

# WORLD WAR II

IN POLISH MUSEUMS  
AND HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS





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AND HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS**

**SELECTED SITES AND EVENTS**

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# INTRODUCTION

“Whoever does not respect or value their past does not deserve the respect of the present or the right to a future”, said one of the fathers of Poland’s independence, Marshal Józef Piłsudski. World War II in Polish Museums and Historical Re-enactments: Selected Sites and Events is a publication designed to introduce readers to sites and events that help maintain remembrance of World War II in Poland. We should remember that travelling is not just for relaxing and sightseeing. Tourism is a diverse pastime. One of its most important values is contact with culture, history, nature as well as people. Tourism often allows us to celebrate and commemorate important events, learn about history as well as shaping patriotic attitudes among society. Acting in accordance with patriotic ideas should be founded on expanding our own knowledge and awareness.

That is why the aims of the present publication include introducing readers to selected sites within today’s Poland that commemorate World War II battles and events. They include history museums, exhibitions and open-air museums where events from 80 years ago are still vivid. You can also review the most important historical re-enactments commemorating major battles, not only of the September Campaign of 1939. The Warsaw Rising Museum, re-enactments of the Battle of the River Bzura, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum – these are just a few important sites and events described in this book. They are all re-

lated to history that we must never forget. Visiting such sites and taking part in re-enactments is not just an important history lesson but also a warning for the future. We should all want to make sure such things never happen again.

The present book presents sites and events of different character, which is why it is divided into three parts: museums, historical re-enactments and events, and other sites. All of them are related to events from the years 1939-1945. The sites in each section are not listed in any hierarchy, because they all touch upon themes important to the Polish people. Wherever possible, the authors have tried to list them chronologically. Of course, we realize that our publication does not include all the museums, sites and re-enactments worth presenting. We treat this book as a contribution encouraging further work and discussion.

The publication has been put together in collaboration with regional tourism organizations, museums, remembrance sites as well as institutions, administration offices and organizations involved in historical re-enactments. We would like to thank all our partners for their invaluable assistance.

Robert Andrzejczyk, Jan Mazurczak, Paweł Pietrzyk

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## MAP

### MUSEUMS

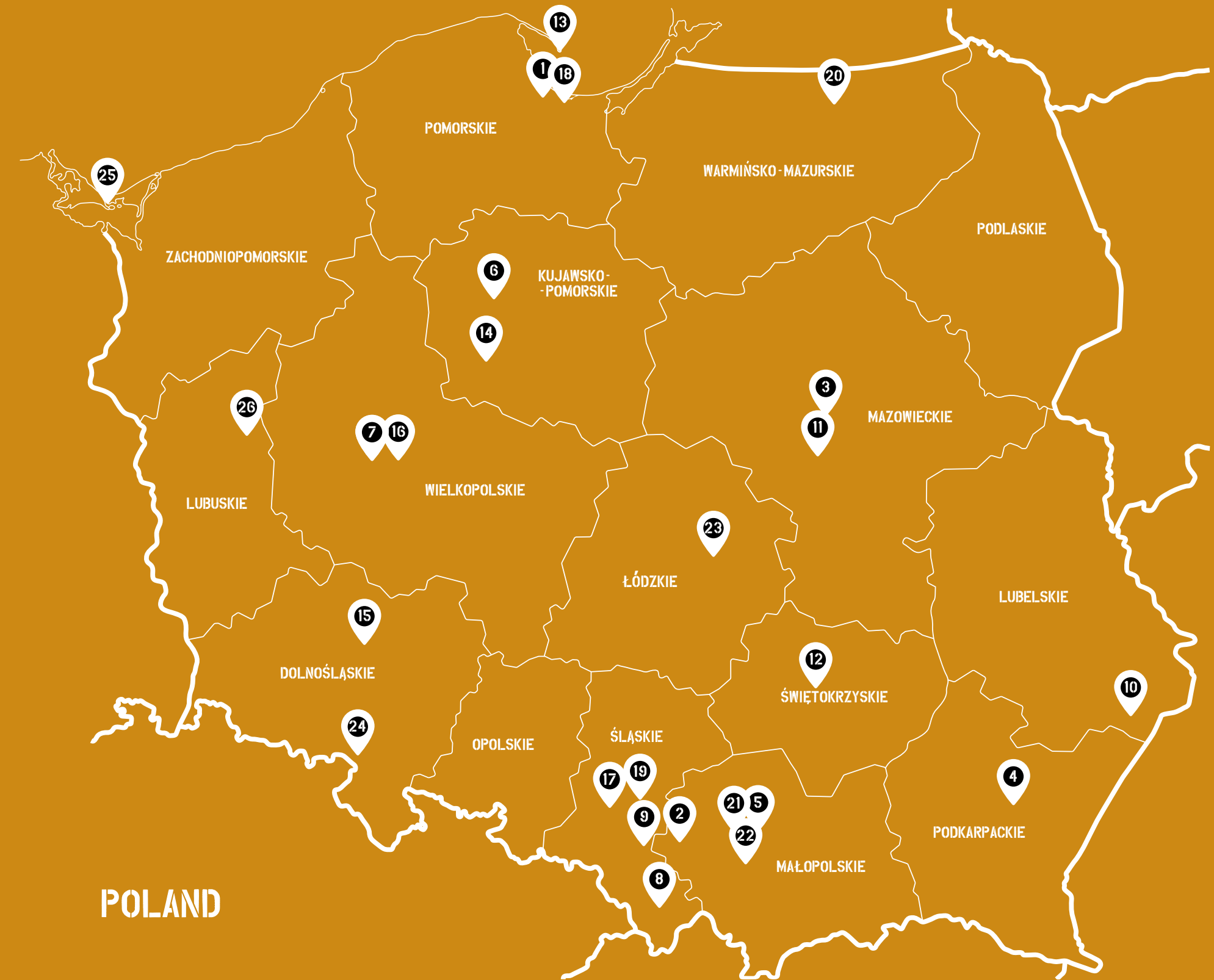
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POLAND

**MUSEUMS**





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### MUSEUM OF WORLD WAR II IN GDAŃSK

#### ADDRESS:

54°21'22.3"N 18°39'38.0"E  
pl. Władysława Bartoszewskiego 1  
80-862 Gdańsk  
phone: +48 58 323 75 20  
e-mail: [info@muzeum1939.pl](mailto:info@muzeum1939.pl)  
[www.muzeum1939.pl/en](http://www.muzeum1939.pl/en)

#### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. closed  
September to June  
Tue.-Sun. 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.  
July to August  
Tue.-Sun. 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.

# MUSEUM OF WORLD WAR II



### CLOSE TO HISTORY

The Museum of World War II in Gdańsk lies on the River Motława, in Władysław Bartoszewski Square, which is close to the city centre. Just 200 metres from its current location is where the Polish Post Office stood before the war, while the Westerplatte peninsula is just 7 km away. Both are inseparably linked with Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 and the heroic defence of these sites by the Poles.

### NEW SYMBOL OF GDAŃSK

The Museum of World War II was established on 1 September 2008 by a directive of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. However, the doors did not open to visitors until 23 March 2017. The modern design of the building housing the museum has won the appreciation of architects from all over the world.

## NOT JUST GREAT POLITICS

The museum's initiators want visitors to learn about more than just historical events connected with World War II. The museum exhibition takes up almost 8,000 sq. metres and includes mementos that give visitors an idea of what ordinary people had to go through in those times. For example, the display features a reconstruction of a street in a pre-war town and photographs portraying life in Polish cities at the time. These scenes are in stark contrast to the bombed-out street whose re-

construction you can see as part of the core exhibition. Of course, the main theme is the war. The museum collection abounds in military items: helmets, uniforms, firearms and even close combat weapons. Also on display are military unit flags and even a German Enigma encryption machine. The everyday items presented as exhibits make a strong impression. Toys, household items, musical instruments, coins – they all show how ordinary people tried to live normal lives amidst the chaos of war. The Museum of World War II already has more than 50,000 exhibits.

## INTERESTING FACTS

Even the cornerstone of the Museum of World War II building, which was laid on 1 September 2012, has its history. It is a piece of paving found during archaeological excavations in Gdańsk and was once part of a street in the Wiadrownia district.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Tickets can be purchased online here: [bilety.muzeum1939.pl](http://bilety.muzeum1939.pl).
- Admission is free on Tuesdays. Tickets to the exhibitions may be collected exclusively from the museum ticket office on the day of your visit. One visitor is eligible for one ticket.
- If touring the core exhibition individually, it is recommended that you do so with an audio guide. These are available in five language versions: Polish, English, French, German and Russian.
- Visitors interested in a guided tour should contact a guide directly; a list of guides is posted on the museum website.
- The museum has its own two-storey underground car park with 132 spaces for visitors. Entrance from Wałowa Street.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM

#### ADDRESS:

50°02'05.7"N 19°10'40.8"E  
ul. Więźniów Oświęcimia 20  
32-603 Oświęcim  
phone: +48 33 844 80 99  
[www.auschwitz.org/en/](http://www.auschwitz.org/en/)

#### OPENING HOURS:

These can differ, depending on the month.  
For details, visit [www.auschwitz.org](http://www.auschwitz.org)

The museum is open every day throughout the year  
except 1 January, 25 December and Easter Sunday.

# AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU MEMORIAL AND MUSEUM



### NAZI GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMP AND EXTERMINATION SITE

Today this site is a symbol of the murderous machine of the Third Reich. The town of Oświęcim lay near railway routes leading to Silesia and the General Governorate. It also had a complex of buildings (military barracks) some distance from the town's densely built-up area. This last fact in particular led the Germans to establish a concentration camp here, in occupied Poland, in June 1940: KL Auschwitz.

The decision to build the camp's second part in nearby Brzezinka (German: Birkenau) was taken in autumn 1941. Initially it was intended for the internment of Soviet POWs, but already from spring 1942 the extermination of Jews began near the Birkenau camp. Soon the entire killing machine was moved to this site. By 27 January 1945, when Soviet troops liberated the camp, the German occupying forces had murdered at least 1.1 million people of different nationalities there, 375,000 of them Polish citizens (including some 300,000 who were Polish Jews).

## GRIM MONUMENT OF HISTORY

What makes the greatest impression on people visiting the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is undoubtedly its terrifying authenticity. The museum was set up as early as 1947, and thanks to the work of conservators the former concentration and death camp has retained its grim appearance from over 70 years ago. The site's 200 hectares include 150 buildings and 300 ruins, including remnants of the gas chambers where the Nazis committed their mass

murders. Today the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum is Poland's most frequently visited site; every year it has some 2 million visitors. It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979.

## NEVER AGAIN

At Auschwitz you can see the tragically difficult conditions in which prisoners lived. The museum's core exhibition was set up in 1955 and has survived to this day with few changes. It includes the prisoners'

personal effects, seized by the Nazis. You can also see how industry in the Third Reich utilized valuables and other items belonging to the victims, and even their hair, to fuel the country's war machine. Tickets to the museum are free: a visit to the site is meant to make people stop to think and remember. The same objective is pursued by the International Centre for Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust operating on the museum grounds. Poland keeps remembrance of the murdered victims alive. The Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum is overseen by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Admission to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial grounds is free.
- Entrance tickets should be booked on the [visit.auschwitz.org](http://visit.auschwitz.org) website.
- Individual visitors may join a group touring the site with an educator.
- The grounds and buildings open to visitors are those of the former Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau camps. The time spent here depends on visitors' individual interests and needs, but you need to reserve at least 3½ hours to tour the grounds and the exhibition in the former camp.
- One of the most advanced conservation workshops in Europe is on site to make sure the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum is open for visiting without interruption.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- 27 January, the day the Auschwitz camp was liberated, is observed as International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



# MAJOR GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMPS AND GERMAN DEATH CAMPS WITHIN THE TERRITORY OF "GREATER GERMANY" IN 1941-1944



## LEGEND



Nazi German concentration camps



Nazi German death camps

----- approximate borders of today's Poland

\_\_\_\_\_ borders of Greater Germany in 1941-1944



## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### WARSAW RISING MUSEUM

#### ADDRESS:

52°13'56.9"N 20°58'52.1"E  
ul. Grzybowska 79  
00-844 Warszawa  
phone: +48 22 539 79 05/06  
e-mail: kontakt@1944.pl  
www.1944.pl/en

#### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.  
Tue. closed  
Wed. 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.  
Thu. 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.  
Fri. 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.  
Sat.–Sun. 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

# WARSAW RISING MUSEUM



#### MEMORABLE REVOLT

On 1 August 1944 at 5:00 p.m., soldiers of the Polish Resistance Home Army (AK) launched an uprising in Warsaw with the aim of liberating the city from the German occupying forces. Sadly, the revolt, planned to last a few days, turned into 63 days of heavy battle. The Warsaw Uprising collapsed on 3 October 1944. An estimated 120,000-150,000 civilians and some 17,000 insurgents lost their lives. A large part of Warsaw was destroyed, and the city was never restored to its pre-war appearance.

