



Nowa Huta

GUIDE



Get a taste of a city which you won't want to leave!



Nowa Huta

Nowa Huta, which celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2024, is an interestingly designed city and a monument to history. The oldest housing estates (*Wanda, Willowe, Krakowiakow*) were still built according to pre-war designs. The later ones are the work of the best Polish architects. Talent, money and solid work were not spared to provide high-quality architecture. The district centre and the most interesting buildings are listed as monuments of Krakow. Today, Nowa Huta faces further challenges. The creation of ecological areas, the laying out of cycle paths and the efforts to inscribe this part of the city on the UNESCO World Heritage List – this is just the beginning of making the district accessible to tourists. Its cultural and natural wealth, once overshadowed by the steelworks combine, is attracting increasing national and international interest.

While in Nowa Huta, it is also a good idea to spend time by the water. The Nowa Huta Lagoon and the bathing area at the beach in Przylasek Rusiecki are where Krakow residents and visitors to the district enjoy active leisure.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Historic Centre of Kraków
inscribed on the World
Heritage List in 1978

Organiza Narodow
Zjednoczonych
dla Wychowania,
Nauki i Kultury

Historyczne Centrum Krakowa
wpisane na Listę Światowego
Dziedzictwa w roku 1978



The Turbulent History from Stalinism to “Solidarity”

Nowa Huta

Once a separate city, now a district of Krakow, it was founded in the 1950s. It is the most interesting and complete realisation of the intentions of the architects of the Socialist Realist era. The unique urban layout of Nowa Huta has been entered in the Register of Historical Monuments of Krakow and declared a Monument of History. **Efforts are underway to inscribe Nowa Huta on the UNESCO World Heritage List.**

Wide streets and impressive and well-furnished houses were to become the place where the ruling party wanted to form a new socialist society. However, not everything went according to plan. On April 27, 1960, riots broke out related to the construction of a church. The city – already combined as one with Krakow – showed a new face, becoming a threat to the system. As it celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, the turbulent 1980s were approaching. It turned out that not only the May 1 marches, but also opposition demonstrations could march along the wide avenues. **Huge, well-integrated human gatherings became the support for “Solidarity”, which transformed Nowa Huta into one of its largest bastions in Poland.**



Excavations for the first block of Nowa Huta commenced on June 23, 1949. A little later, on April 26, 1950, the first worker began work on construction of a plant, later called the W. Lenin Steelworks. **In the record-breaking 1977, the steelworks employed 38,000 people and produced 6.7 million tons of steel per year.** The basis for the building plan for the centre of Nowa Huta comprised three axes: connecting the new city with the historic center of Krakow (the City Axis), the plant (the Work Axis) and Town Hall Square (the Leisure Axis). Tadeusz Ptaszycki – the main architect of Nowa Huta – designed the Central Square (presently Ronald Reagan Central Square) in line with these five arteries exiting it, surrounded by a half-octagonal city.

According to the ideology of socialist realism, art was to be “socialist in content and national in form.” Renaissance Kraków, Zamość and Kazimierz nad Wisłą survived the conflagration of war. The Renaissance was therefore recognized as our “national form” and it was decided that Nowa Huta would be built in this style. From the formal side, Polish socialist realist architecture did not allude to Russian architecture at all, where Classicism reigned supreme, but had its own original nature.



ArcelorMittal Poland S.A. – Branch in Krakow *Former Lenin Steelworks, then the T. Sendzimir Steelworks*

The Sendzimir Steelworks had been part of the Polskie Huty Stali S.A. consortium since 2003. It was purchased by the LNM concern belonging to the Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal (in 2005–2007, the steelworks was called Mittal Steel Poland S.A.).

The main gate to the smelter at ul. Ujastek 1, erected in 1952–1955, is one of the best examples of socialist realism in Polish art.

It was designed by Janusz Ballenstedt and Janusz and Marta Ingarden. The gate to the complex, flanked by two office buildings, bears all the hallmarks of the Renaissance style, on which it was modeled at that time. The Administrative Centre of the steelworks is commonly known as the “Doge’s Palace” or “Vatican City”. Its magnificent interiors were partly changed by the renovations which took place in



the 1990s, but it is still one of the best-preserved examples of the design from the 1950s, with marble stairwells and specially designed furniture.

