

Stone – The Witness of The Past

Hi, guys! I know I haven't posted in a while, but life gets so busy... also nothing really interesting has happened lately. I've seen some comments that you guys are tired of my daily vlogs, so I decided to have a little experiment with an old-school kind of content – a blog! I'm no writer, but I had sooooo much fun writing this post for you 😊 .

This is a story of my trip to... Europe! But I'm not talking here about Rome, France, Spain or other countries known here. And it's not just me this time, but also Vera, Danny and Riley! We booked a surprise thematic trip! We only got some tips what to pack! I was sooo excited! I kinda expected to land somewhere warm like here in Florida, maybe Venice or Italy. But actually, we landed in... Poland. And hey, before you say anything, it was actually fun! So, we flew there, the flight was around 11 hours, and I was kinda confused when I got off the plane. I had no idea where we were, but thankfully someone from the company we booked the trip with was waiting for us and explained everything. We were in Cracow, Poland. And this post will be about what we saw there.

Actually – I'm not the only author of this post! We divided the most interesting places among us, so every participant wrote about something. We did a fair share of research, but we still know very little about the east of Europe so maybe we get some stuff wrong. Feel free to correct us in the comments. But I must admit, I have learned a lot during the trip.

P.S. Sadly, we were so excited we forgot to take photos in some places, hope y'all forgive us :c

P.S. 2 Can you guess who wrote which part?

Castle in Przegorzały

We took a taxi from the airport to our hotel. It was a quick 15-minute ride, but not where I expected. I thought we would live in the center of Cracow... But it seemed that we were almost outside of the city. The address was correct – Jodłowa 13. When we got out of the taxi, we saw a castle! A CASTLE! That's when I remembered that it was a thematic trip, and our theme was "stone". I definitely could see some stones there.

Turned out it was a hotel and a restaurant. I mean...creative? Luckily, the room was modern with a beautiful view of the city and mountains. The restaurant was fine, but there was mainly European cuisine and little Polish traditional dishes. It seemed to be a popular site for weddings. I'd seen a couple of them while we were living there. I for sure did NOT join them...Shhh.

The place was romantic, but the journey to the city center was not. Well, unless you had a car. We didn't, so public transport became our best friend. Even though the distances were not great at all compared to the U.S., figuring out the public transport was challenging. The first few days were stressful, but then we got the hang of it.

Oh, by the way! Everything in Cracow has *a history*. Remember that word. You'll constantly see it in this post. The castle that we were living in also has some history, but its history is relatively young compared to other things in Cracow. *You'll soon find out what I'm talking about...* The castle in Przegorzały (yeah, I won't even attempt to pronounce this town) was built during World War II for the Austrian governor of the district of Cracow during the

occupation. Later the castle became a sanatorium for SS men, then a hospital, then various university institutions were based here... And here we are in 2023 when this place is a hotel and a restaurant. Fascinating, isn't it?

It's high time to move to the next stop of our trip...

Church of St. Adalbert

update: another day, another slaay!

side note: Soooooo many churches around here.

No but honestly, who needs this many churches???. Anyways, we visited this Saint (waaaaait, maybe it was like a challenge, huh? every church for every saint or something?) Adalbert's church which was practically in the middle of the Main Square. BUT let me tell you I blinked and almost missed it! It was soo small 🙌😳🙌

Such a pick me church for real! UGH...

It was first built in the 10th century as a wooden church and later in the 11th it was rebuilt, or set if you will, in stone. And I believe that history is definitely written in stone around here casue apparently apparently Saint Adalbert (Wojciech, for my polish folks ;) used to preach in this church before he went to Prussia to convert people to Christianity. Buut no one really likes to be told what to believe in and the history went that he was killed on his pious mission and his body had to be brought back to Poland for its weight in gold. It feels like this church weighs as much as a body so maybe it's a clue here. But all jokes aside it was a lovely and cozy church and I recommend it for everyone.

Wawel Royal Castle and St. Leonard's Crypt

Guess what I had heard from the locals more than one hundred times? "Cracow is a city of kings" (Also that there were no polar bears...) Well... we didn't meet any kings there, but we went to the Wawel Royal Castle, which had been the residence of the kings of Poland for centuries! I definitely felt like a king walking around the castle...