#### IN THE HEART OF THE POLISH CAPITAL

It is hard to point to a more dramatic event in the 20th-century history of Poland than the Warsaw Uprising. However, we had to wait a long time for a museum that would show contemporary generations those tragic images from August and September 1944 in a way they would understand. The Warsaw Rising Museum was opened on 31 July 2004, on the eve of the uprising's 60th anniversary. The museum is housed in the former Municipal Tram Power Station in Warsaw, at

79 Grzybowska St. Hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world visit it every year (audio guides are available in 27 languages!).

### TOUCHING HISTORY

Visitors to the Warsaw Rising Museum can feel the atmosphere of the city engulfed in the uprising. The exhibition features accurately reproduced replicas of sites such as a field hospital and a 25-metre section of the underground sewer along which the insurgents moved

between the city's districts. Visitors can also see hundreds of archival photographs, bulletins and film footage as well as the weapons the insurgents fought with in 1944.

In 2019 the Warsaw Rising Museum received a Gold Certificate of the Polish Tourism Organization – award for the best tourist product. Museum Director Jan Oldakowski remarked: “We feel that this award has strengthened us and proves that today we are not just a museum. We are also a centre recounting the history of Poland and we explain the present”.

### INTERESTING FACTS

Above the museum visitors' heads is a faithful replica of a Liberator B-24 bomber. The Allies used these aircraft to drop supplies for fighting Warsaw. The museum also has themed rooms dedicated to other forces in the conflict: the Red Army, the Polish People's Army (LWP) and soldiers of the Wehrmacht.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Admission to the museum is free on Sundays.
- It takes 2 hours on average to tour the museum.
- Individuals and groups wishing to take a guided tour of the museum should book a guide online in advance.
- Audio guides, which are available in 27 languages, can be borrowed from the museum gift shop.
- The museum does not have a car park. The nearest private (paid) car parks for passenger vehicles can be found in the Proximo II building at 26 Przyokopowa St. and the Warsaw Spire at 1 Europejski Sq. (entrance from Grzybowska Street).



## COMMEMORATION OF WARSAW UPRISING ANNIVERSARIES

“W” Hour was the symbolic time when the Warsaw Uprising broke out. All over Poland, every year on 1 August at exactly 5:00 p.m., siren alarms are heard for one minute. The whole country grinds to a halt to honour the fallen insurgents.







## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### ULMA FAMILY MUSEUM OF POLES SAVING JEWS IN WORLD WAR II IN MARKOWA

#### ADDRESS:

50°01'22.4"N 22°19'01.3"E  
37-120 Markowa 1487  
phone: +48 17 224 10 15  
e-mail: sekretariat@muzeumulmow.pl  
www.muzeumulmow.pl/en

#### OPENING HOURS:

November to March:  
Tue.-Sun. 10:00 a.m. –4:00 p.m.  
April to October:  
Tue.-Sun. 10:00 a.m. –6:00 p.m.

# ULMA FAMILY MUSEUM OF POLES SAVING JEWS IN WORLD WAR II IN MARKOWA



2.



3.



### RISKING LIVES TO HELP

It is hard to say how many Jews Polish people saved from death at the hands of the occupying Germans during World War II. What we do know, however, is that people of Polish nationality are the biggest group of recipients of the Righteous Among the Nations title (6,992 as of January 2019). This honorific, awarded by the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Israel, was also granted to Wiktoria and Józef Ulma from the village of Markowa near Łańcut. On 24 March 1944,

they and their six children were murdered by German soldiers for hiding eight Jews from the Goldman family.

### MUSEUM DEDICATED TO SILENT HEROES

The museum was opened on 17 March 2016. It is the only institution dedicated exclusively to the memory of those saving Jews from death in occupied Polish territory. It was set up not only as a history lesson, but also to promote positive models of behaviour and universal values.

The museum has a simple, austere form compatible with the tragedy of World War II. The building is shaped to resemble a primitive rural cottage. The museum's semi-dark interior houses a modern, interactive multimedia permanent exhibition. At its centre is an illuminated glass structure re-creating the Ulmas' farmhouse (their cottage has not survived to our times) and presenting mementos connected with the heroic family.

## SQUARE AND ORCHARD OF REMEMBRANCE

The space in front of the building features illuminated plaques with the names of Podkarpacie region residents who were killed for trying to save Jews from extermination. In the centre of this square is a slab with an inscription identifying it as a monument to the memory of Jewish victims of the Holocaust and the anonymous Poles who helped them. The wall next to the square includes plaques with the names of residents of today's Podkarpackie province; the list is still being up-

dated because new examples of heroism on the part of ordinary people are still being discovered. The Orchard of Remembrance, also a part of the museum, is full of fruit trees and its alleys feature plaques with the names of localities where Jews, doomed to extermination, were rescued by Polish Righteous Among the Nations.

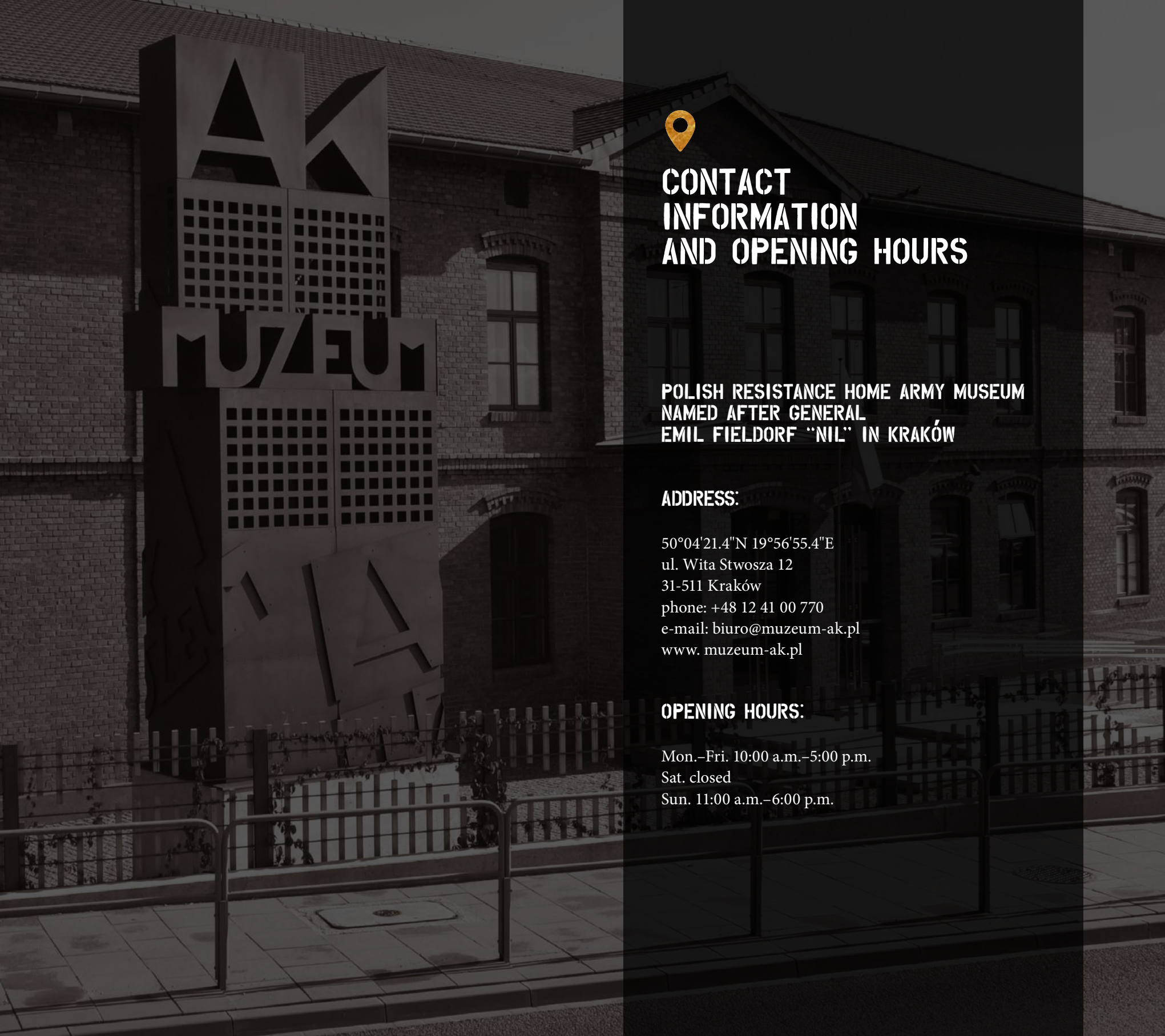
## INTERESTING FACTS

The orchard in Markowa is a reference to Józef Ulma's passion for fruit farming, and also to the Garden of the Righteous at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Admission to the museum is free on Tuesdays; you can collect your free pass from the museum ticket window.
- Due to the exhibition's subject matter, it is recommended that visitors be over 12 years of age.
- The last entry is 45 minutes before the exhibition's closing.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

**POLISH RESISTANCE HOME ARMY MUSEUM NAMED AFTER GENERAL EMIL FIEDORF "NIL" IN KRAKÓW**

### ADDRESS:

50°04'21.4"N 19°56'55.4"E  
ul. Wita Stwosza 12  
31-511 Kraków  
phone: +48 12 41 00 770  
e-mail: [biuro@muzeum-ak.pl](mailto:biuro@muzeum-ak.pl)  
[www.muzeum-ak.pl](http://www.muzeum-ak.pl)

### OPENING HOURS:

Mon.–Fri. 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.  
Sat. closed  
Sun. 11:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

# POLISH RESISTANCE HOME ARMY MUSEUM



## THE POLISH UNDERGROUND STATE

After Poland was invaded by German Third Reich and Soviet troops in September 1939, a different battle began within its territory. Underground soldiers from the Union of Armed Struggle (ZWZ), renamed the Home Army (AK) on 14 February 1942, conducted resistance activity against the occupying forces. Sabotage, guerrilla warfare, underground education: it is estimated that more than 390,000 Poles were serving in the Home Army in summer 1944. The crowning period

of their activity was Operation Tempest during which heavy fighting against the German occupying forces took place practically across the whole of pre-war Polish territory.

## KRAKÓW TRIBUTE

For political reasons during communist rule, the history of AK soldiers could not be properly honoured for a long time. In 1990 a group of veterans of this underground army initiated the founding of a museum to

house mementos of the people who had fought against the country's double occupation. The museum at 12 Wita Stwosza St. inaugurated its activity on 27 September 2000 within a former military complex. The person chosen for its patron was Kraków-born General August Emil Fieldorf, pseudonym "Nil", who was sentenced to death by a communist court in February 1953.

### LONG HISTORY IN ONE PLACE

The core exhibition of the Kraków museum is housed on two sto-

reys. The ground floor welcomes guests with an exhibition presenting life in the Second Republic of Poland as well as the September 1939 campaign. For example, it includes a reconstructed Vickers tank and POW barracks. The most important part of the exhibition is found on level -1. It features objects related to the resistance in Poland. The multimedia presentations and exhibits show AK soldiers' training, their military operations, weapons, uniforms and distinctions. You can also see the role women played in the Polish Underground State. Finally, the exhibition outlines the tragic story of Operation Tempest in 1944 and the history of the anti-communist underground activities.

### INTERESTING FACTS

The more than 8,000 historical objects at the Home Army Museum include the diary of Major "Hubal", the first guerrilla fighter of World War II.

Renovated in 2011, the museum building won the Brick Award Poland 2013 for best renovation/adaptation/conversion/reconstruction.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The Home Army Museum won a special mention in the Accessibility Leader competition in 2017 for the elimination of architectural barriers in a historic building.
- Visitors with visual impairment can take advantage of audio description. For visitors with hearing impairment, there are films with a narrator translating text into Polish Sign Language. The tour path for those with hearing loss is based on QR codes enabling visitors to watch 27 films on their mobile devices, describing consecutive elements of the permanent exhibition.
- Admission to the museum is free on Sundays.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

**EXPLOSEUM – BRANCH OF THE  
LEON WYCZÓŁKOWSKI REGIONAL  
MUSEUM IN BYDGOSZCZ**

### ADDRESS:

53°04'15"N 18°04'26"E  
ul. Alfreda Nobla  
85-862 Bydgoszcz  
phone: +48 883 366 056  
e-mail: [exploseum@muzeum.bydgoszcz.pl](mailto:exploseum@muzeum.bydgoszcz.pl)  
[www.exploseum.pl](http://www.exploseum.pl), [www.muzeum.bydgoszcz.pl](http://www.muzeum.bydgoszcz.pl)

### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. closed

April to October:  
Tue.–Wed. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.  
Thu. 9:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.  
Fri.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

November to March:  
Tue.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–3:30 p.m.

