minted – 100 ducats of Sigismund III Vasa. In that time, Bydgoszcz had a population of about 5,000 and was one of the biggest cities in Poland. Poles dominated in the social structure of the city, which also featured big groups of the Germans and Scotsmen. The melting pot of Bydgoszcz was supplemented by the Jews (although formally they had been banned from settling in the city based on the 1555 royal charter, thus they lived in nearby Fordon, appearing in Bydgoszcz primarily during fairs) and single Italian families (someone called Stefan Parkuzi served several times as the mayor of the city).

The biggest disaster in the history of the city took place in the mid-17th century, during the Second Northern War. Bydgoszcz, just like countless Polish cities and towns, was destroyed during the invasion of Poland by

Map of Bydgoszcz, 1656



Mill Island

Sweden, known as the Swedish Deluge (1655-1660). Fierce battles had been fought for the city, which had changed hands many times, leading to tremendous losses. The city lost some of its oldest historical sites, most importantly the castle built at the request of Casimir the Great and the medieval city walls. The Swedes left a mark in the name of one of the biggest residential districts of the city, Szwedewo, where the Swedish camp was headquartered. During the war with Sweden, King John Casimir and Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg and Duke of Prussia signed the famous Treaty of Bromberg in the Bydgoszcz Old Market Square, on the stairs of the Jesuit Church. This treaty allowed Poland to break the dangerous anti-Polish alliance, but unfortunately, it also became the foundation for the future Kingdom of Prussia, one of the three invaders that annexed Poland in the 18th century. Plagues brought to the city by armies, fires, and finally the Third Northern War (1700-1721) completed the destruction. War damages along with the dramatic drop in population led to the decline of Bydgoszcz, which ceased to exist as a major business centre for several dozen years. In 1772, as a result of the first partition of Poland, Bydgoszcz was annexed by Prussia, within the newly established province of West Prussia.

In June 1772, Frederick the Great, the ruler of Prussia, stayed in Bydgoszcz. His decision to build a canal connecting the rivers Odra and Vistula determined

Old Bydgoszcz Canal



an important role of the city in his kingdom. When Bydgoszcz was taken over by Prussia, the city had a population of about 800. The invader invested significant funds in the city, which led to its fast growth and population increase. Bydgoszcz (which at that time was known under its German name Bromberg) was appointed as the seat of the authorities of the Netze District, becoming an important administrative centre. In a very short period, in 1773-1774, at the request of Frederick II, the Bydgoszcz Canal was excavated. This outstanding engineering achievement brought to the city a long period of stable growth and prosperity. Bydgoszcz once again became a major trade centre. In the beginning of the 19th century, it had a population of several thousand. During the 1794 Kościuszko Uprising, General Jan Henryk Dąbrowski took back Bydgoszcz from the invader. For two weeks, after the fall of the uprising, the city was in Polish hands. In 1806, after the Battles of Jena - Auerstedt, the land annexed previously by Prussia was taken over by Napoleon Bonaparte. Bydgoszcz, as a capital of department, became part of the Duchy of Warsaw established by the French Emperor. It led to further economic growth of the city, in which there were tanneries, dye-works, breweries, and a number of mills. After the fall of Napoleon, Bydgoszcz returned under Prussian rule.

In 1851, the city was connected by railway with Berlin. The solemn opening of the railway line was attended by Frederick William IV, King of Prussia. Bydgoszcz became the seat of the world's first railway authority involved in expansion and supervision over railway lines in the eastern provinces of Prussia. Construction of the railway station contributed to the development of the city in the north-western direction. The Bydgoszcz city centre with big-city buildings was developed in a very short time. The second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century marked a period of very fast growth of the city, whose population was reaching 100,000 in the beginning of the 20th century. Electrification had progressed at a fast pace. As early as 1896, electric trams entered the streets of Bydgoszcz (horse-drawn tramways operated since 1888). In that time, many stately public buildings were constructed, led by the edifices of the Municipal Theatre and the East Railway Authority. The buildings for Bydgoszcz, known as the Little Berlin ("Klein Berlin") in that period, were designed by local and German architects. Shortly after the outbreak of the First World War, the design of the city expansion was prepared by the well-known urban planner Hermann Stübben. Industry had been growing at a very fast pace, along with dozens of small and medium production plants. The Prussian rule in the city was brought to an end by the First World War.

On January 20, 1920, based on the decisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Bydgoszcz returned to Poland. Re-Polonization had progressed so quickly that during the interwar period Bydgoszcz along with Poznań had become one of the most Polish cities. Urban development, business and culture were booming in the city. Bydgoszcz, the second largest city of Poznań Province, became



The Polish Radio of Pomerania and Kujawy

the biggest economic centre of Pomerania. In 1923, the Friends of Bydgoszcz Association was founded, one of the oldest associations of this type in Poland. On January 4, 1937, the Polish Radio started broadcasting in Bydgoszcz. In 1938, based on a new administrative reform, Bydgoszcz became part of the Pomeranian Province.