The steelworks is enormous – hundreds of buildings, entwined pipes and tracks running in different directions. The plant covers an area of about 1000 hectares. **Some of the halls could accommodate several of Krakow's Main Market Squares lined up next to each other.** Vats, as tall as small houses, filled with liquid metal, are reminiscent of volcanoes bubbling with lava.

After 1989, the plant underwent many changes. The first change was a change of patron (1990) – the name Vladimir I. Lenin no longer suited the times, so it was renamed after Tadeusz Sendzimir – an outstanding American inventor in the field of metallurgy, who had Polish roots. The restructuring of the steelworks began. Individual departments began to close. Some were too toxic, others unprofitable or outdated. The Zgniatacz Rolling Mill – the main bastion of “Solidarity” in the steelworks, was closed down. A memorial dedicated to all those who contributed a part of their lives to the creation of the first free trade union in the plant was moved in September 2005 to the Central Square. Over time, the steelworks, which was owned by the State Treasury, was incorporated into the Polskie Huty Stali holding company, and then sold to a private investor, Lakshmi Mittal. The new owner carried out a number of development projects, demolishing the old halls and putting modern facilities in their place.

On November 23, 2019, the blast furnace was shut down.



Wanda Mound

Nowa Huta is, in a sense, the oldest part of Krakow. Although it began to be built as late as in 1949, archaeological research revealed that **there had been continuous settlement at the site at least since 5000 BC**, while the area of the current Old Town was settled as late as in the 8th century AD.

The imposing mound standing just beyond the fence of the plant (near the intersection of ul. Ujastek Mogilski and T. Ptaszyckiego) is a reminder of the ancient times. **It is considered the tomb of Wanda – the daughter of the legendary founder of the city, Krak.** Legend has it that she jumped into the Vistula, so that neither her hand nor the rule of Poland be handed over to a German, as a symbolic gesture of dedication to the homeland. At present, the Wanda Mound is decorated with a small monument erected in the 19th century, designed by the outstanding Polish painter Jan Matejko, who lived in the nearby Krzesławice manor.



Jan Matejko's manor house Church of John the Baptist

Jan Matejko's Manor House in Krzesławice (Wankowicza 25) is presently the property of the Society of Friends of Fine Arts in Krakow. The low, single-story building with an outbuilding that was once the workshop of Master Jan, is open to the public. Furniture, paintings and everyday objects



from the 18th and 19th centuries associated with the outstanding inhabitants of this manor are exhibited in five spacious rooms. The first of these was Hugo Kołłątaj – a famous political activist of the Enlightenment period, co-founder of the first European constitution, called the May 3 Constitution to commemorate the signature date. He leased Krzesławice in 1778 from the Krakow Academy, of which he was the rector. In 1876, the manor house was purchased by the greatest Polish painter of the 19th century, Jan Matejko, who used the proceeds from the sale of the canvas *Batory near Pskov* to buy the property. From that time onwards, Krzesławice became his favorite place of rest. In every free moment, he hid away from the metropolitan bustle of Krakow. Here you can see the famous *Gallery of Portraits of Polish Kings and Princes*, illustrations for Niemcewicz's *Historical Songs* – considered to be the first example of romanticism in Polish art, as well as Matejko's easel, his boxes for drawings, paintings and reproductions. The property is surrounded by a magnificent English park that connects to the recreational areas of the Nowa Huta Lagoon. The wooden one-nave church of St. John the Baptist and Our Lady of the Scapular is located near Matejko's manor. This shrine was built in 1633–1648. It was originally located in Jawornik near Myslenice, but when a new church was built there in the 1980s, it ceased to be needed and was in danger of being demolished. It was moved to Nowa Huta in 1983–1985, and an impressive tower was added that was not originally part of the church.



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Wandy and Willowe housing estates

Nowa Huta was built according to the concept of a neighbourhood unit created in the United States in the 1920s, when architects were working on a plan to expand New York City.

The unit was to be a housing estate of 4–5 thousand inhabitants, equipped with the infrastructure needed for living, and constituting a separate town. Nowa Huta was described as having “Individual estates located around the main axis, which form independent entities, to some extent”. Each housing estate has everything needed to provide a full range of amenities to the residents, including shops, service outlets, club rooms, a school, a kindergarten, a nursery, and a cinema. Each estate has its own collective garage for cars. Residents can meet all their daily needs within their own housing estate. **Buildings from the first period stretch from the monastery in Mogiła to ul. Kocmyrzowska**, creating charming settlements full of trees and flowers. The first of the houses listed here is located at ul. Stanisława Mierzwy (14 Wandy Housing Estate; a commemorative plaque has been placed here). It was at the construction of these settlements that the famous labor leader Piotr Ożański – a master bricklayer who could arrange 60,000 bricks in eight hours, broke his own record. He was the inspiration for **Mateusz Birkut – a character in Andrzej Wajda's film Man of Marble**.