# EXPLOSEUM



## DAG FABRIK BROMBERG

When the cannons of the September Campaign of 1939 fell silent, the Germans started running things in the occupied Polish territory. The forest in Łęgnowo near Bydgoszcz became a silent witness to the founding of DAG (Dynamit-Aktien Gesellschaft) Fabrik Bromberg. As it is easy to guess, the main aim of this facility was to manufacture ammunition and explosives for the Wehrmacht. The hard work of 30,000-40,000 forced labourers enabled the Germans to build a sub-

stantial industrial complex (1,500 buildings, 400 km of roads and 40 km of railway tracks). Its operations continued uninterrupted until the Red Army marched into Bydgoszcz in January 1945.

## FROM RUINS TO MODERN MUSEUM

The Russians took the factory equipment away to the Soviet Union as a war trophy. The buildings of the DAG Fabrik Bromberg complex decayed gradually, attracting adventurers. In the early 21st century

the Bydgoszcz municipal authorities decided to set up a tourist facility in part of the former factory. This task was carried out together with the Leon Wyczółkowski Regional Museum in Bydgoszcz, with substantial support from the European Regional Development Fund. The Exploseum in Bydgoszcz was opened on 7 July 2011. It won tourists' appreciation, and in 2017 received the Polish Tourism Organization's Certificate for Best Tourism Product of 2016.

## NOT JUST DYNAMITE

The core exhibition occupies 7 buildings of the former complex, or, to be precise, its southern part. During World War II this was where deadly nitroglycerin was made. Touring the Exploseum, you learn about the history of ammunition manufacturing at DAG Fabrik Bromberg, about the lives of the forced labourers and also their ties to the Polish resistance. You can also find out a lot about Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite.

## INTERESTING FACTS

DAG Fabrik Bromberg was the Third Reich's easternmost armaments factory. Some of its infrastructure was located underground to protect it from Allied bombings. The exhibition at the Exploseum includes firearms used by the German army in both world wars.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Admission to the permanent exhibition is free on Saturdays.
- Due to the character of this site and its climatic conditions (changing temperatures, humidity), a visit to the museum is not recommended for children under 3 years of age.
- The exhibitions may be toured individually or with a guide (the guides speak Spanish and English).
- Tickets are available at the museum. Guide services are available during specific times posted on the museum's website. You can also book a guide in advance by telephone, which guarantees that a guide will be available at the time of your choice.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### ENIGMA CODEBREAKERS EXHIBITION

#### ADDRESS:

52°24'29.0"N 16°55'06.0"E  
ul. Święty Marcin 78  
60-142 Poznań  
www.enigmacentrum.pl

#### OPENING HOURS:

Open daily 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

Admission free.

Szyfrokontener is an overture to the Enigma Cipher Centre which will be opened at the turn of 2020 and 2021. The centre will be housed in the building of a former branch of the Cipher Bureau of the Polish Armed Forces General Staff.

# ENIGMA CODEBREAKERS EXHIBITION



### THE DISCOVERY THAT CHANGED HISTORY

The German Enigma encryption machine was one of the best-guarded secrets of the Third Reich. Its code could not have been cracked by British specialists without the work of mathematicians from the University of Poznań: Marian Rejewski, Jerzy Różycki and Henryk Zygalski. Already in late December 1932, these three Poles working at the Cipher Bureau of the Polish Armed Forces General Staff for the first time deciphered a message sent using an Enigma machine.

### REMEMBERING THE FAMOUS CRYPTOLOGISTS

The Wielkopolska region's capital remembers the achievements of Rejewski, Różycki and Zygalski. The Szyfrokontener (Cypher Container) was set up in 2016 opposite the Zamek Cultural Centre, in Święty Marcin Street, its shape reminiscent of an Enigma machine. Inside you can learn the rudiments of cryptology by seeing how complex codes are created and cracked. You can also learn a lot about the contribution of the three Polish mathematicians' work to the Allied victory in World War II.

# HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS AND EVENTS

For some, they are practical history lessons; for others, an exciting way to spend free time. During historical re-enactments, enthusiasts wearing costumes from a given period recreate events that were important in the history of a region, and sometimes the whole country. Let us add that they do this in compliance with all safety rules, often in front of a delighted audience that usually includes plenty of young people. The battles of World War II have a special place among Polish re-enactment shows. Besides a lesson and entertainment, re-enactments of

the battles of the River Bzura, Gostyń or Tomaszów Lubelski also aim to honour the memory of the heroes of events from the past. Historical re-enactments have become hugely popular in Poland in recent years, and many are organized on an impressive scale and with great care for accuracy in historical details. We would therefore like to present nine selected events of this type that are well worth attending.





## LOCATION DETAILS

### WĘGIERSKA GÓRKA 1939: WESTERPLATTE OF THE SOUTH

#### WHERE?

Near the Wędrowiec Combat Bunker,  
ul. Obrońców Węgierskiej Górki 19,  
34-350 Węgierska Górka  
49°35'55.6"N 19°07'13.4"E

#### WHEN?

Every year in August

#### ORGANIZERS:

Węgierska Górka Commune Promotion Centre,  
Museum of the Żywiec Region's Military Effort and  
Węgierska Górka Commune Office

# WĘGIERSKA GÓRKA 1939 – WESTERPLATTE OF THE SOUTH



On 2–3 September 1939 a fierce battle took place on the boundary of the Silesian Beskid and Żywiec Beskid mountains. For two days Polish troops under the command of Captain Tadeusz Semik, including soldiers from the Węgierska Górka Fortress Company, repulsed attacks from the much stronger German 7th Infantry Division. Due to the heroism of these defenders, the Battle of Węgierska Górka has been dubbed the “Westerplatte of the South”.

The historical re-enactment commemorating these events has won a permanent place in the calendar of Węgierska Górka Commune. Every year,

members of re-enactment groups come to Węgierska Górka to recreate the battle from 80 years ago in the preserved Wędrowiec combat bunker.

#### INTERESTING FACT

In 1938 plans were put in place to build 16 forts near Węgierska Górka, of which five were completed. If the fortifications had been finished, they would most likely have enabled the Poles to defend themselves for longer.



## LOCATION DETAILS

### BATTLE OF WYRY: THE FIGHT FOR GOSTYŃ

#### WHERE?

In the historical fields near the Memorial to the Soldiers of September 1939, ul. Tęczowa 40, 43-176 Gostyń  
50°06'22.7"N 18°53'57.4"E

Fringe events, including the Fortress Picnic, an exhibition of contemporary Polish Armed Forces equipment, re-enactor dioramas and a tour of the Sowiniec combat bunker, take place in the vicinity of the bunker.

#### WHEN?

Every year in May.

#### ORGANIZERS:

Pro Fortalicium Association for Historical Fortifications and Wry Commune Office

# BATTLE OF WYRY: THE FIGHT FOR GOSTYŃ



The September Campaign's of 1939 biggest battle in Upper Silesia took place between 1 and 3 September 1939 near Gostyń, Wry, Żwaków and Mikołów. Especially heavy fighting occurred near the Wry forest. Polish soldiers from the 73rd Infantry Regiment under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Władysław Kielbasa not only defended themselves against the enemy. On 2 September, thanks to a successful counterattack, they retook the village of Wry from the Germans. Battle of Wry: The Fight for Gostyń, a re-enactment held regularly in Wry Commune since 2005, is rightly called "the queen of September

1939 re-enactments". In May 2019 alone, it had over 100 participants belonging to as many as 20 re-enactment groups. War veterans and Polish Armed Forces soldiers attend this event regularly as well.

#### INTERESTING FACT

Among other things, in the Sowiniec combat bunker you can see what the Polish soldiers' action stations looked like in September 1939.



## LOCATION DETAILS

### BATTLES NEAR TOMASZÓW LUBELSKI

#### WHERE?

In the meadows of the Pod Lasem stud farm  
in Dąbrowa Tomaszowska  
50°29'01.9"N 23°24'21.7"E

#### WHEN?

Every year on the third Sunday in September

The commemoration in Tomaszów Lubelski starts two  
days earlier.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: Bitwy Pod Tomaszowem

# BATTLES, NEAR TOMASZÓW LUBELSKI



This historical re-enactment is dedicated to two battles. The first one took place on 17–20 September 1939. The Lublin Army under the command of General Tadeusz Piskor made an unsuccessful attempt to fight their way through the German forces towards the border with Romania. The other battle near Tomaszów Lubelski, fought on 22–27 September by troops of the Polish Northern Front, similarly ended in defeat. Besides a re-enactment of the battles with the participation of cavalry units and tanks, the commemoration of those events also includes the Tomaszów Half Marathon in Memory of September 1939 Soldiers.

#### INTERESTING FACT

On 18 September 1939 Tomaszów Lubelski was the scene of the biggest armoured battle in the whole of the September Campaign. It included tanks of the Warsaw Armoured Motorized Brigade of Colonel Stefan Rowecki, who later became commander of the Home Army (AK).



## LOCATION DETAILS

### THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER BZURA

#### WHERE?

In Sochaczew, near Castle Hill  
You can also take part in a commemoration preceding the re-enactment, at the military cemetery in Trojanów and in Tadeusz Kościuszko Square in Sochaczew.  
52°13'46.8"N 20°14'16.8"E

#### WHEN?

Every year in September

#### ORGANIZERS:

Museum of the Sochaczew Region and the Battle of the River Bzura Fields

#### WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

[www.muzeumsochaczew.pl](http://www.muzeumsochaczew.pl)  
Facebook: Rekonstrukcja Bzura 1939

# THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER BZURA



The biggest battle of the September Campaign is deservedly popular among historians and history enthusiasts. On 9–18 September 1939 on the River Bzura, the Poznań Army under the command of General Tadeusz Kutrzeba together with part of the Pomerania Army launched an attack on the left flank of Germany's Army Group South advancing towards Warsaw. Only the rapid arrival of reinforcements and absolute domination in the air saved the Wehrmacht from defeat. The Museum of the Sochaczew Region and the Bzura Battlefield was founded in the town many years ago and displays many mementos

of that extremely important battle. The most spectacular part of the re-enactment takes place near Castle Hill.

#### INTERESTING FACT

The attack General Kutrzeba's troops launched on the German flank on 9 September forced the Germans to halt and regroup some of the forces moving towards the Polish capital.



## LOCATION DETAILS

### FOLLOWING "WILK'S" TRAIL: HISTORICAL SHOW IN MIEDZIANA GÓRA

#### WHERE?

The common near the monument honouring the memory of Lieutenant Zbigniew Kruszelnicki  
The common near the entrance to the Tor Kielce racetrack  
ul. Wykień 95  
Ćmińsk  
26-085 Miedziana Góra  
50°57'40.8"N 20°32'24.1"E

#### WHEN?

Every year in early June

#### ORGANIZERS:

Miedziana Góra Commune Local Government,  
Jodła Historical Re-Enactment Association

# FOLLOWING "WILK'S" TRAIL



Zbigniew Kruszelnicki, pseudonym "Wilk" ("Wolf"), was too young to take part in the September Campaign of 1939. Nevertheless, he joined the Polish underground resistance already in 1940 and two years later completed a secret officer cadet school course in Warsaw. From January 1944 Kruszelnicki was the commander of a sabotage unit of the AK Kielce District. He became famous for bold operations against the occupying forces. He was killed on 5 June 1944 during one of them, in Miedziana Góra near Kielce. At the site where he was killed, today there stands a monument commem-

orating the heroism of "Wilk" and his comrades in arms. In June members of re-enactment groups take part in a historical show staged nearby.

#### INTERESTING FACT

Kruszelnicki's most famous operation was a road ambush near Czerwona Góra on 31 May 1944. Two Gestapo officers were killed and "Wilk's" men seized many weapons and a list of 224 people that were to be arrested.



## LOCATION DETAILS

### D-DAY ON THE HEL PENINSULA

#### WHERE?

This is the only re-enactment in Poland that takes place on a beach in the town of Hel. Fringe events are organized in many places around the town.  
54°35'35.7"N 18°48'38.8"E

#### WHEN?

Every year in the second half of August

#### ORGANIZERS:

Historical Military Technology Foundation, Hel Commune and historical re-enactment groups from all over Poland

#### SOCIAL MEDIA:

Facebook: D-Day Hel

# D-DAY ON THE HEL PENINSULA



#### LONG-AWAITED FRONT IN FRANCE

The biggest landing operation in history – Operation Overlord – took place on 6 June 1944. Four Allied armies (two US, one British, one Canadian) landed on the beaches of Normandy in France and formed a new front in the war against the Third Reich. The fighting in Normandy lasted from June to August 1944 and also included Polish units, to mention General Stanisław Maczek's 1st Armoured Division which fought tough battles against the Germans near Caen and Falaise.

