

# Warsaw



Take a stroll through Warsaw's pristine Old Town and Royal Castle and you'd think the city had enjoyed a comfortable existence the past 200 years. But at the end of WWII they, and nearly the entire metropolis, lay in rubble and ruin. The fact that Varsovians picked themselves up and rebuilt almost everything is reason enough to pay the country's capital a visit.

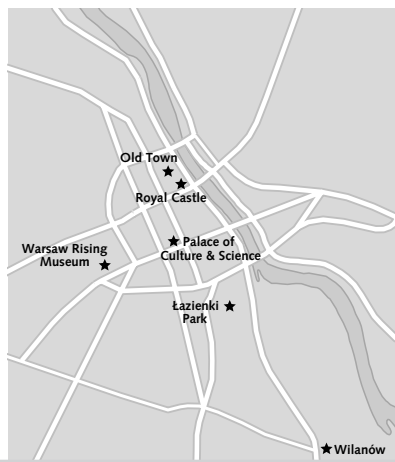
Warsaw's unquenchable energy not only extends to construction. Today it is a thriving, dynamic and progressive city, the epitome of a Polish nation firmly fixed on the future. Its bar, clubbing and music scene is unmatched in the country, and its yearly calendar is filled with theatre productions, operas and art-house film premieres. If culture is your thing, then Warsaw is your place.

The city's museums are often testament to its terrible past; many, like the Warsaw Rising Museum, retell the devastation WWII wrought. But there are more light-hearted gems too, like the picture-perfect palaces at Łazienki and Wilanów. Shoppers will max out credit cards on handmade products, and diners can satisfy their hunger with quality Polish cuisine and an ever-increasing array of food from around the world.

True, Warsaw is an acquired taste, and the first impressions probably won't appeal – stepping off the train or airport bus at Warszawa Centralna train station and staring at the drab blocks lining Al Jerozolimskie may tempt you to hop straight back on. But the vibe and drive of Poland's greatest city is infectious, and if you give it a little of your time, you'll be richly rewarded.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Taking in Warsaw and beyond from the top of the **Palace of Culture & Science** (p97)
- Listening to first-hand accounts of WWII at the **Warsaw Rising Museum** (p99)
- Spending your hard-earned cash on **handmade products** (p115)
- Marvelling at the renovation work in the **Old Town** (p91)
- Taking in the regal splendour of the **Royal Castle** (p87)
- Tapping into the capital's **nightlife** (p112), whether it be bar hopping, clubbing, live jazz or highbrow entertainment
- Admiring Warsaw's palaces at **Łazienki Park** (p101) and **Wilanów** (p101)



■ POPULATION: 1.7 MILLION

■ AREA: 495 SQ KM

## WARSAW IN...

### One Day

What better place to start a tour of Warsaw than the **Royal Castle** (p87), a former Mazovian stronghold. Spend the rest of the morning exploring the back streets of the **Old Town** (p91), then head to the **New Town** (p92) for a spot of lunch. Let the food digest while wandering through the **Historical Museum of Warsaw** (p91) before crossing town to the **Warsaw Rising Museum** (p99). Wait until late afternoon to take in the view from the top of the **Palace of Culture & Science** (p97), then round the day off with dinner at one of many restaurants in and around **ul Nowy Świat** (p96).

### Two Days

Begin with a wander down **ul Krakowskie Przedmieście** (p96) and **ul Nowy Świat** (p96), the upper section of the Royal Way. Stop for breakfast en route before spending a few hours exploring the cultural gems of the **National Museum** (p100). Lunch south of **Al Jerozolimskie** (p99), then pass the early afternoon in the beautiful **Łazienki Park** (p101). With the rest of the afternoon, explore Warsaw's **markets** (p115) or **handcraft stores** (p115) and end the two days with dinner and drinks, and perhaps a jazz concert in **Akwarium Jazzarium** (p113).

## HISTORY

Warsaw's history has more ups and downs than a jejunum. But like the very essence of the Polish character, it has managed to return from the brink of destruction time and time again.

The first semblance of a town only sprang up around the beginning of the 14th century when the dukes of Mazovia built a stronghold on the site of the present Royal Castle. In 1413 the dukes chose Warsaw as their seat of power, and things went swimmingly for over 100 years until, in 1526, the last duke died without an heir. The burgeoning town – and the whole of Mazovia – fell under direct rule of the king in Kraków and was incorporated into royal territory.

Warsaw's fortunes took a turn for the better after the unification of Poland and Lithuania in 1569, when the Sejm (the lower house of parliament) voted to make Warsaw the seat of its debates, because of its central position. The ultimate ennoblement came in 1596 when King Zygmunt III Waza decided to move his capital from Kraków to Warsaw.