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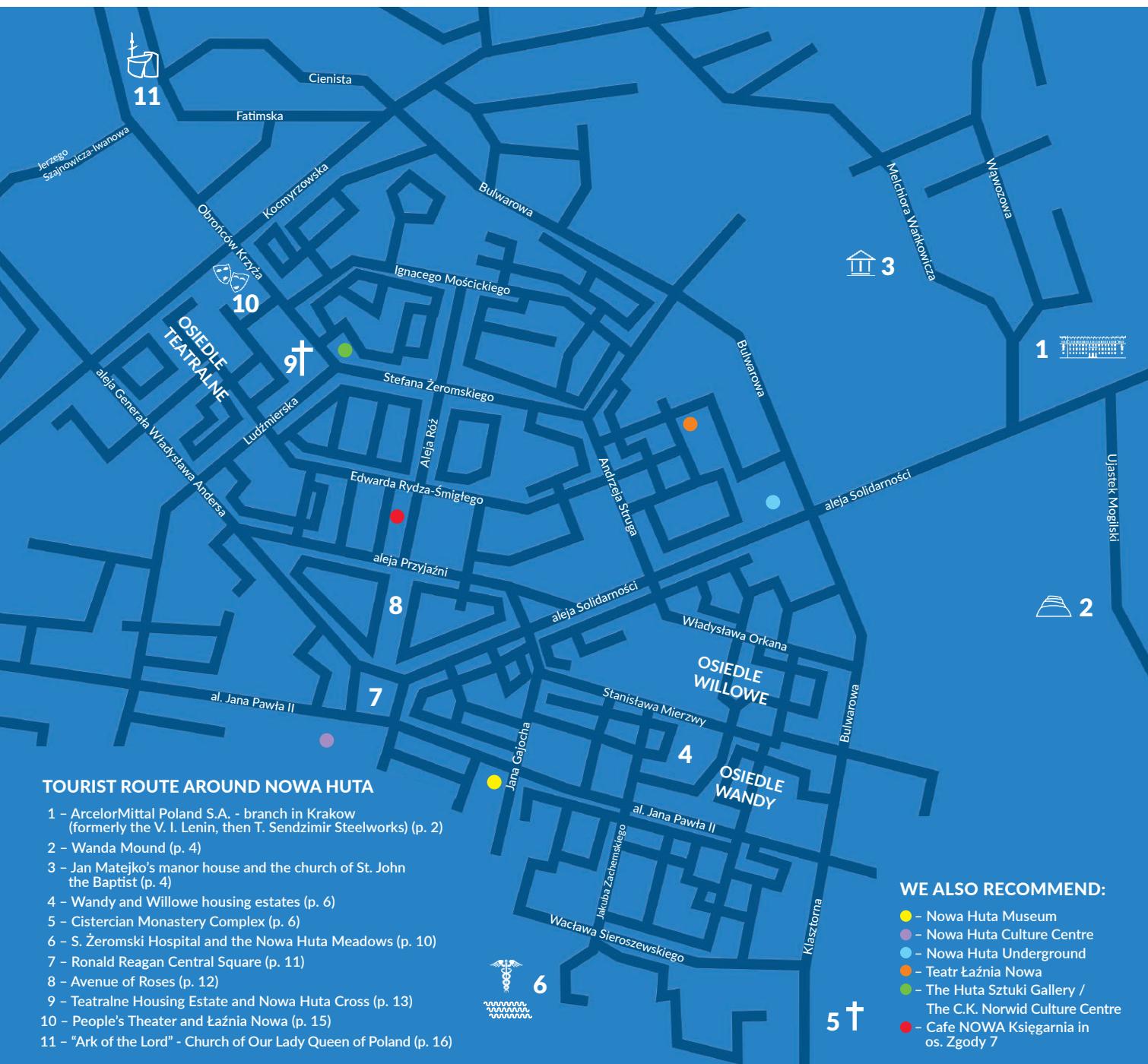
Cistercian Monastery Complex