The Allied invasion landing in Normandy has fuelled the imagination of book lovers and cinema-goers for decades. It has been immortalized in films like *The Longest Day* and *Saving Private Ryan*. This is not surprising, as the importance of those events was enormous. After defeating the Wehrmacht in Normandy the Allies liberated Paris, the rest of France as well as Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. They soon reached the Rhine, the gateway to Germany. This is why international observances are held every year in Normandy on 6 June to commemorate D-Day, i.e. the day of the landing.

## NORMANDY ON THE HEL PENINSULA

Luckily we don't have to travel to France to see what the Allied landing of 1944 was like. Tourists visiting the Hel Peninsula in August can watch a historical show called D-Day Hel. The town is perfect for a re-enactment of the battle: it has a sandy beach and many restored buildings from the inter-war period. For the event, military camps and storehouses are reproduced in Hel with great accuracy. In all, 400 re-enactors and 200 volunteers make sure the event goes without a hitch.

The D-Day Hel historical re-enactment involves not just re-enactors, weapons and machines. There are also fireworks specialists handling the visual and sound aspects of the show. During the several-day event visitors can expect many other attractions, e.g. a 1940s fashion show, themed dioramas and multimedia presentations. For example, in 2018 a special VR Zone was set up near the Hel beach. It enabled visitors to see what the 1939 Battle of Westerplatte, on the other side of the Bay of Puck, was like.

D-Day Hel is a good opportunity to get a closer look at the uniforms,

weapons and vehicles (e.g. Sherman tanks and the legendary Willys MB jeep) of the Western Allies – the Americans and the British. A great military parade of re-enactment groups has become a tradition of the event.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- According to data from Discovery Channel television network, in 2017 the historical show in Hel was watched live by 130,000 people! That's why it is worth booking a stay at one of the nearby hotels well in advance. Every year the organizers of D-Day Hel do their best to surprise the participants in some way. In 2014, for example, an aircraft cut across the sky over Hel a few times, as a reminder of an air raid in Normandy 70 years before.





## LOCATION DETAILS

### FRONTS TO FREEDOM: ŁABISZYN ENCOUNTERS WITH HISTORY

#### WHERE?

52°57'10.5"N 17°55'11.1"E

#### WHEN?

The re-enactment lasts three days and takes place every year during the weekend after Corpus Christi.

#### ORGANIZERS:

Łabiszyn Town Hall, SRH AA7, Active Young People of Łabiszyn, Łabiszyn Cultural Centre, ERIKA Historical Association

#### WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

[www.labiszyn.pl](http://www.labiszyn.pl)

Facebook: Łabiszyńskie Spotkania z Historią

# FRONTS TO FREEDOM: ŁABISZYN ENCOUNTERS WITH HISTORY



#### FOLLOWING POLISH SOLDIERS

Besides shows dedicated to specific historical events, re-enactments on broader themes also take place in Poland. For example, an event called Łabiszyn Encounters with History organized every June is dedicated to the achievements of Polish soldiers on different fronts of World War II. Re-enactments of battles are accompanied by history contests, interactive presentations as well as displays of re-enactment groups' equipment. In 2018, for example, the theme of the Łabiszyn Encounters with His-

tory was the September Campaign, while in 2019 the event's title was Heroes of Normandy. In the latter case, special attention was paid to the operation of General Maczek's 1st Armoured Division, although the history of the Polish Armed Forces in the West – navy and air force – was also presented. Earlier themes included the Berlin Campaign of 1945 in which the Polish 1st Army took part.



## FASCINATING TRIP BACK IN TIME

For three days in June, Łabiszyn turns into a town straight from World War II. In the main square, in the nearby gravel pit and around the local mill, you can hear the sounds of historical re-enactments: the roar of engines and the clang of weapons. Battles are staged and equipment is displayed together with military vehicles from different fronts of World War II. Every year the main square in Łabiszyn also

witnesses a parade of all the re-enactment group members taking part in the show.

Concerts at the local amphitheatre present wartime as well as contemporary compositions and songs, and there are folk dance shows, too. Women from the Bluszcz Historical Re-Enactment Group are regular participants; they present changing fashion styles of the 1930s and 1940s. Besides stage shows, the Łabiszyn Encounters with History also include photo exhibitions, a flea market, a craft fair, a picnic at

which street bands play, museums (e.g. a historical coach house) and a fireworks display. Anyone who enjoys history-themed events should visit Łabiszyn in June at least once.



## INTERESTING FACTS

- In June 2019, thanks to the efforts of the town authorities and re-enactors, for three days Łabiszyn looked like a French town taken straight from the 1940s.
- In 2018, thanks to the votes of web surfers from all over the country, the event Fronts to Freedom: Łabiszyn Encounters with History received a Certificate of the Polish Tourism Organization. It was voted by internet users the Best Tourism Product in Poland.





## LOCATION DETAILS

### ARADO RALLY

#### WHERE?

Lower Silesia

#### WHEN?

Every year in early May

#### ORGANIZER:

ARADO Fabryka Historii

#### WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

[www.projektarado.pl](http://www.projektarado.pl)

Facebook: Projekt Arado – zaginione laboratorium  
Hitlera

# ARADO RALLY



The name of the Arado Rally comes from the underground Arado complex in Kamienna Góra. During the war, the Germans worked on jet propulsion for their fighter planes here, among other things. The Arado Rally also includes Kowary, Karpacz, Osada Śnieżka, Strzegom and Jelenia Góra. During this several-day event participants witness a series of historical re-enactments (e.g. the capture of the German town of Hirschberg – now Jelenia Góra) and presentations of weapons and vehicles. The re-enactments are mainly of events from late in the war, when the Wehrmacht was withdrawing from Lower

Silesia, chased along the whole front by the Red Army and the Polish People's Army.

#### INTERESTING FACT

The purpose of many of the underground tunnels the Germans dug in Lower Silesia remains a mystery to this day. There is some suspicion that, away from prying eyes, the Germans were working on weapons of mass destruction or an ultramodern long-range aircraft.



## LOCATION DETAILS

### POZNAŃ FORTRESS DAYS

The programme includes many sites and events connected with World War II and other periods of history. You can see forts, bunkers, air-raid trenches and historical re-enactments.

### WHEN?

Every year during the last weekend of August

### COORDINATOR:

Poznań Local Tourism Organization

### WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA:

[www.dnitwierzypoznan.pl](http://www.dnitwierzypoznan.pl)

Facebook: Dni Twierdzy Poznań

# POZNAŃ FORTRESS DAYS



### FESTUNG POSEN

Built in 1828–1914 and costing enormous sums of money, the Poznań fortifications were meant to guarantee that the city would remain in Prussian hands. Continually developed and modernized, the ring of forts and artillery posts was among the largest in Europe at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. As things turned out, though, the Germans used the Poznań Fortress (German: Festung Posen) for defence purposes just once.

The Red Army besieged the city, one of the last major barriers on the road to Berlin, from 24 January to 23 February 1945. The month-long battle resulted in a lot of damage to the city: over 55% of Poznań's buildings were destroyed. The fortifications, however, have survived to our times in amazingly good condition. Of the Poznań Fortress's 18 forts, only four were completely destroyed. The others are now in varying condition, but Poznań's fortification enthusiasts take care of them and open them to visitors as a fascinating monument to the city's history.

## ATTRACTION FOR FORTIFICATION FANS

It is definitely worth visiting Poznań in the last week of August. Organized every year in the capital of the Wielkopolska region, Poznań Fortress Days are a real treat for people passionate about history and architecture. During the event, residents and tourists can tour Fort Ia, Fort IIa, Fort IVa, Fort Va, Fort VI, and also Fort VII – the place where the Germans set up the first concentration camp in Polish territory and where the Museum of Wielkopolska Martyrs is housed today. All of these forts were part of the

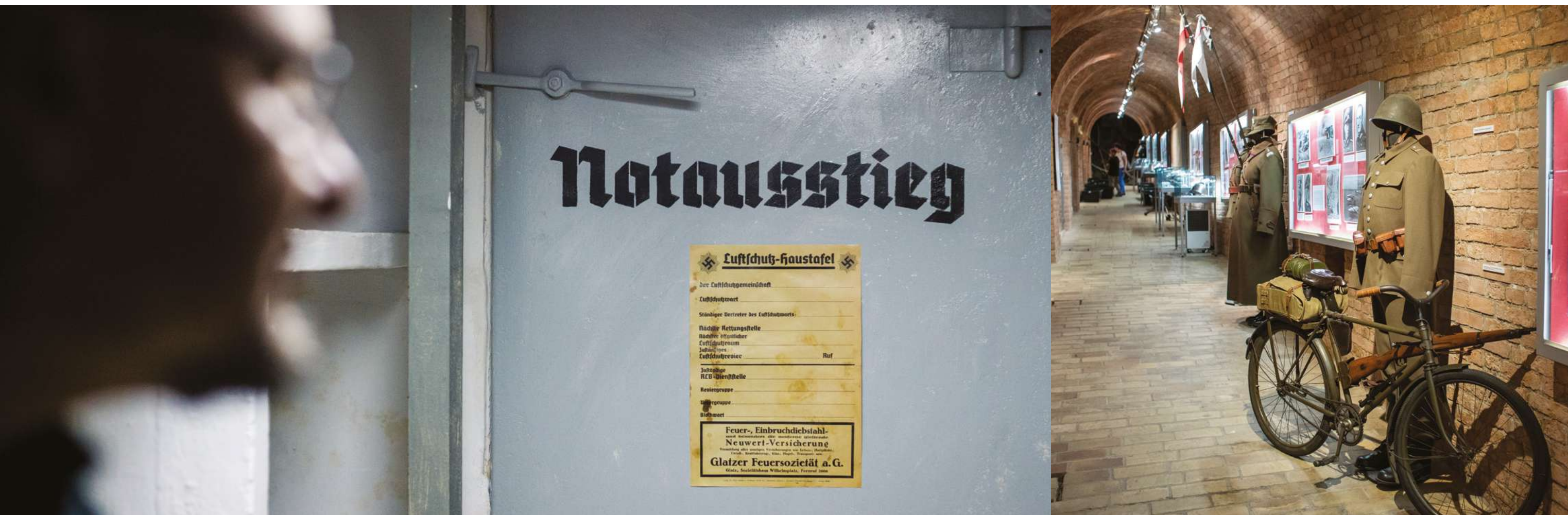
city's defence system, funded by the Prussian authorities and steadily developed by people who were among the best fortification specialists in Europe. You can also see the remnants of the largest fort, Winiary (now known as the Citadel). Today it houses, among other things, the Armaments Museum and the Poznań Army Museum with collections of objects from World War II, especially the September Campaign and the 1945 siege of the city.

Besides the forts, during Poznań Fortress Days in August it is worth seeing the air-raid shelters in Wilson Park and Sołacki Park. New sites to visit

during Poznań Fortress Days are being added all the time. For example, an air-raid shelter in Kościelna Street was opened to tourists recently. It is also worth seeing the shelter in the cellar of a villa in Berwińskiego Street once inhabited by Arthur Greiser, the German governor of the "Wartheland", who was executed for his crimes at Poznań's Citadel in July 1946. Every year the programme is supplemented by historical re-enactments, themed tours and fortress-related boat trips along the River Warta.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- Travelling between the attractions is made easier by a special Fortress Bus Line that stops at all the sites available for sightseeing. It runs for the duration of the event.
- In the 19th century the Poznań fortifications were even more substantial. However, due to the development of siege technology (and city infrastructure) the German authorities decided to dismantle the so-called field fortress, stretching along Poznań's city centre, in 1896–1902.
- Even though Poznań Fortress Days take place in August, it is advisable to have warmer clothing with you. The temperature in the forts is a constant 12 degrees Celsius.



# OTHER SITES

Apart from museums and historical re-enactments, there are many other places connected with World War II that are worth seeing. Some of them, like Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory in Kraków, the Wolf's Lair and Westerplatte, are well-known thanks to fiction and documentary films, novels and history books. The possibility of seeing these sites for yourself will be an excellent opportunity to confront those popular images with reality. Other locations, e.g. the Gli-

wice Radio Tower, the Międzyrzecz Fortified Region and the Riese Tunnel System, are still waiting for someone to recount their history to a wider audience. These sites are often surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery and sensation, so visiting them can be an exciting historical journey into the unknown.



## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### GLIWICE RADIO TOWER

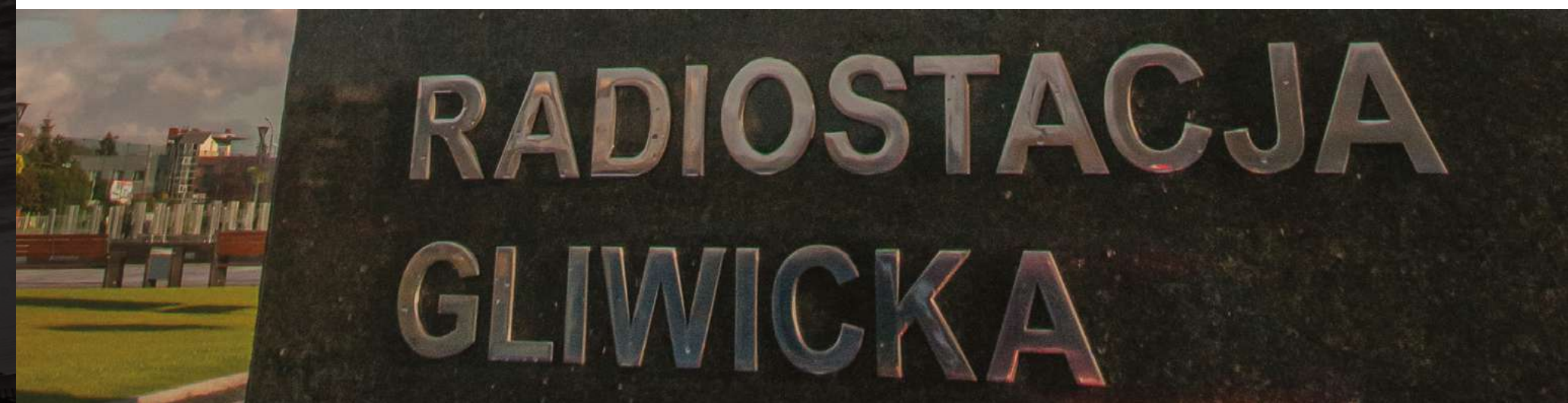
#### ADDRESS:

50°18'48.6"N 18°41'19.9"E  
ul. Tarnogórska 129  
44-100 Gliwice  
phone: +48 32 300 04 04  
[www.muzeum.gliwice.pl/en](http://www.muzeum.gliwice.pl/en)

#### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. closed  
Tue.–Fri. 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.  
Sat.–Sun. 11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
(May to September 11:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.)

# GLIWICE RADIO TOWER



### BATTLE ON THE AIRWAVES

In 1921 Upper Silesia, an industrialized region rich in resources, was split between two countries: Poland and Germany. This quickly led to the eruption of a cultural, social and political war for the hearts and souls of the Silesian people. In 1925 the Germans decided to build a radio station in Gliwice, for the purpose of broadcasting programmes exclusively in German. Ten years later the facility was expanded to include a 11-metre-tall transmitter station tower made

of impregnated Siberian larch, resistant to both pests and the elements. When the weather was right, broadcasts from Gliwice could even reach as far as New Zealand.

It was not its technical parameters, however, that made this Upper Silesian radio tower world-famous on the eve of World War II. On 31 August 1939, at 8:00 p.m., Germans disguised as Polish insurgents launched an armed attack on the facility. Their aim was to show that the Poles were trying to take Upper Silesia by force, which would justify the invasion of Poland on 1 September. However, the

“Gleiwitz provocation” had not been professionally prepared. For example, the attackers could not find any microphones within the transmitter station. When they finally managed to switch on the “storm microphone”, listeners most probably managed to hear just nine words: “Attention, Gliwice here. The station is in Polish hands”. No one in Europe was fooled. As part of this grim staging of an alleged Polish attack, a Pole called Franciszek Honiok was killed at the transmitter station, and today is considered the first casualty of World War II.

## IN POLISH HANDS

In January 1945 the radio station was seized by Soviet troops, and handed over to the Poles four months later. To this day it boasts the tallest wooden transmitter tower in Europe. The radio station was taken over by the Gliwice Museum in 2005. The site was opened to visitors and is currently used mainly for educational purposes. Preserved historical exhibits include radio equipment made by Lorenz, Siemens & Halske, and Telefunken. Even though more than

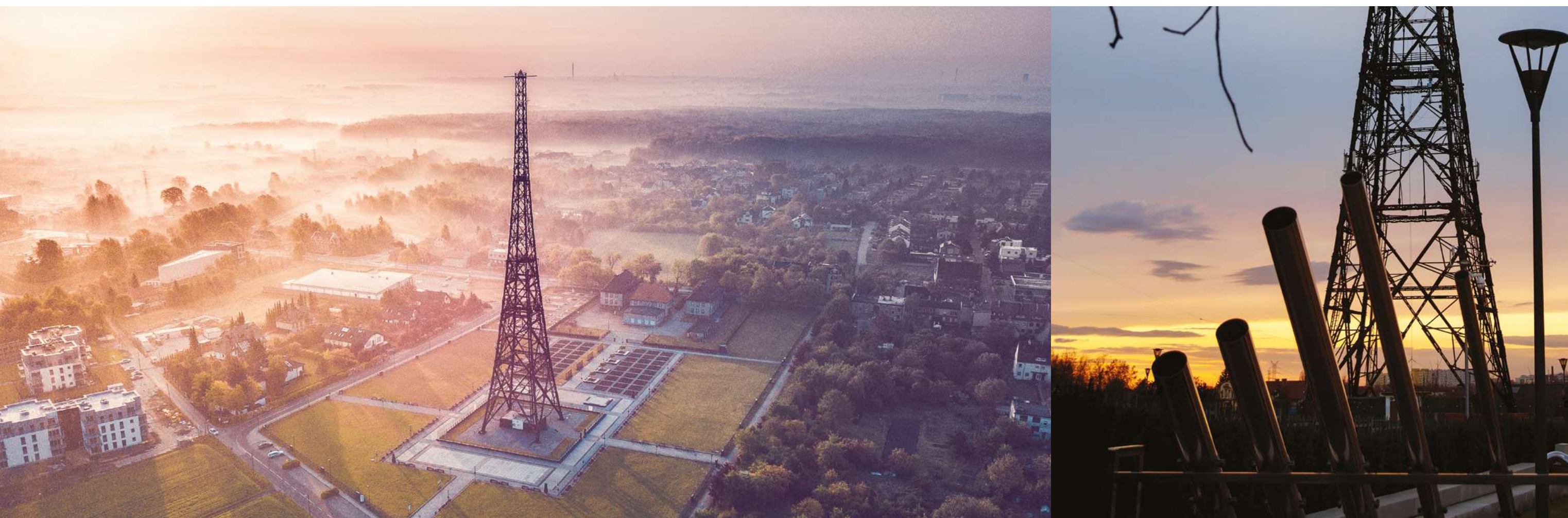
80 years have passed since the radio station was set up, some of the equipment is still operational and could be switched on.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The radio tower serves Gliwice’s residents to this day, for example as an illuminated landmark. There is also a free hotspot in the surrounding park.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Admission to the museum is free on Saturdays. On Sundays parents with children can get a 50% discount; admission is free for school groups on Wednesdays and Thursdays.
- The Gliwice Radio Tower lies on the Industrial Monuments Route.
- It takes from 30 to 60 minutes to tour the site. Taking photos and filming is allowed at the museum.
- The park around the tower is open 6:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m. in summer and 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m. in winter.
- The Gliwice Radio Tower has been a Monument of History since 2017.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### WESTERPLATTE MONUMENT TO THE DEFENDERS OF THE COAST

#### ADDRESS:

54°24'24.7"N 18°40'01.0"E  
Westerplatte  
80-001 Gdańsk

#### OPENING HOURS:

The site may be visited 24 hours a day.

Tourists can also view Guardhouse No. 1.  
From May to September  
it is open 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Tickets are required.

# WESTERPLATTE



### FIGHTING TO THE END

This site is a symbolic place, a fact that should not need explaining. Between 1 and 7 September 1939, the small garrison of the Polish Military Transit Depot on Westerplatte peninsula fought against much more powerful Wehrmacht forces. The shelling of the Polish garrison by the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* is considered to mark the start of World War II.

In the inter-war period the small Westerplatte peninsula was part of the Free City of Gdańsk, where Polish and German influences crossed. Polish soldiers were already stationed here in 1920, but it was not until five years later that the League of Nations transferred the peninsula to Poland under a perpetual free lease. In the following years the Westerplatte garrison grew with the growing tension between Poland and Germany. On 1 September 1939 there were between 205 and 225 soldiers and civilians here as well as some hidden fortifications. No one, however, including the authorities in Warsaw,



thought that if an international conflict broke out, Westerplatte could hold out for more than half a day or so. Ultimately the garrison under the command of Major Henryk Sucharski, attacked by the Germans from land, sea and air, held out for seven days. During this time information about its resistance was broadcast on the radio across the country, raising the spirits of soldiers defending Poland on other fronts. With no hope for reinforcements, there was only one possible ending: the Westerplatte garrison finally surrendered on 7 September 1939 at 10:15 a.m.

## MUSEUM ON THE PENINSULA

Despite the passage of time, Westerplatte has retained a lot of its inter-war atmosphere. On the peninsula you can still see Polish barrack buildings as well as elements of the fortifications from which the Polish defenders repelled German attacks. The towering Monument to the Defenders of the Coast together with the sign in the space around it – “No more war” – is a reminder of the tragic events of World War II. At present work is under way to establish a modern museum that

would tell the story of the peninsula’s defenders to successive generations of people visiting this site.

## INTERESTING FACTS

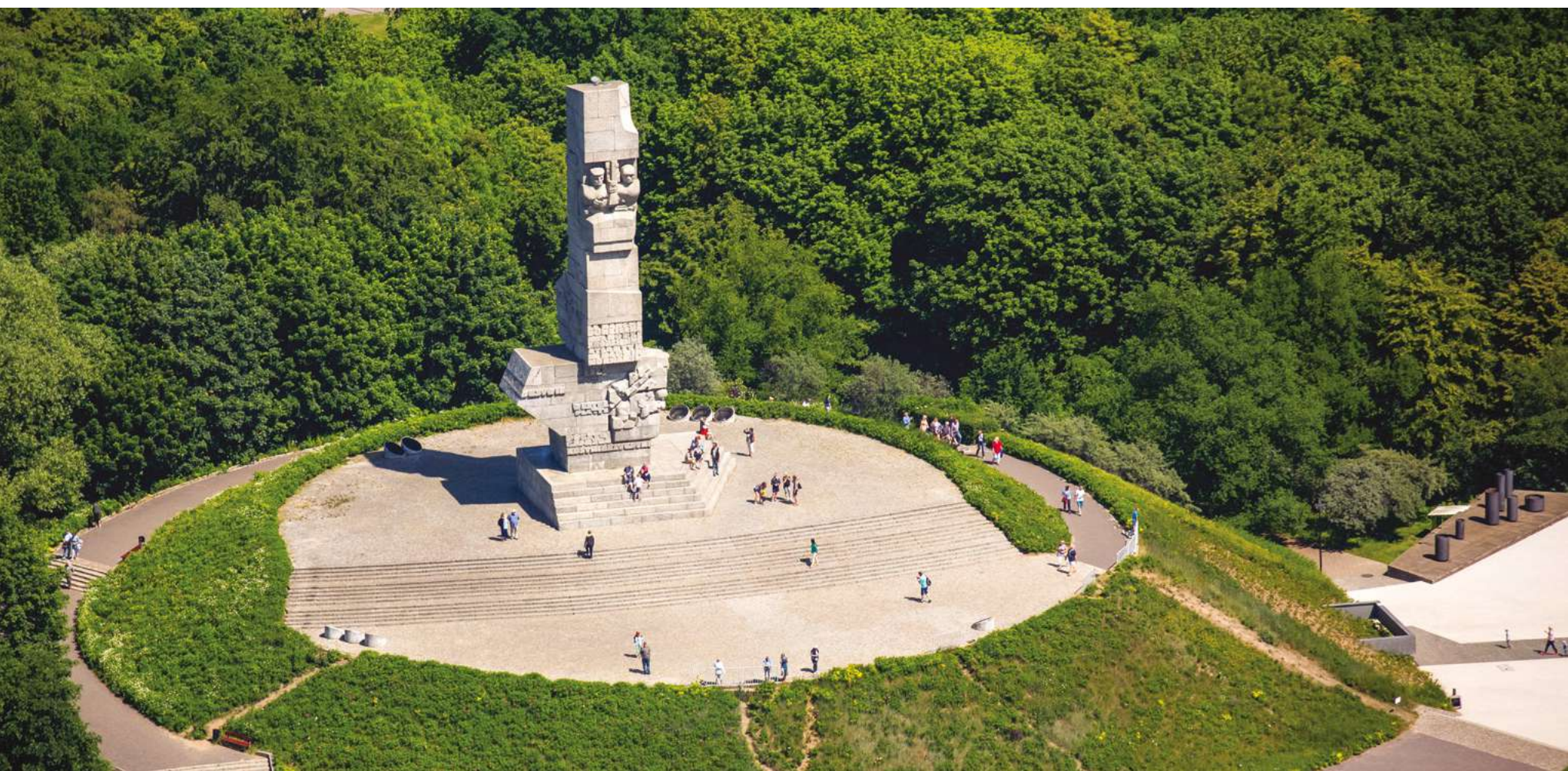
The exact place and time when World War II broke out has been the subject of debate. Many historians underline that before the *Schleswig-Holstein* opened fire on Westerplatte, German planes had already bombed the Polish town of Wieluń.