The Swedish invasion from 1655 to 1660 was not kind to Warsaw, but it swiftly recovered and continued to develop. Paradoxically, the 18th century – a period of catastrophic decline for the Polish state – witnessed Warsaw's greatest prosperity. A wealth of palaces and churches was erected, and cultural and artistic life flourished, particularly during the reign of the last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski.

In 1795 the city's prosperity was again shattered – following the partition of Poland, its status was reduced to that of a provincial town. When Napoleon rolled into town in 1806 on his way to defeat in Russia, things started looking up – the warring Frenchman created the Duchy of Warsaw and the city became a capital once more. The celebrations were brief however, as in 1815 Warsaw, and the rest of Poland, fell under Russian rule. The Varsovians rebelled against their rulers in 1830 and 1864, but the city remained in Russian hands until WWI.

After WWI Warsaw was reinstated as the capital of independent Poland and the urban development and industrialisation begun in the late 19th-century continued. By 1939, the city had grown to 1.3 million, of whom 380,000 were Jews who had traditionally made up a significant part of Warsaw's community.

German bombs began to fall on 1 September 1939 and a week later the city was besieged; despite brave resistance, Warsaw fell within a month. The conquerors instantly set about terrorising the local population with arrests, executions and deportations, and a Jewish Ghetto was swiftly built. The city rebelled against the Germans twice, first in April 1943 (see boxed text, p99) and second in August 1944 (see boxed text, p37). Both rebellions were ruthlessly crushed.

At the end of the war the city of Warsaw lay in ruins and 800,000 people – more than half of the prewar population – had perished.

(By comparison, the total military casualties for US forces in WWII was 400,000, for UK forces 326,000.) A massive rebuilding project was undertaken soon after (see boxed text, p93) and despite over 40 years of communist rule the city once again regathered its strength and is now enjoying an unprecedented period of economic growth.

## ORIENTATION

Warsaw is a large, sprawling city split into two uneven halves by the Vistula (Wisła) River. Most of the tourist action is on the western side of the river, which is centred on the modern financial district.

The financial district's centrepiece is the prominent Palace of Culture & Science, which

can be seen from almost anywhere in the city. Lying to the north of this area is the celebrated Old Town, and further north again is the New Town. West and northwest of the financial district is the former Jewish Ghetto.

An ancient processional route, known as the Royal Way (Trakt Królewski) leads south from the Old Town for 4km to Łazienki Park. Along the way it changes its name from ul Krakowskie Przedmieście to ul Nowy Świat and finally Al Ujazdowski. Wilanów, a royal retreat, lies even further south, around 6km from Łazienki Park.

Warszawa Centralna train station (also known as Dworzec Centralny), which lies southwest and in easy walking distance of the Palace of Culture & Science, is the city's main train hub. Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal is 3km to its west, on Al Jeruzolimskie, Warsaw's main east-west thoroughfare. The international airport is on the southwestern edge of the city.

## INFORMATION

### Bookshops

**American Bookstore** ([www.americanbookstore.pl](http://www.americanbookstore.pl) in Polish) Sadyba Best Mall (Map p84; ☎ 022 370 3173; ul Powsińska 31); ul Koszykowa (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 660 5637; ul Koszykowa 55); ul Nowy Świat (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 4852; ul Nowy Świat 61; ☎ 10am-7pm

Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) English-language publications, including travel guides.

**Atlas** (Map p84; ☎ 022 620 3639; Al Jana Pawła II 26; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Specialises in maps, atlases and travel guides; the best place in town for hiking and national park maps.

**EMPIK** ([www.empik.com](http://www.empik.com) in Polish) ul Marszałkowska (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 702 9402; ul Marszałkowska 116/122); ul Nowy Świat (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 627 0650; ul Nowy Świat 15/17); Złote Tarasy (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 222 0606; ul Złota 59) Has 15 stores Warsaw-wide; stocks a wide selection of British, German, French and US newspapers and magazines.

**Marjanna** (Map p92; ☎ 022 826 6271; ul Senatorska 38; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) The city's best French-language bookshop, located in the Institut Français Varsovie.