The church of the Virgin Mary and Saint Wacław in Mogiła (11 ul. Klasztorna) and the Cistercian monastery adjacent to it are among **the most valuable sacred buildings in the Malopolska Region**. The **crucifix, which is famous for its grace**, is housed here. This sculpture was the only element of the furnishings to survive a fire in 1447. The crucifix was moved to the present chapel in 1588, but was previously located at the junction of the transept and the nave. The founder of both the convent and the wooden church of St. Bartholomew on the other side of the street, was the bishop of Krakow, Bl. Iwo Odrowąż. He brought the Cistercians to Mogiła from Silesia,



to settle here in 1222. They began their activities by erecting a cross on the Wanda Mound, which was a site of pagan rites until that time. During the Renaissance, Mogiła became famous in particular for painting. Brother Stanisław Samostrzelnik, working for the court of King Sigismund the Old, took this art to unprecedented heights. His polychromes can be admired in the church and in the monastery library. In the years 1716–1786, the **General Study of the Cistercian Province** operated in the Mogiła monastery, teaching philosophy, theology, canon law and church history. **It was the first university on the site of what is Nowa Huta today**. Because the Mogiła church, as a religious object, was closed to the faithful, in the time of the Bl. Iwo Odrowąż the church of St. Bartholomew was built for them nearby. In its present form, it dates back to 1466 and is the work of the master carpenter Maciej Mączka. The church has three naves, which are not found in wooden buildings of this type in Poland. The decor dates from the Rococo period and presents people distinguished for their service to the Mogiła convent. A wooden bell tower dating back to 1752 with a domed roof and a passage gate stands next to the church.





TOURIST ROUTE AROUND NOWA HUTA

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WE ALSO RECOMMEND:

- Yellow dot: Nowa Huta Museum
- Pink dot: Nowa Huta Culture Centre
- Light blue dot: Nowa Huta Underground
- Orange dot: Teatr Łaznia Nowa
- Green dot: The Huta Sztuki Gallery / The C.K. Norwid Culture Centre
- Red dot: Cafe NOWA Księgarnia in os. Zgody 7



S. Żeromski Hospital and Nowa Huta Meadows

The Stefan Żeromski Specialist Hospital (66 Na Skarpie Housing Estate), built in 1954–1958 as the City Hospital, is located in close proximity to the Ronald Reagan Central Square. The architects, Stefan Porębowicz and Henryk Skrzynski, created **an original layout in the style of socialist realism with numerous references to the Baroque and Renaissance styles**. The bronze bust of the patron of the hospital, the work of M. Konieczny, stands in front of the hospital entrance. The hospital is located on a slope, behind which are the **Nowa Huta Meadows – a huge area of greenery (about 70 ha)**. In the old days, the riverbed of the capricious Vistula, not yet included in the embankments, would often change. In the 18th century, it flowed along the escarpment on which Nowa Huta was built. The vast meadows are the remnants of its oxbow lake. In the 1950s, a park with a reservoir was to be opened here, but the idea was abandoned, and **the area became a paradise for 370 plant species and 69 bird species, including many listed in the Red Book of Endangered Species**. This area was deemed an ecological site by the Krakow City Council.



Ronald Reagan Central Square

The Ronald Reagan Central Square and its surroundings are a kind of exhibition of the history of Polish architecture of the last half-century. This is because **buildings dating back to all periods of post-war construction** can be found there, implemented by outstanding Polish architects, including Bolesław Skrzypalski, Janusz and Marta Ingarden, Adam Fołtyn, Tadeusz Uniejewski, Tadeusz Rembiesz, Stanisław Juchnowicz, and Romuald Loegler. Nowa Huta was built in Stalinist times – it was a city of strategic importance for the arms industry; so it could have been the first to be bombed.

Individual quarters resemble fortresses with an entire system of passages and safeguards. For someone who does not know Nowa Huta, it is a complicated maze (even entrances to estates are hidden behind walls and are invisible from the side).

In 1952–1960, more than **250 air-raid shelters** were built under the Nowa Huta estates. They were built under blocks of flats, health centers, schools, kindergartens, and cultural institutions. **The most effective shelters that have survived to this day are located under the administrative buildings of the plant and the Żeromski hospital**. The first location on the Underground Nowa Huta route created by the Nowa Huta Museum is the shelter under the Mechanical School Complex No. 3 at os. Szkolne 37, where you can see the exhibition 'State of Emergency'.