## SITES ON WESTERPLATTE

- The Monument to the Defenders of the Coast – a 25-metre-tall statue honouring the memory of the Polish defenders of the coastal region in September 1939.
- Cemetery of the Fallen Defenders of Westerplatte – the resting place of those killed defending Westerplatte during the defensive war in 1939.
- Preserved guardhouses: Guardhouse No. 1, Guardhouse No. 3, Fort Outpost, Power Station Outpost.
- New Barracks – the barracks of the Westerplatte garrison. This is where the armoury, living quarters and other important premises were housed. The complex was originally built on a T-shaped plan, but some parts of the building were destroyed after the war.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- From 1 May to 30 September you can reach Westerplatte by taking the F5 water tram which runs on the Żabi Kruk – Westerplatte – Brzeźno route.





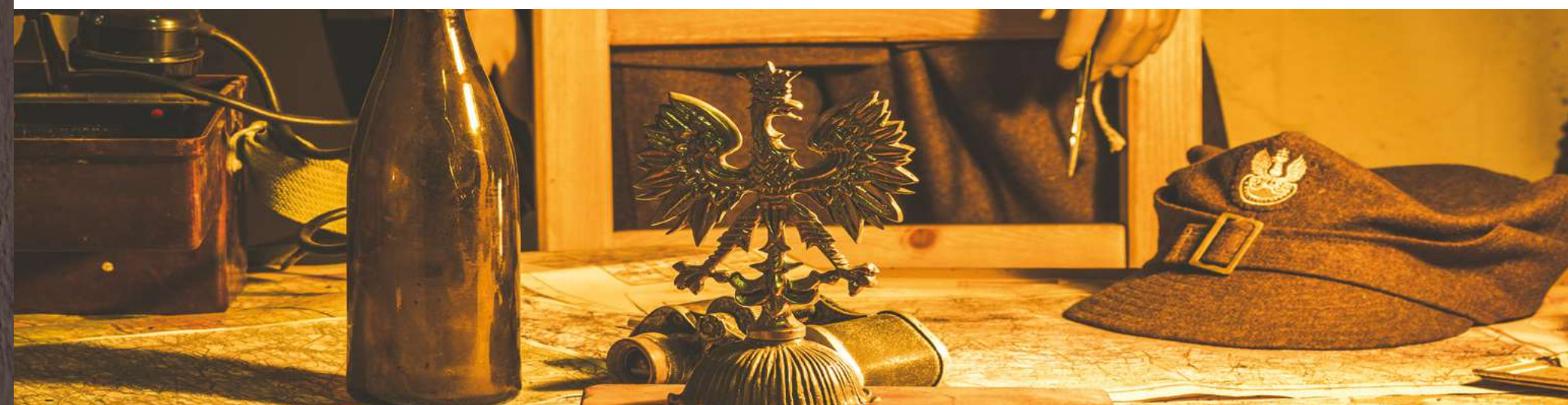
## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### FORTIFIED AREA OF SILESIA

The most famous sites open for sightseeing include:

- Polish combat bunker in Dobieszowice (Będzin county)
- Polish combat bunker in Chorzów in Katowicka Street
- Command bunker in Chorzów on Reden Hill
- German combat bunker in Zbroślawice
- Polish combat bunker in Dąbrówka Wielka (Piekary Śląskie)
- Sowiniec Polish combat bunker in Wry
- German air-raid shelter in Bytom-Miechowice
- Sosabowski bunker in Bytom
- Trager bunker in Bytom
- Polish combat bunker in Świętochłowice (Heiloo Park)
- German combat bunker in Dąbrowiecka Góra (Karczew commune)

# FORTIFIED AREA OF SILESIA



### STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT REGION

After Poland regained its independence, it quickly became necessary to strengthen the country's defences by building permanent fortifications. The province that was especially susceptible to foreign attacks was resource-rich Silesia, its loss being something to which the Germans were unable to reconcile themselves. That is why, despite having a modest budget, the authorities in Warsaw decided to fortify the region. The first fortifications were built already in 1931, but it

was not until Hitler came into power in Germany and brought about its rapid remilitarization that work accelerated. The Fortified Area of Silesia was built in 1933–1939 in six stages. The result was a 60-km belt of fortifications stretching along poorly accessible terrain from the town of Przerzyce in the north all the way to Wry in the south.

### LINE IMPOSSIBLE TO CROSS?

Besides reinforced concrete bunkers, shelters and outposts (a total of

180 structures), the Fortified Area of Silesia also included hydraulic structures (dams). A few kilometres behind the main line of fortifications was a command bunker. The Silesia Operational Group stationed in the region was well prepared for repelling a possible German attack: it had heavy machine guns, anti-tank guns and artillery. Its soldiers, grouped mainly in the 23rd Infantry Division, knew the area very well. Unfortunately the overall strategic situation of Polish forces in September 1939 forced the Silesia Operational Group to withdraw before it could fully take advantage of the defence line. Meanwhile, the

battle of Wiry fought on 1–3 September near Gostyń showed that if the Silesian combat bunkers had been properly manned and supported with artillery fire, they would have been very hard for the Wehrmacht to capture. After seizing the Fortified Area of Silesia, the Germans did not get an opportunity to use it. That is why the bunkers in Upper Silesia survived the war in very good condition, and then deteriorated over the course of many years.

## TOURING THE FORTIFICATIONS

The Pro Fortalicium Association for Historical Fortifications has taken charge of 30 sites belonging to the former Fortified Area of Silesia, and opened 17 of them to visitors. These include three bunkers on Hill 319 in Ruda Śląska, a command bunker in Chorzów on Reden Hill and a bunker in Świętochłowice Piaśniki. Together with the Town Museum in Ruda Śląska, the Pro Fortalicium Association organizes tours of these sites.

## INTERESTING FACTS

- The command bunker in Chorzów was unique in Poland. Equipped with communications equipment and weapons, it is still very impressive today.
- Due to the large scale of the fortifications, before the war the Fortified Area of Silesia was dubbed the “Polish Maginot line”. Unfortunately the modern manoeuvre warfare that befell Poland as well as France in 1939–1940 showed very clearly that the times of positional warfare along fortified lines were over.



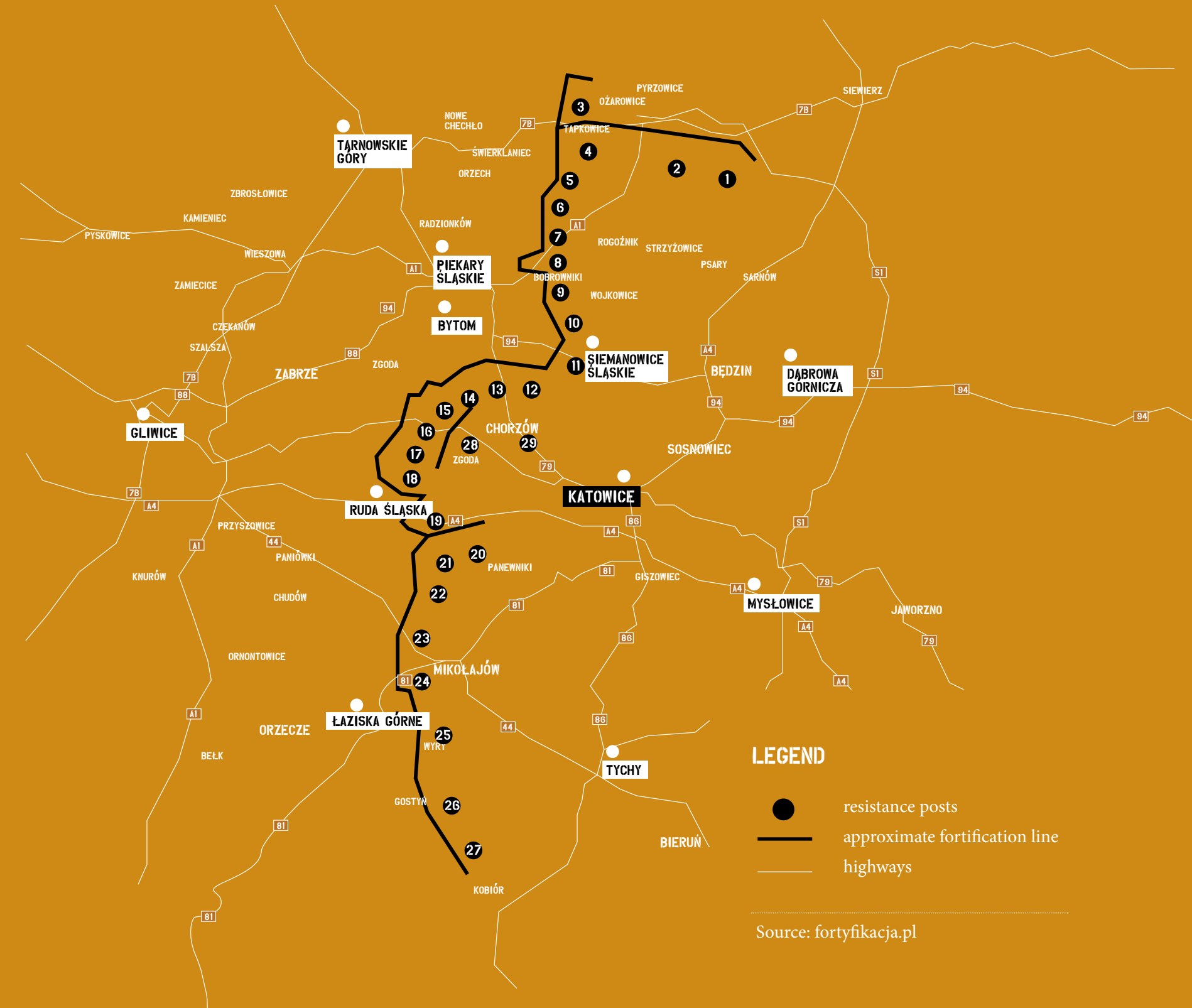


# APPROXIMATE COURSE OF THE LINE OF FORTIFICATIONS IN THE FORTIFIED AREA OF SILESIA



1. Przeczyce resistance post
2. Nowa Wieś field outpost
3. Brynica field outpost
4. Hill 307 Niezdara resistance post
5. Kozłowa Góra field outpost
6. Wymysłów combat group
7. Wesoła combat group
8. Hill 310 Bobrowniki resistance post
9. Hill 298 Kamień resistance post
10. Brzeziny combat group
11. Hill 304,7 Dąbrówka resistance post
12. Maciejkowice combat group
13. Łagiewniki resistance post
14. Zgorzelec combat group

15. Godula resistance post
16. Chebzie combat group
17. Hill 319 Nowy Bytom resistance post
18. Wirek combat group
19. Szyb Artura resistance post
20. Kłodnica combat group
21. Radoszowy resistance post
22. Field output on the River Jamna
23. Śmiłowice sub-sector
24. Mokre sub-sector
25. Łaziska sub-sector
26. Wiry sub-sector
27. Las Wiry field outpost



**LEGEND**

- resistance posts
- approximate fortification line
- highways

Source: fortyfikacja.pl



## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

WOLF'S LAIR HISTORY AND NATURE  
EDUCATION CENTRE OF SROKOWO FOREST  
DISTRICT OFFICE

### ADDRESS:

54°04'51.0"N 21°29'39.5"E  
Gierłoż 5  
11-400 Kętrzyn  
phone: +48 89 741 00 31  
wilczyszaniec@olsztyn.lasy.gov.pl  
www.wilczyszaniec.olsztyn.lasy.gov.pl

### OPENING HOURS:

The site is open all year round, 7 days a week (also on public holidays).