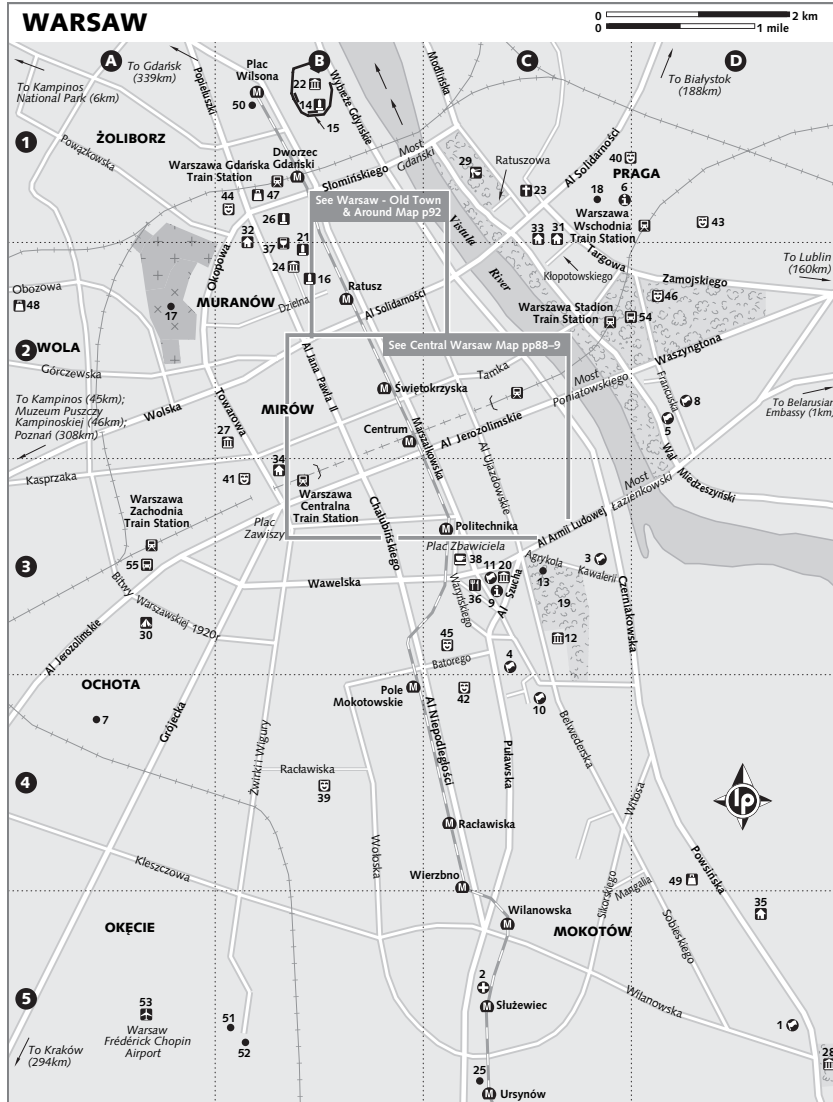
**Traffic Club** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 692 1454; ul Bracka 25; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun) Multilevelled and multicoloured mega store with city maps on the 1st floor and English and German fiction on the 2nd.

### Cultural Centres

The Centrala train station tourist office has a full list of cultural centres in Warsaw.

**British Council** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 695 5900; [www.britishcouncil.pl](http://www.britishcouncil.pl); Al Jeruzolimskie 59)

**Goethe Institut Warschau** (German Cultural Institute; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 505 9000; [www.goethe.de/warschau](http://www.goethe.de/warschau) in German & Polish; ul Chmielna 11a)



### INFORMATION

American Bookstore.....	(see 49)
Belarus Embassy.....	1 D5
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Dutch Embassy.....	3 C3
French Embassy.....	4 C3
German Embassy.....	5 D2
InfoPraga.....	6 C1
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Brama Straceń.....	14 B1
Cytadela.....	15 B1
Chettos Heroes Monument.....	16 B2
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Warszawa Stadion Bus Terminal.....	54 C2
Warszawa Zachodnia Bus Terminal.....	55 A3

**WI-FI ACCESS**

An ever-increasing number of cafés, restaurants and hotels offer wi-fi access for laptop users in central Warsaw (Map pp88–9). Some provide the service free of charge, while others require you to buy a network keycard and password (usually available from the reception or at the bar). Cards start at around 10zł for two hours' surfing.

**Institut Français Varsovie** (French Cultural Institute; Map p92; ☎ 022 505 9800; www.ifv.pl in French & Polish; ul Senatorska 38)  
**Istituto Italiano di Cultura** (Italian Institute; Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 628 0618; www.iic.pl in Italian; ul Marszałkowska 72)

**Internet Access**

Internet cafés come and go as quickly as Polish politicians but this lot seem fairly stable.

**Casablanca** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 828 1447; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; per 10min 1.50zł; ☎ 9am–1am)

**Eccoms Internet** (Map pp88–9; ul Warecka 1; per hr 5zł; ☎ 9am–11pm)

**Internet Café** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 826 6062; ul Nowy Świat 18/20; per hr 6zł; ☎ 9am–10pm Mon–Fri, 10am–10pm Sat & Sun)

**Simple Internet Café** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 628 3190; ul Marszałkowska 99/101; per hr 1–4zł; ☎ 24hr) Warsaw's biggest, with 150 terminals; highest rates from 9am to 7pm, cheapest from 2am to 7am.