The Second World War left its bloody mark on the history of the city. During the first days of the war, German sabotage took place in Bydgoszcz, an event which the Third Reich propaganda described as the "Bloody Sunday in Bydgoszcz". The troops of the "Pomerania" Army withdrawing from the city were unexpectedly attacked by German saboteurs. This act of sabotage was quickly suppressed and those responsible for it were punished on September 5, 1939. The city was taken over by the German army, beginning the period of occupation. In January 1945, Bydgoszcz was liberated from German occupation by the Soviet Army and the First Polish Army.

Since March 1945, Bydgoszcz served first as the capital of Pomeranian Province and later of Bydgoszcz Province. The postwar years marked further fast growth of the city. New neighbourhoods were developed, including Kapuściska, Błonie, Wyzyny, and the biggest district of the city, New Fordon.

In 1999, Bydgoszcz became a co-capital (along with Toruń) of a newly established province called Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship. In 2004, the Diocese of Bydgoszcz was established by the decision of Pope John Paul II. In this way, the oldest place of worship in Bydgoszcz, late-Gothic Fara Church, was raised to the rank of cathedral. A year later, the first Bydgoszcz university - Kazimierz Wielki University - was opened.

On May 1, 2004, the city celebrated Poland's accession to the European Union. On that occasion, the "Man Crossing the River" Sculpture was unveiled, which quickly became the new symbol of Bydgoszcz.

In recent years, the city has been consistently turning its focus on the water. The revitalized Mill Island along with a modern marina became the new landmarks of the city. In addition, thanks to such investment projects as the reconstruction of boulevards on the River Brda and the revitalization of the park on the Old Bydgoszcz Canal, Bydgoszcz residents and visitors can enjoy additional recreation sites on the river. Other major investments in tourist infrastructure include restoration and opening to the public the old German nitroglycerine factory "DAG Fabrik Bromberg" as Explozeum, establishing of the Museum of Waterworks in the historical Water Tower and Gdańsk Forest, making the Bydgoszcz tourist offer very diverse. The statue Archer Lady Nova (near the Opera Nova), unveiled in 2013, has already become a symbol of changes taking place in Bydgoszcz.

Cultural Bydgoszcz

The beauty of Bydgoszcz consists in the fact that the city remains largely unexplored in terms of history, architecture, and culture. It waits to be explored by both local residents and tourists. The cultural offer of Bydgoszcz is very broad thanks to such institutions as the Pomeranian Philharmonic, the Opera Nova, and the Municipal Centre for Culture, which hosts social meetings, concerts, and movie screenings in the Orzeł Cinema. In addition, the Centre administers the "Wspólna" Gallery and the Ostromecko Palace and Park. Once a year, Bydgoszcz becomes a capital of international cinema thanks to the CAMERIMAGE International Film Festival of the Art of Cinematography.

Musical Bydgoszcz

Bydgoszcz has for years been deservedly called a city of music. The musical traditions of the city date back to the 17th century, when the local Jesuit College had a theatre staging performances involving music and singing. Numerous choirs and music ensembles, which had been active in later years, continued these traditions. They were also involved in preserving the Polish language in the city, where the Germans were in the vast majority. After the Second World War, Bydgoszcz gained popularity thanks to Arnold Rezler's Orchestra, which from 1945 operated at the Polish Radio Broadcasting Station in Bydgoszcz. However, the man who had preserved this musical image of the city was Andrzej Szwalbe, a long-term director of the I. J. Paderewski Pomeranian Philharmonic in Bydgoszcz. The Pomeranian Philharmonic founded on January 1, 1953 is the pride of Bydgoszcz.

It's not only a place of music, but also a place of culture. The Philharmonic is decorated with innumerable busts of composers, standing inside and outside this stately building, as well as an extensive collection of tapestries commissioned by Andrzej Szwalbe, made by outstanding Polish artists. The Philharmonic has a concert hall that boasts the best acoustics in Poland and one of the best in Europe. Therefore, it is used for recordings made by great musicians, who in interviews frequently praise the acoustics of the Bydgoszcz concert hall. It also hosts some of the oldest music festivals in Poland.

One of them is the Bydgoszcz Music Festival, organized since 1963. Alternately with the Bydgoszcz Music Festival, the Philharmonic hosts a unique festival called Musica Antiqua Europae Orientalis – Festival of Early Music of Central and Eastern Europe. It has been organized since 1966, attracting artists and musicologists with truly encyclopaedic names.