April to October:  
daily 8:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

November to March:  
daily 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

# WOLF'S LAIR



### MOST CLOSELY GUARDED FACILITY IN THE THIRD REICH

Adolf Hitler did not spend as much time at any other of his headquarters as he did at the facility located 8 km east of Kętrzyn (in today's Warmińsko-Mazurskie Province). The military complex hidden in the Gierłoż forest was given the codename Wolf's Lair (German: Wolfsschanze). The facility, built and expanded by forced labourers, was completed in May 1941, just before the German invasion of the Soviet

Union. It was here that Hitler took his key decisions on the war in the east, and not only. The leader of the Third Reich spent some 800 days here in total. At the peak of the war the complex occupied 250 hectares and included 200 buildings where 2,000 people worked. It was one of the most closely guarded sites on the map of Europe, protected by camouflage and a network of sentry posts as well as minefields.

## THE ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT THAT COULD HAVE CHANGED HISTORY

Nevertheless, in spite of all these security measures, it was at the Wolf's Lair that Hitler almost lost his life on 20 July 1944. That day, Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg set off a bomb under the table in a conference room in which the leader of the Third Reich was present. The explosion damaged the room and killed four people, but Hitler was only lightly wounded. The wave of repression that soon engulfed Germany ended

in the execution of Stauffenberg and his accomplices.

The glory years of the Wolf's Lair were drawing to an end. First of all, the Red Army was rapidly moving towards Masuria, in July 1944 capturing territory in today's Belarus and advancing into ethnically Polish lands. On 20 November Hitler left the Wolf's Lair for good, and valuable equipment and documents were evacuated. On the night of 24-25 January 1945, after the Russians captured nearby Węgorzewo, the Germans blew up the facility.

Clearing mines from the area around the remains of the Wolf's Lair

took years. Today the History and Nature Education Centre operates here. Visitors can learn about the purpose of different buildings from information boards, see an exhibition of World War II weapons and take advantage of multimedia applications.

## INTERESTING FACTS

In 1968 the Wolf's Lair site served as a location for Yuri Ozerov's film *Liberation*. Hitler's grim headquarters are visited by up to 300,000 tourists every year.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- You can pay for sightseeing and a parking space in cash or by card at the gate (without getting out of your car).
- The services of a local guide are available at the Wolf's Lair History and Nature Education Centre of Srokowo Forest District Office. Guides speak Polish, English, German, French, Russian, Lithuanian and Italian.
- The centre offers accommodation at a campsite and in single, double and three-person rooms.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### OSKAR SCHINDLER'S ENAMEL FACTORY

#### ADDRESS:

50°02'51.5"N 19°57'42.5"E  
ul. Lipowa 4  
30-702 Kraków  
phone: +48 12 257 10 17  
e-mail: fabrykaschindlera@muzeumkrakowa.pl  
www.muzeumkrakowa.pl

#### OPENING HOURS:

April to October:  
Mon. 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Tue.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

November to March:  
Mon. 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.  
Tue.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

The museum is closed on the first Tuesday of every month.

# OSKAR SCHINDLER'S ENAMEL FACTORY



### SAVING KRAKÓW'S JEWS

This site is familiar to cinema-goers all over the world, mainly thanks to Steven Spielberg's film *Schindler's List*. There was an enamelware factory at 4 Lipowa St. in Kraków's Zabłocie district before the war, but it went bankrupt. After the Wehrmacht captured Kraków in September 1939, the factory resumed production under the management of businessman Oskar Schindler, as the German Enamelware Factory (German: Deutsche Emailwarenfabrik – DEF).

A large group among the factory's employees were Jewish, and working at Schindler's factory was an alternative to being in the local forced labour camp, turned into a concentration camp in 1944, where the conditions were extremely tough, prisoners were tortured by guards and were also at risk of being shot by the sadistic commander, Amon Goeth. In 1944 the imminent advance of the Red Army on Kraków led the Germans to shut down the camps and factories in the city. Schindler and his accountant Itzhak Stern managed to save about 1,100 DEF employees from

deportation to Auschwitz by transferring them to the Brünnlitz factory in Moravia.

### ALONG THE MEMORY TRAIL

After the war the administration building of the Enamelware Factory at 4 Lipowa St. continued to be used as office space. In 2007 it came under the care of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków. Today it houses a permanent exhibition, Kraków under Nazi Occupation 1939–1945. In 45 rooms, visitors can see how people here lived during

World War II. The exhibition is organized to give visitors the impression of walking in the streets of wartime Kraków. It includes stage-set reconstructions of genuine urban spaces, e.g. a hairdresser's, a photographer's studio, the interior of a Kraków tram and an interior from the ominous Płaszów labour camp. Visitors touring these rooms also see presentations of important historical events such as the liquidation of the Kraków Ghetto or the Red Army entering the city in 1945. The Enamel Factory is one of the historical sites on the Memory Trail illustrating the horrific fate Polish people suffered in 1939–1956.

### INTERESTING FACTS

Where the Enamel Factory's production building used to be, today stands the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków (known as MOCaK).



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The museum has a daily quota of visitors, so it is a good idea to book your tickets online, on the website [www.bilety.mhk.pl](http://www.bilety.mhk.pl).
- Due to the exhibition's subject matter, it is recommended that visitors be over 14 years of age.
- Admission to the permanent exhibition is free on Mondays (number of visitors limited - you can collect your pass from the ticket window).





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### EAGLE PHARMACY

#### ADDRESS:

50°02'46.9"N 19°57'15.3"E  
pl. Bohaterów Getta 18  
30-547 Kraków  
phone: +48 12 656 56 25  
e-mail: apteka@muzeumkrakowa.pl  
www.muzeumkrakowa.pl

#### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.  
Tue.– Sun. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

The museum is closed on the second Tuesday  
of every month.

# EAGLE PHARMACY



### SAFE HAVEN

In March 1941 the Germans set up a ghetto for Jews and allowed only one pharmacy to operate within it. Run by Tadeusz Pankiewicz, the Eagle Pharmacy at 18 Zgody Sq. (today: Ghetto Heroes Square) became more than just a place to get medicines for the people enclosed by the ghetto walls; it was a venue for artistic and academic meetings as well. The Eagle Pharmacy was also a place where underground resistance work was carried out and where people awaited news from

the fronts of World War II. The dependable Tadeusz Pankiewicz stored the property of the Kraków Ghetto's residents at the pharmacy – including copies of the Torah and personal documents. For his service, in 1983 he was awarded the Righteous among the Nations title.

### IN THE HEART OF KRAKÓW

The Eagle Pharmacy continued to operate for a few years after the war, before being nationalized and moved elsewhere (many of the

fittings were destroyed at the time). In 1983, thanks to the initiative of people familiar with Tadeusz Pankiewicz's achievements, a museum was opened in the original building of the Eagle Pharmacy. In 2003 it became a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków. Parts of the pharmacy's former premises (distribution room, stock-room, laboratory) were reconstructed and combined with exhibits related to the history of the Kraków Ghetto – photos and mementos of former residents. The exhibition is supplemented with multimedia presentations and films.

## INTERESTING FACTS

In 1947 Tadeusz Pankiewicz wrote a book, *The Kraków Ghetto Pharmacy*, recounting the wartime history of his business. The owner once said modestly about himself: “What I did, any decent person should do. I'm not making it out to be any kind of heroism. It was my bound-en duty” (Anna Pióro, *Magister Tadeusz Pankiewicz. Biografia* [Pharmacist Tadeusz Pankiewicz: A Biography], Kraków 2013).

## POMORSKA STREET

For many years after the German occupation of Kraków ended, “Pomorska” was an abbreviation understood by all: a symbol of Nazi crimes, unambiguously associated with the place from where the Nazis ran the terror system directed against the people of Kraków. But “Pomorska” is not just the former Gestapo headquarters, or, more precisely, the headquarters of the Office of the Security Service and Security Police Commander for the Kraków District of the General Governorate from 1939–1945, but above all a place where the only, unique and genuine document of its kind has been preserved: “immortalized cries”.

In a few small cellars accessed from the yard of the Silesian House at 2 Pomorska St. you can view inscriptions scratched into the walls of the Gestapo holding cells by people imprisoned and interrogated there in 1939–1945.

## MEMORY TRAIL

Pomorska Street, the Eagle Pharmacy and Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory are three branches of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków that form the Memory Trail. These sites on the map of Kraków tell three complementary stories about World War II and what came afterwards.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

KONEWKA BUNKER  
TOURIST ROUTE  
KONEWKA

### ADDRESS:

51°33'43.6"N 20°09'06.3"E  
97-215 Inowłódz  
phone: +48 501 430 321  
e-mail: [info@bunkierkonewka.eu](mailto:info@bunkierkonewka.eu)  
[www.bunkierkonewka.eu](http://www.bunkierkonewka.eu)

### OPENING HOURS:

Mon. closed  
May to October:  
Tue.–Sun. 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

In the other months, opening hours differ depending on the day. For detailed information see the website.

# KONEWKA BUNKER



## ARMY GROUP CENTRE COMMAND POST

These bunkers in Łódzkie Province, near the towns of Lubochnia and Spała, have a very interesting history. In late 1939 the Third Reich authorities, anticipating a war with the Soviet Union, decided to build an army command post in the area. The lovely Spała palace, dating back to tsarist times, was perfect for officers' quarters, while the surrounding forest provided excellent camouflage for a whole complex of bunkers and fortifications. The command headquarters of the future

Army Group Centre was built by the Todt Organization using more than 3,000 forced labourers working almost throughout 1940. The base had a convenient link to the railway network of the General Governorate and the Third Reich, which is why two large railway bunkers were built for its needs – near the villages of Konewka (380 m long) and Jeleń (355 m long) – together with technical facilities. They were meant to protect German military staff trains from air bombing as well as gas attacks.

Despite the scale of this construction work, the Germans never fully

utilized the headquarters known as Anlage Mitte. The invasion of the Soviet Union begun on 22 June 1941 rapidly progressed away from the borders of occupied Poland. For the rest of the war the bunkers in Konewka and Jeleń served mainly as storage space.

### NOT JUST FOR FORTIFICATION FANS

The Konewka bunker survived to our times in very good condition; only the armoured door was replaced with a wooden one after the

war. The Konewka Bunker Tourist Trail was opened in 2005, enabling visitors to see the bunker interior housing an exhibition of military items, military vehicles and models of German bunkers and trains. Here you can also learn a lot about the history of Anlage Mitte and the activity of the Polish resistance movement in the surrounding forests. Besides the main facility, visitors can see some technical bunkers: the boiler room and the power station. The latter is reached via an 80-metre underground tunnel from the railway bunker. The pump room, meanwhile, houses an exhibition on the construction of bun-

kers with documentation from the Philipp Holzmann company. The drilled well bunker, equipped with a water cooler and a fuel tank, has also survived to this day.

At weekends the Kolej Carska ("Tsarist Train") for tourists runs between the bunkers in Konewka and Spała. You can also take advantage of motorcycle-sidecar and military-vehicle rides.



## INTERESTING FACTS

- The remains of three of Hitler's headquarters are located in Poland. Anlage Mitte near Spała and the Wolf's Lair near Kętrzyn are two of them. In addition, some remains of a complex called Anlage Süd can be found near Strzyżowo in the Podkarpacie region.
- Besides permanent exhibitions, temporary exhibitions brought by museums from different parts of Poland take place at the Konewka bunker as well.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The temperature in the bunker ranges from 4 degrees Celsius in winter to 16 degrees Celsius in summer – you are advised to bring warm clothing.
- Visitors are allowed to tour the facility with dogs (on a lead).
- At the weekend you can take a ride in a motorcycle sidecar or a military vehicle.
- There is a roofed space with tables and benches in front of the bunker, where you can also have a bonfire.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### RIESE TUNNEL SYSTEM IN WALIM

#### ADDRESS:

50°41'21.2"N 16°26'41.0"E  
ul. 3 Maja 26  
58-320 Walim  
phone: +48 74 84 57 300  
e-mail: [biuro@sztolnie.pl](mailto:biuro@sztolnie.pl)  
[www.sztolnie.pl/en](http://www.sztolnie.pl/en)

#### OPENING HOURS:

October to April:  
Mon.–Fri. 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.  
Sat.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

May to September:  
Mon.–Fri. 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.  
Sat.–Sun. 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.

