

Old Town



The Old Market Square and its surroundings are among the most interesting places to see in Poznań. The beautiful Renaissance town hall, old houses, charming side streets, numerous museums, pubs, cafes and people walking the streets - all of them create the unique atmosphere of the place. The Old Market Square is the heart of Poznań. From spring to autumn, surrounded by pavement cafes, the Square is bustling late into the night. It also hosts numerous events, performances and concerts.

It is best to enter the **Old Market Square** via Wielka Street, once the location of the main town gate, welcoming the greatest guests entering medieval Poznań. Pay attention to the red cobblestones roughly halfway to the Old Market Square, they mark the line of the old town walls. We're slowly approaching the Old Market Square, laid out in 1253, when Poznań was founded in accordance with German law. The law envisaged that the town would have to meet the requirements for an ideal medieval city. The central town square was laid out on a square plan with a side being 141 m). Each side marks a beginning of three streets, and at each market square frontage 8 equal parcels were originally marked out. This layout has been well preserved in the vast majority of frontages, which are built up with eight houses.



We are facing **one of the most beautiful Renaissance town halls** north of the Alps, a masterpiece by Giovanni Battista Quadro of Lugano, which dates back to the mid-sixteenth century. The monumental front facade with a three-storey arcaded loggia is crowned with a high attic with three towers. The building was the former seat of City Authorities. The most impressive room in the town hall is the Renaissance Hall (the so-called Grand Vestibule) covered by the famous vault dating back to 1555. Nowadays, the Town Hall houses the **Poznań Historical Museum**. Since 1551, the Town Hall has had a clock with **effigies of goats**. The clock was created by Bartłomiej Wolf from Gubin. Every day, as the town-hall clock strikes twelve, the doors of the small tower on top of the clock located on the front elevation open, revealing two metal billy goats. The clockwork goats butt each other with horns 12 times. The legend has it that having completed the clock, Bertel Wolf decided to show his work to

city councillors and the Poznań Voivod. While preparing an official feast, the cook carelessly burned a piece of meat, so he decided to steal two goats in order to kill and roast them, but these escaped to the town-hall tower. When the visitors spotted the animals hitting each other on the cornice of the town hall, the voivod commissioned a mechanism with goats to be added to the clock.

Near the Town Hall you can see colourful **merchant's houses** with characteristic arcades, where once merchants sold fish, candles and salt, and the building of the former Weighing House, reconstructed after the war according to Quadro's original design, while in front of the town hall stands a pillory - a column topped by a sculpture of the executioner holding a sword - this was the place where punishments had been inflicted.



From the Town Hall, head to the left, along the east side frontage of the market. You will pass the **Museum of Musical Instruments**, one of few in Europe, to reach the so-called 'Pod Daszkiem' ('Canopy') house (No. 50). The apartment building is linked to an anecdote about a visit of King Augustus II the Strong. Enjoying himself during one of his feasts, the monarch reportedly fell out of the window, falling straight onto the characteristic canopy, which saved his life. The stone plaque placed on the left side of the entrance commemorates the water level during the great flood in 1736.



The quarter adjacent to the southeast corner of the market is occupied by the **Palace of the Górka Family** from the mid-sixteenth century. It was one of the most beautiful Renaissance palaces in the cities of the Republic of Poland. The luxurious house is adorned with, among others, a garden with a pond full of fish and a fountain on the roof. Unfortunately, during the war the building burnt down completely. The reconstruction has restored the form it had

after it was rebuilt in the eighteenth century. What remains of the former interior decor is the authentic, richly decorated Renaissance portal on the side of Klasztorna Street, with the date of construction stamped upon it. Presently, the building houses the **Archaeological Museum**, holding exhibits illustrating the history of Wielkopolska and a rich collection of Egyptian and Nubian art. The west wall of the museum proudly presents the oldest piece illustrating mediaeval Poznań - an engraving by Braun and Hogenberg of the seventeenth century. What we can discern is the Cathedral Island with its cathedral, town walls with gates and the former Collegiate Church of St. Mary Magdalene with a 90-metre tower.

Going down Świętosławska Street, you will reach one of the most magnificent Baroque churches in Poland - the **Parish Church of St. Stanislaus**. Its vast interior is decorated with forms characteristic of Roman Baroque. Construction of the parish church took Jesuits 50 years. The church's interior impresses with its size and richness. The portal in the central section of the facade and the main altar were created by Pompeo Ferrari. The central point of the ceiling - at the intersection of the nave and transept - features a pseudo-sphere filled with illusionist painting by Stanisław Wróblewski. Its interior is rendered by painterly means which give the illusion of semi-round bowl. The **organ**, weighing 230 tons and preserved almost intact, was created by a nineteenth-century artist Friedrich Ladegast.





Now let's return to the market square and move to its western frontage, along the way passing the statue of John of Nepomuk, intended to guard against floods. At the exit from Franciszkańska Street you can see the late-Baroque [Palace of Działyński Family](#), built between 1773 and 1787. You can go inside via two gates once used by horse carriages. The classical facade is crowned by rich sculptural ornaments. The attic features reliefs illustrating triumphal and sacrificial processions, and the middle of the sculpture impresses with a figure of a pelican with its wings outspread - a symbol of devotion.

The most beautiful room in the palace is the beautifully decorated **Red Room**, a setting of many prestigious meetings. Out of the room you can enter the balcony with a Baroque balustrade that spans the entire width of the facade. The name of the room was derived from the colour of its walls, contrasting with the white stucco-decorated ceiling. In the nineteenth century the Palace of Działyński Family was a centre of Polish cultural life. The palace hosted concerts, Polish lectures and exhibitions.



Opposite the Palace of Działyński Family is the [Guardhouse](#) - the building of a former municipal police dating back to the eighteenth century. This project was initiated and sponsored by Kazimierz

Raczyński, the then governor of Wielkopolska. Today the edifice houses the [Museum of the Wielkopolska Uprising 1918-1919](#).



From the guardhouse go up Franciszkańska Street, climbing a small hill called **Przemysław Hill** with remains of the [Royal Castle](#). The origins of the castle date back to the times of Poznań's foundation. The castle had been a residence of Polish King Przemysław II before he was assassinated by the Brandenburgians in 1296. In times of Casimir III the Great it was the largest secular venue in Poland. During the reconstruction carried out in the years 1959-1964, the only part that was raised from the ruins was the building of the old

archive built by K. Raczyński. Today it houses the **Museum of Applied Arts**.

Opposite the castle stands the late-Baroque **Franciscans' Church**, which for more than 300 years has displayed the **painting of "the Mighty Mother of God,"** also called "the Lady of Poznań". Walking down Ludgarda Street, you will pass on your right hand-side the remains of once city walls. On the left, the church basement houses the [Models of Historic Poznań](#). There we can see models of Poznań from the time of the Piast dynasty (c. 1000) and the Renaissance (c. sixteenth century).

To return to the Old Market Square you must go left into Paderewski Street.