The Wawel Royal Castle is situated on the Vistula River and combines many European architectural styles. The history of the castle began around the 11th century when the first Wawel cathedral was built. In the 13th/14th century, royal residencies were built near the cathedral. Long story short, the Wawel Royal Castle is old. Extremely old. The whole architectural complex is huge, and I wasn't prepared for it. Museums, royal gardens, towers, churches... What do I do? Where do I start? We went to the museum of Wawel Castle, and I have to tell you that there is a lot of history. Maybe even too much... But I have to admit, that this is exactly why I felt like a king. It was a time machine! Straight to the past! I won't list all the artefacts that you can find there because you have to go there and feel the atmosphere. It's simply impossible to describe.

We also visited the Wawel Cathedral. And well... I've never seen so many dead famous people in one place. Polish kings, poets, generals, presidents, and saints are buried in the cathedral's crypts. The oldest crypt there is called **St. Leonard's Crypt**. It was built in the 11th century. Have I mentioned that everything is really old there? There is an interesting story about the bishop who helped to build the cathedral and blessed St. Leonard's Crypt when it was finished.

His name was Maurus. He died three years after the St. Leonard's Crypt was done and was buried under this crypt. And then he was forgotten... for 800 years... Everyone forgot about him, and his tomb was ACCIDENTALLY discovered in 1938 during restoration works. Can you imagine? You help people to build a cathedral, then you are buried under one of its crypts, and then forgotten for 800 years? Rude. But better late than ever, I guess...

Overall, I'm impressed, and what I loved the most are the stories. There are so many stories about each brick of this castle that it is impossible to resist the feeling that history has its eyes on us.

Szczepanski Square



We arrived at the Szczepanski Square and I started thanking myself for creating a blog and not a vlog cause don't ever ask me to pronounce this name. The Square was apparently named after a medieval church which used to be there long time ago. The stones in a church were changed by cobblestones on the ground to nicely click on them as you walk. I like it, Picasso! There's this beautiful theatre in the corner of the Square which is supposed to be one of the oldest theatres in Poland and therefore it was named something like "The Old Theatre". I gotta say the architecture of it is very beautiful. But not just the theatre, all the buildings are quite interesting. Aaaaand after you're done clicking around the square there are some nice places you can go sit down and relax your legs. Cause you know you cannot feed yourself with stones. They're cool to look at but you gotta eat...and drink! There's this pseudo-French

bistro named Charlotte (classy, I guess?) which offers fancy breakfasts. That's for the morning and for the afternoon you just have to go to Bubble Toast. It's an amazing venue which serves drinks and gorgeous pink interior. You just gotta take pics for instagram cause let me tell you pink is THE color. And they have amazing happy hours offers as well! You can nicely mix the history lesson and delicious fun here <3

Barbican



As our last stop while visiting Cracow, we went to the one that looked the most boring to me, but I didn't really have anything else to do, so I said: why not? On the north side of Cracow's Old Town and at the end of Florianska Street, there is one of the best-preserved medieval fortified outposts with over 500 years of history. Located on Basztowa Street (near Main Square, right in the center for your convenience), this building is a Gothic-style fortification, built in 14998 in response to the Ottoman occupation (now Turkey, I guess) of Cracow. Originally linked to the city walls served as a checkpoint for all who entered the city, I guess, in case you were trying to attack it, duh! The Barbican is one of the few remaining relics of the network of fortifications and defensive barriers that once encircled the royal city of Cracow.

The Barbican in numbers: (I also found these measurements in meters, but what the heck are those?!)

- 10 ft – thickness of the walls
- 80 ft – internal diameter
- 78.7 ft and 10 ft – width and breadth of the moat that originally encircled the structure

There is an interesting legend attached to this building. The legend of Marcin Oracewicz, a haberdasher, who in 1768 deterred the attacking Russian forces with a single shot. They say he used a big brass button from his robe as a bullet and that he duly hit Panin, the tsar's general, killing him on the spot. Some Hawkeye shit, not bad.

Overall, it's basically brick on a brick. Yet I was able to see the charm of it. There isn't much to do here, so you have to rely on your imagination, but once you listen to the history of this place, you will be able to find yourself enchanted by its maybe slightly plain in looking but with fascinating story.

And that, my friends, is the end of our trip! We definitely recommend visiting Poland and we will gladly come here again to explore other cities. If you have any questions feel free to comment, if there'll be like a lot of them then we'll do Q&A next week. Stay safe guys, see you soon!