The defensive nature of the city took its toll on the militia units which dispersed anti-government demonstrations in the 1980s, during martial law. Other buildings are called "pointers", from the 1960s, located within the Handlowe Housing Estate (arch. Janusz Ingarden). They were called "Swedish" buildings because they were modelled on structures erected at that time near Stockholm.

The **Nowa Huta Cultural Center** dates back to the 1970s, when – according to the official propaganda – "Poland was growing in strength and people were to prosper". Due to the economic crisis of the time, the construction of this multifunctional facility took ten years. Despite the difficult start, this institution is currently one of the most dynamic centers on the cultural map of Krakow. It conducts comprehensive educational and entertainment activities, offering participants of all ages dozens of ways to develop individual talents and artistic sensitivity. The events held are not only addressed to the residents of Nowa Huta. It organizes numerous exhibitions of contemporary art with Zdzisław Beksiński Gallery at the forefront, and other events.

In the early 1970s, the West began to depart from the modernism style, which took the form of large blocks of flats in Poland. A slow retreat towards historical styles began. It transpired that socialist realist architecture, so condemned by many, was groundbreaking in relation to the Western architecture. The **new style – postmodernism – resulted in the Centrum E housing estate built in Nowa Huta** from 1988 to 1995 (arch. Romuald Loegler).

The Nowa Huta Museum has been located as a local arm of the Krakow Museum in the building of the former Świątowid cinema at the Centrum E 1 housing estate since 2019. It combines the experience and achievements of the History of the Nowa Huta department of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow and the Museum of the Polish People's Republic. It invites guests to view temporary exhibitions devoted to the history of the district and various aspects of life in the Polish People's Republic, as well as to the semi-permanent exhibition "Atomic terror. Shelters in Nowa Huta", created in a former shelter, renovated especially for this occasion and retrofitted.



Aleja Róż (Avenue of Roses)

Originally, it was supposed to be a pedestrian area connecting the communication hub – the Central Square, with the main forum of Nowa Huta – the Town Hall Square. The latter was not built and the Avenue of Roses became a route to nowhere, typical of socialist urban planning. From



one end, it was visually closed in by the Krzesławice Hills, from the other by the Beskid Mountains. On April 20, 1970, the foundation stone was laid for the monument at the Avenue of Roses and a competition was announced, which was won by Marian Konieczny. On April 28, 1973, a 74-piece statue of V.I. Lenin – "the leader of the revolution" – was located at the destination. On April 18, 1979, the Avenue of Roses was shaken by a powerful explosion. A bomb was placed under the monument, but the charge only broke Lenin's heel. The monument was finally removed on December 10, 1989. It ended up in Wróblowice and was there in an unused fort until 1992, when the Swedish millionaire Big Bengt Erlandsson bought it for the price of 100,000 crowns and exported it from Poland. Today you can admire it in a theme park in Sweden.

www.muzeumkrakowa.pl

In the building located in Al. Róż in the os. Zgody 7 housing estate, one finds the first information point about Krakow dedicated mainly to residents, opened in 2018. In its place today is Cafe Nowa Księgarnia, which has a very rich cultural programme.



Teatralne Housing Estate and the Nowa Huta Cross

The area of today's Teatralne Housing Estate; its first inhabitants called it "Taiwan". Its construction began far from the existing buildings and new blocks looked like an island in the ocean, with the grain grain still growing here rippling in waves. In the first half of the 1950s, the "Świt" cinema and the Ludowy Theater were founded. After 1956, authorities allowed construction of a church, but then reversed their decision and ordered that a school be erected in the place of the temple. This resulted in an outbreak of riots, known as



the *Battle for the Nowa Huta Cross* on April 27, 1960. The confrontation of social protest and the authorities' decisions turned into bloodshed. Several hundred demonstrators and police officers pacifying them were injured. In 2001, the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was erected next to the historical cross (2 Ludzmierska). This was the work of Krakow architects Krzysztof Ingarden and Przemysław Gawor.