Spring belongs to the Bydgoszcz Opera Festival, which entered the calendar of music events in April 1994. Initially, it was supposed to help in the construction of the opera building, which had continued for over twenty years. The first festival was held in the building under construction, featuring walls without plaster, audiences sitting on folding chairs, cables hanging from the ceiling and lots of dust everywhere. However the

Opera Nova



F. Nowowiejski Academy of Music

Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz

atmosphere during the first festival was very unique, hard to find in similar events. Today, the festival lives a life of its own, and the Opera Nova is regarded as one of the most modern and beautiful buildings in Poland. Situated on the River Brda, it serves as the cultural landmark of the city. It attracts opera ensembles from all over the world, including the famous contemporary Swedish Cullberg Ballet, Béjart Ballet of Lausanne, ensembles from Cuba, Spain and many other countries. Therefore, it's not surprising that the Bydgoszcz Opera Festival draws opera aficionados from all over Poland to Bydgoszcz. It should be mentioned that Bydgoszcz has a year-long calendar of opera events, reporting some of the highest attendances in the country for events. The repertoire is dominated by the most notable performances, loved by audiences, including Verdi's La Traviata and Nabucco, and Puccini's Tosca. It also produces less known performances, which are rarely shown by other opera theatres in Poland such as Arrigo Boito's Mefistofele and Amilcare Ponchielli's La Gioconda, to name just a few. As we can see, Bydgoszcz was deservedly called the music heartland by the notable music critic Jerzy Waldorff.

The musical image of Bydgoszcz is completed by the F. Nowowiejski Academy of Music, whose most outstanding graduate is Rafał Blechacz, winner of the 15th International Chopin Piano Competition. Concerts given by students and teachers of this school, just to mention the series "Academy in Historic Sites", became permanent items in the calendar of cultural events in the city. The local Music District, the only neighbourhood of this type in Poland, is very unique. It comprises three institutions, namely the Pomeranian Philharmonic, Academy of Music and A. Rubinstein Complex of Music Schools. As far as contemporary music is concerned, we need to mention the local cult club which is "Mózg". Every year, it organizes the "Mózg Festival", which presents alternative music from across the world. The Eljazz Club organizes the Jazz Festival, inviting well-known jazz musicians to Bydgoszcz. For those who prefer a heavier sound there is StageBar.

Bydgoszcz theatres

There is a reason why our outstanding theatre critic Adam Grzymała-Siedlecki chose Bydgoszcz as his place of residence in 1922. The Municipal Theatre was operating in the city as early as 1920, playing great Polish dramas led by the plays written by Słowacki and Wyspiański. At that time, theatre was supposed to unite Poles, giving them Polish words and teaching them patriotism. Wanda Siemaszkowa, the first director of the Municipal Theatre, took a big risk when she decided to play operas and operettas in the theatre, hoping to attract audiences in great numbers. The first production staged in 1921 was Stanisław Moniuszko's Halka. This performance shows that the selection of both dramatic and musical repertoire was influenced by the patriotic factor at that time. A similar situation took place after the Second World War. Even before all the cannons had fallen silent, Polish words were coming from the stage. The first post-war premiere was Aleksander Fredro's

Zemsta (The Revenge), staged on March 27, 1945. Witnesses recalled that when the actors were reciting the words written by Fredro, spectators were crying. These days, the Bydgoszcz theatre is known primarily for its Premiere Festival held in Autumn, attracting theatres and critics from all over Poland. The festival creates a unique opportunity to show the world's contemporary plays. Bydgoszcz is a place to watch the most recent plays performed according to the visions of the most outstanding directors, which charm or outrage audiences. The main focus of the Polish Theatre in Bydgoszcz is its contemporary message and dialogue with the viewer.

Artistic Bydgoszcz

The Leon Wyczółkowski District Museum has several buildings in various parts of the city. The vast majority of them are situated on the picturesque Mill Island. It features Leon Wyczółkowski's House, which is a museum building with restored interiors of a house in nearby Gościęradz, in which the patron of the Bydgoszcz museum used to live in the early 20th century. Here, we can admire the splendid paintings and graphic artworks made by Wyczółkowski and enjoy the unique belle époque atmosphere. Next to it, the spacious Red Granary features the Contemporary Art Gallery with a sizeable collection of contemporary paintings. The collection comprises over 5,000 works made by the most accomplished Polish artists during the last decades. The interesting Art Nouveau collections, in which the Museum specializes, also deserve mention.



I. J. Paderewski Pomeranian Philharmonic

District Museum

Mill Island is called the Island of Museums, but Gdańska Street, which is the main thoroughfare of the city, is also known for its contemporary art exhibited by the Municipal Gallery, bwa. Established in 1949 as the Artistic Exhibitions' Agency, it was supposed to showcase the accomplishments of a large group of local artists from Bydgoszcz and Toruń. In addition bwa has hosted exhibitions presenting works of such internationally known artists as Andy Warhol, Pablo Picasso, and Salvador Dali. At 5 Chocimska Street, there is one of Poland's oldest private galleries. The "Autorska" Gallery, founded in 1975 by painter Jan Kaja and graphic artist Jacek Soliński, is a unique establishment. It organizes exhibitions of artists coming from various communities and cities, as well as poetry evenings, meetings with writers, performances, concerts, and lectures. These are only some of the addresses that are worth remembering, since they are known for their great traditions and equally interesting present-day activities. There are many more similar addresses. A careful traveller will certainly discover them when walking among the local Art Nouveau tenement houses. The space between them is also filled with culture, particularly in the summer. A street art festival, known as the Buskers Festival, has become a popular event hosted by the city. Thanks to the artists who perform within an arm's reach, a unique atmosphere is created in the city in the summer.