

# 9th Poznań Fortress Days 28-29.08.2021



Did you know that Poznań was one of the biggest fortresses in 19th century Europe? Join Poznań Fortress Days and learn more about its undiscovered history! This year we prepared selection of events available in English.



[Check full programme in Polish](#)

(with a little help from translator ) and explore Poznań's fortifications.

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SHORT HISTORY OF POZNAŃ FORTIFICATIONS



As early as 1,000 years ago Poznań was one of the best fortified places in this part of Europe. It is not a coincidence that the fortified town was located just here for at a distance of several dozen kilometres (either south or north of the city), there was not any other place that would offer such great conditions for crossing the Warta river. The strategic role of Poznań was all the greater that it protected, from the western side, the route to Gniezno. Even the great Emperor Henry II was not able to

conquer Poznań. Indeed, having come to the city along with his army, he made peace with the Polish King Boleslaus I the Brave (1005). Until the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the fortress in Poznań was a significant part of the Polish system of fortifications. Later, Poznań's significance as a fortress slightly decreased.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries the city did not face the danger of an attack on the part of enemies and so trade and craft could develop. The construction of fortifications was neglected, while numerous wars that started in the 1650s did not spare the city. Ruled by sovereigns of different origin, the city was plundered by Swedish, Russian, Saxon and Brandenburgish armies, and even by the Polish Confederate Army.



A change came with the Second Partition of Poland, when Poznań became part of Prussia (1793) and when following the Napoleonic Wars, the borderline between the territories annexed by Russia and Prussia was moved to the West. Being the only fortified town that could possibly protect Berlin in case of a conflict with Russia, the city started to be transformed into a fortress. The Citadel's main fort was outlined (Winiary Fort - Germ. Kernwerk) and the 19<sup>th</sup>-century city was

enclosed with tight defensive walls. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fortress was strengthened with eighteen forts surrounding the city. The fortifications were gradually developed until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, causing Poznań to become one of Europe's greatest fortresses that could withstand a siege lasting many years. It was then that the fortifications' inner circle was also demolished that, owing to the development of war technology, did no longer serve military purposes. The Castle District, among others, was created in its place.

Poznań was tested as a fortress only once, this is to say in 1945, when it was heavily defended by the Germans against an attack on the part of the approaching Soviet army. It was not possible to defend the city, but these were mainly the old Prussian fortifications that allowed the German army to station in Poznań for a month. Remains of the Prussian defensive walls have survived to this day in the form of ruins and the Citadel - the city's biggest park.