The C. K. Norwid Cultural Centre (5 Gorali Housing Estate) witnessed the battle for the Nowa Huta Cross. The history of this institution, founded by the Trade Unions of Steelworkers, dates back to the early 1950s. Without interruption, the Sphinx Cinema Studio – the last traditional cinema in Nowa Huta – has been operating at the Centre for over 60 years. It is frequently visited by tourists who, in addition to the current repertoire, can also watch a movie about the history of Nowa Huta (available in three languages). In 2018, the Huta Sztuki Gallery was opened at the Norwid Centre. This presents the works of artists from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s associated with Nowa Huta and a unique collection of paintings by the Nowa Huta Group.



Teatr Ludowy (People's Theater)

For years it has been said that Nowa Huta is famous for two things -- good steel and good theatre -- despite the fact that the main theatre building planned at the Central Square was never built, only a chamber stage was erected, i.e. today's Ludowy Theatre (34 Teatralne). Designed by Edmund Dabrowski and Marta and Janusz Ingarden, it opened on December 3, 1955 with the play "Cracovians and Highlanders" by Wojciech Bogusławski. The repertoire was not accidental – the drama takes place at the nearby monastery in Mogiła. **In remembrance of this premiere, the housing estates opposite the theatre were called the Cracovians and Highlanders.** Many outstanding directors have been at the theatre, including Krystyna Skuszanka, Jerzy Krasowski, and Józef Szajna, and actors such as Franciszek Pieczka and Witold Pyrkosz. Due to the nature of the district, considered difficult for the theatre, artists who had no chance to break through with their avant-garde ideas elsewhere came to Nowa Huta. With time, however, the predatory avant-garde was replaced by a more subdued, educational repertoire. The time when Jerzy Fedorowicz took over management in 1989 coincided with political changes in Poland and opened a new period in the history of the Ludowy Theatre. The stage version of *Man of Marble* became a symbolic means of addressing the history of the site.



Today, however, in Krakow and Poland one more often hears of the second Nowa Huta theatre, Łaznia Nowa, housed in the buildings of a former school workshop at the Szkolne housing estate. **This is considered one of the most interesting places on the theatrical map of Krakow,** it is also the heart of one of the most interesting Polish theater festivals the "Divine Comedy". Łaznia Nowa combines artistic and social activities – performances are held in former industrial halls and often involve local residents, and also holds festivals, concerts, exhibitions, film and multimedia shows, meetings and workshops.

www.ludowy.pl
www.laznianowa.pl

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“Ark of the Lord” - Church of Our Lady Queen of Poland

The church was established mainly thanks to the efforts of Karol Wojtyła – the metropolitan archbishop of Krakow, and Father Józef Gorzelany, who had been appointed the parish priest by Karol Wojtyła in Bielszczyce in 1965. The temple was consecrated on May 15, 1977. The Cracovian architect, Wojciech Pietrzak, proposed a building in the shape of Noah's Ark once it had come to settle on Mount Ararat. For people who wanted to survive the hard times of communism, this metaphor was very clear. The latest constructed part of the design was a 70-metre cross-shaped

mast with a crown, because the authorities did not want the Christian symbol to rise above the surrounding blocks. The construction of the “Ark” became a symbol of the unity of the entire Christian world. Pope Paul VI sent a stone from the Vatican from the tomb of St. Peter – to become the foundation stone of the new church. Dutch Christians donated seven bells, and Cardinal Konig from Vienna – a chrome plate for making the cross-mast. The main altar was made of Carrara marble – the same that was once used by Michelangelo in Rome.



A small crystal of rutile attached to the tabernacle was brought from the moon by the crew of the Apollo 11 spacecraft.

The rest of the furnishings are equally interesting. The expressive Christ on the side of the nave is the work of the Krakow sculptor Bronisław Chromy. In the underground Chapel of Reconciliation you can see the many examples of pietà by the Zakopane sculptor Antoni Rząsa. Before the “Ark of the Lord”, numerous clashes took place between the local population and the militia. They usually took place after masses were held for the liberation of the homeland from totalitarian oppression. A small monument dedicated to the victims of martial law is a reminder of the times. It is located in the place where a Security Service agent shot a young steelworker, Bogdan Włosik.

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Nowa Huta on the ATRIUM European Cultural Route



ATRIUM
Architecture
of Totalitarian Regimes
in Europe's Urban Memory

Cultural route
of the Council of Europe
Itinéraire culturel
du Conseil de l'Europe



City information points
www.infokrakow.pl

The city's tourist information points offer abridged versions of the city guides, with practical tips and contact information, as well as maps of the centre with marked tourist routes.



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