# RIESE TUNNEL SYSTEM IN WALIM



### FAR FROM ALLIED BOMBERS

In 1943 the war was definitely not going in the Third Reich's favour. Intensifying Allied air raids on German armament factories led the minister responsible for weapons and ammunition, Albert Speer, to decide to move the main arms manufacturing effort to underground factories, including some in the Sudetes. Among these facilities was the Riese (German: Giant) underground complex whose construction had lasted two years, located in the Sowie Mountains and probably

somehow connected to Książ Castle. It was the biggest project of its kind in all of the Third Reich. In a report from 1944 the Germans listed the completion of 213,000 cubic metres of tunnels. It took about 30,000 forced labourers and prisoners of the Gross Rosen camp, overseen by the Todt Organization, to build as many as seven underground complexes: Rzecznka, Jawornik, Włodarz, Osówka, Soboń, Gontowa and Książ Castle (total tunnel length: ca. 7,400 m). The purpose of these structures remains unclear. However, it is possible that the Riese complex was planned to be Adolf Hitler's new headquarters.

## UNDERGROUND ADVENTURE FOR THE BOLD

Information gathered about the Riese complex indicates that we may not yet have discovered a large part of the tunnels dug in the Sowie Mountains. That is why sites like the tunnel system in Walim, where the aforementioned Rzeczkka complex lies, are very popular among people who enjoy mysteries. Three adits here have been opened to tourists (over 500 m of underground galleries and chambers), including concrete-lined segments of corridors and defence infrastructure. Of course

you can only tour the adits with a guide. The underground tourist route includes audiovisual effects in many places, enabling visitors to get some idea of the conditions of forced labour during construction of this enormous project of the Third Reich. The path to the facility leads across a Bailey bridge used by military engineering units, from which you can see a model of a V2 rocket. Another model, of a V1 bomb this time, awaits underground. As of 2018, the site also includes an exhibition of drawings by Hungarian painter Imre Holló who was a prisoner of the nearby AL Riese Dörnhau labour camp during World War II.

A trip to the tunnel system in Walim is worth combining with a visit to Grodno Castle which is close by.

## INTERESTING FACTS

The vast scale of investment in the Riese project is illustrated by the fact that in 1944 the amount of materials assigned to it was almost the same as was used for all the civilian air-raid shelters in the whole of the Reich.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Due to low temperatures (5–7 degrees Celsius) and high humidity, it is advisable to have warmer clothing with you.
- There is a free car park for individual tourists and coaches near the site.
- The tunnel system in Walim is on the black-marked Martyrdom Trail that starts in Jugowice and leads through most of the sites connected with the Riese project, including Jugowice Górne, Walim, the Riese Tunnel System in Walim (Sztolnie Walimskie – Rzeczkka complex), Grządki and Underground City Osówka. Next, the trail leads through the village of Kolce to the railway station in Głuszycza Górna.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

### UNDERGROUND CITY ON WOLIN ISLAND

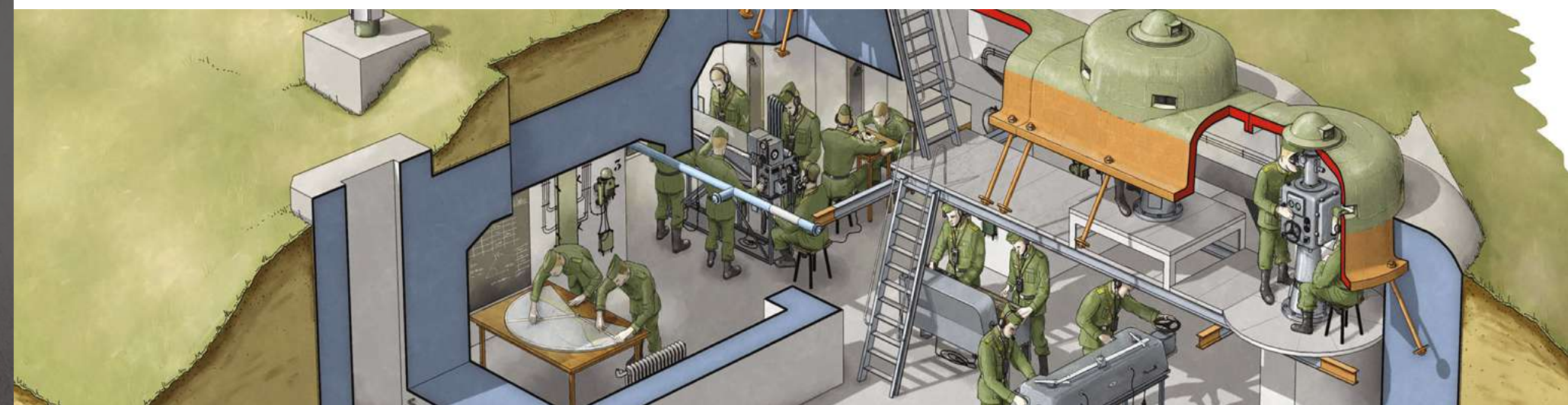
#### ADDRESS:

53°54'08.7"N 14°19'59.4"E  
ul. Wolińska  
72-605 Świnoujście-Przytór  
phone: +48 789 07 22 44  
e-mail: kontakt@podziemne-miasto.pl  
www.podziemne-miasto.pl

#### ENTRY TIMES:

- October to April on Saturdays and Sundays at 10:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- May to June daily at 12:30 and 3:00 p.m.
- July to August daily at 10:30, 11:30 a.m., 12.30, 1:30, 3:00, 4:00, 5:00 p.m.
- September daily at 12:30 and 3:00 p.m.

# UNDERGROUND CITY ON WOLIN ISLAND



#### STRATEGIC LOCATION

The beginnings of modern fortifications in the region date back to the mid-1930s. That was when the Germans decided to build defences and artillery posts on the island to protect a nearby Kriegsmarine base. Over several years, seven reinforced concrete bunkers, roads and some technical infrastructure were built here. Powerful 150 mm guns with a range of about 20 km were meant to spread terror in the area. The complex also included a two-storey command bunker, an

engine room and an ammunition bunker. During the war a FuMo 214 Wurzburg-Riese radar was installed here as well.

For most of the war, the facility served as a training centre for navy artillerymen. In January 1946 it was transferred to the Poles, who modernized and expanded it over the following decades. They connected all the bunkers with a kilometre of underground tunnels and housed facilities such as a telephone switchboard, a radio receiver centre, an officers' mess and a chemical defence unit in the bunkers. The Wolin battery became an autonomous "under-

ground city” kept secret from everyone but communist Poland’s top military officials.

### UNDERGROUND SIGHTSEEING

On 31 December 2013 the facility was handed over to the Museum of Coastal Defence in Świnoujście. Today, as the Underground City on Wolin Island, it is open to sightseers. Walking along the tunnels with a guide, you can see things like the base of the aforementioned Ger-

man radar from World War II, the interior of the command bunker and the engine room. Mementos of the facility’s former operators can sometimes still be found in the surrounding area, including coins and pieces of equipment.

There is a lot to learn about the history of the Underground City on Wolin Island. The engine room bunker includes equipment from 1955 which, thanks to regular maintenance, is still in working order. The anti-aircraft defence and air force coordination room enables you to imagine how such a military facility operated in the time of the War-

saw Pact; it has maps, radio stations and screens which, fortunately, Poland never needed to use except for training.

### INTERESTING FACTS

In the times of People’s Poland the Wolin complex was meant to serve as the Emergency Command Post of the Polish (Coastal) Front Commander. It was from here that attacks on Scandinavian countries belonging to NATO were to have been coordinated.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Due to the special character of this site, its size and location, you cannot tour it on your own. Individual tourists are formed into groups that start their tours at a specific time.
- The tour takes 90 to 130 minutes – it depends on the visitors’ ages and the group size.
- Organized groups (20 people minimum) can tour the site daily after making an advance telephone booking.
- Due to the low temperature inside, no more than 10 degrees Celsius, you are advised to bring warm clothing.





## CONTACT INFORMATION AND OPENING HOURS

**MIĘDZYRZECZ FORTIFIED  
REGION MUSEUM  
OF FORTIFICATIONS  
AND BATS**

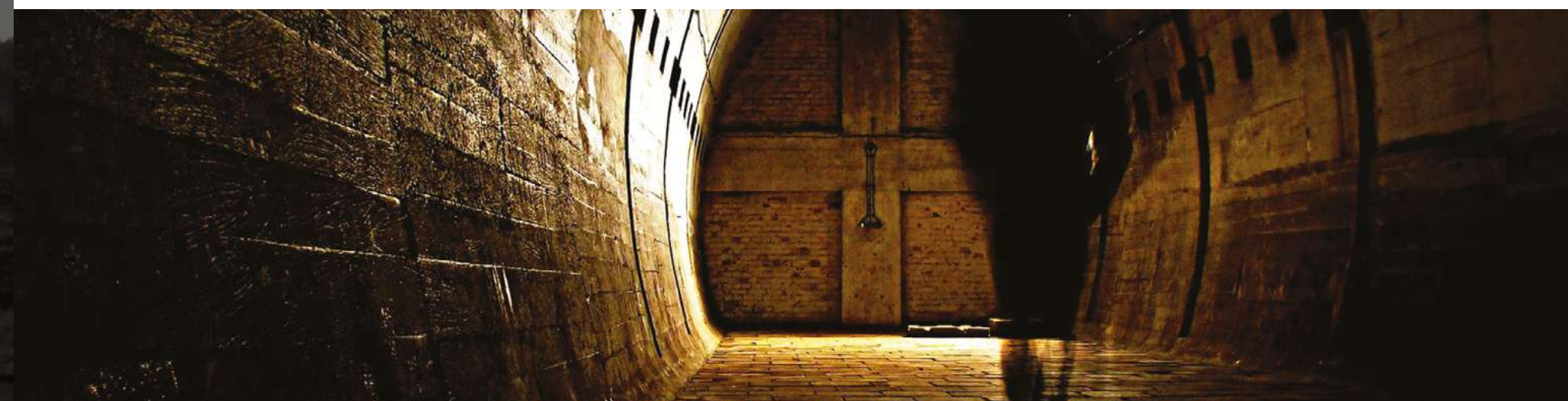
### ADDRESS:

52°22'19.6"N 15°30'21.1"E  
Pniewo 1  
66-300 Międzyrzecz  
phone: +48 95 741 99 99  
e-mail: [biuro@bunkry.pl](mailto:biuro@bunkry.pl)  
[www.bunkry.pl](http://www.bunkry.pl)

### OPENING HOURS:

These differ depending on the month and the route chosen. For details see the website.

# MIĘDZYRZECZ FORTIFIED REGION



### IN DEFIANCE OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

Although international treaties after World War I forbade Germany to build fortifications near the border with Poland, the Germans quite soon stopped respecting them. In 1934, construction of the “East Wall” (German: Ostwall) started in earnest. On an inspection in the region, Hitler could not conceal his disappointment with the slow pace of work. After the strategy towards Poland changed to a decidedly aggressive one, the construction of the Ostwall was suspended in

May 1938. By then, the Germans had built one of the biggest defence complexes in Europe; today it lies in Lubuskie Province.

Combat bunkers stretch along the 80-kilometre front line – from Gorzów Wielkopolski and the Warta River in the north all the way to Lubrza and the River Odra in the south. Apart from bunkers, the strongest central section (from Kursk to Boryszyn) also included machine-gun, grenade-launcher and flame-thrower posts, armoured domes and anti-tank dragon’s teeth. Gaps in artillery and anti-tank gun posts were an Achilles heel of these fortifications. That is why

in 1945 it cost the Red Army just three days of battle (29–31 January 1945) to seize them.

## BUNKERS AND BATS

Today fortification fans from Poland and beyond are drawn here the most by a sector of the fortifications that is open to visitors in Pniewo, Międzyrzecz commune. The total length of underground tunnels in the area is estimated at over 30 km. Sightseeing, however, takes place

along shorter routes: 1.5 km and 3 km. Along the way you can see many examples of old German fortifications, from armoured domes to dragon's teeth. The site also includes an outdoor exhibition of military equipment and an operational railway trolley.

Not just history enthusiasts are keen to come to the Międzyrzecz region. The unique ecosystem of the humid underground tunnels draws crowds of bats here as well. The number of bats living in the tunnels of the Międzyrzecz Fortified Region in winter is estimated at over 30,000, representing 12 different species of these flying mammals.

That is precisely why tourists are allowed in here mainly in the summer, when the bats are not looking for a place to spend the winter.

## INTERESTING FACTS

In 1943 there was a secret aircraft engine factory at the central point of the Ostwall underground line.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- The temperature underground is a constant 10 degrees Celsius, so even in summer it is advisable to have warmer clothing with you.
- The underground route is available as a guided tour only.
- Extreme routes are only open from 16 April to 31 August (the shorter route takes up to 4 hours, the medium route up to 6 hours, and the long route up to 8 hours).
- Guides speak English and German.



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Warszawa 2020

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