**Verso Internet** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 2854; ul Freta 17; per hr 5zł; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm Sat, 10am–4pm Sun) Enter off ul Koźła.

**Internet Resources**

**www.e-warsaw.pl** Official website of the city of Warsaw.

**www.inyourpocket.com/city/warsaw.html** Highly opinionated, but often amusing, coverage of the capital.

**www.warsaw-life.com** Eating, sleeping, drinking and shopping reviews.

**www.warsawvoice.pl** Online version of the English-language magazine.

**Medical Services**

For an ambulance, call ☎ 999, or ☎ 112 from a mobile phone. English-speaking dispatchers are rare, however, so you're probably better off phoning the following medical centres. For nonurgent treatment, you can go to one of the city's many *przychodnia* (outpatient clinics). Your hotel or your embassy (see p507) can provide recommendations.

There are plenty of pharmacies in Warsaw where you can get medical advice; look or ask for an *apteka*. There are always several pharmacies that stay open all night; a list is provided (in Polish) in the *Gazeta Wyborcza* newspaper (in the Supermarket section).

**Apтека 21** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 825 3128; Warszawa Centralna train station, Al Jerolimskie 54; ☎ 24hr) An all-night pharmacy at the central train station.

**Damian Medical Centre** (Map p84; ☎ 022 566 2222; www.damian.com.pl; ul Wałbrzyska 46; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat, 10am–3pm Sun) A reputable private outpatient clinic with hospital facilities.

**EuroDental** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 627 5888; www.eurodental.com.pl; ul Śniadeckich 12/16; ☎ 8am–8pm Mon–Sat, 10am–4pm Sun) Private dental clinic with multilingual staff.

**LIM Medical Center** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 458 7000; www.cm-lim.com.pl; Marriott Hotel Bldg, Al Jerolimskie 65/79; ☎ 7am–9pm Mon–Fri, 8am–8pm Sat, 9am–6pm Sun) Private clinic with English-speaking specialist doctors and its own ambulance service; carries out laboratory tests and arranges house calls.

**Money**

*Kantors* (currency-exchange offices) and ATMs are easy to find around the city centre. There are 24-hour *kantors* at the Warszawa Centralna train station and either side of the immigration counters at the airport, but exchange rates at these places are about 10% lower than in the city centre. Avoid changing money in the Old Town, where rates are shocking.

**Amex** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 581 5100; ul Chłodna 51; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) Cashes its own travellers cheques as well as those of other major banks, but the rate may be lower than Bank Pekao.

**Bank Pekao** Marriott Hotel (Map pp88–9; Al Jerolimskie 65/79); Plac Bankowy (Map p92; Plac Bankowy 2); ul Krakowskie Przedmieście (Map pp88–9; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 1); ul Wilcza (Map pp88–9; ul Wilcza 70) Cashes travellers cheques and has more than a dozen offices in the city centre. Cash advances on Visa and MasterCard.

**Western Union** (Map pp88–9; ☎ general info 022 636 5688, 0800 120 224; Bank BPH, Al Jerolimskie 27; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri) Money-transfer service, with branches at a number of locations; this is the main central office.

**Post & Telephone**

**Main post office** (Poczta Główna; Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 826 0303; ul Świętokrzyska 31/33; ☎ 24hr) One of over a hundred post offices in the city. Poste restante is at

windows 41 and 42 (address c/o Poste Restante, Poczta Główna, ul Świętokrzyska 31/33, 00-001 Warszawa), and a rack of public phones is close by.

**Tourist Information**

The various branches of the city's official Tourist Information Centre provide free city maps and booklets (such as the handy *Warsaw in Short* and the *Visitor*), sell maps of other Polish cities, and will help you book a hotel room.

Free monthly tourist magazines worth seeking out include *Poland: What, Where, When; What's Up in Warsaw; Welcome to Warsaw*; and *Warsaw Point*. All are mines of information about cultural events and provide reviews of new restaurants, bars and night-clubs. They're available in the lobbies of most top-end hotels. The comprehensive monthlies *Warsaw Insider* (8zł) and *Warsaw in Your Pocket* (5zł) are also useful.

**Tourist Information Centre** (Centrum Informacji Turystycznej; ☎ 022 9431; www.warsawtour.pl) Airport (Map p84; Arrivals Hall Terminal 1; ☎ 8am–8pm May–Sep, 8am–6pm Oct–Apr; Etiuda Terminal; ☎ 8am–8pm May–Sep, 8am–6pm Oct–Apr); Old Town (Map p92; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 39; ☎ 9am–8pm May–Sep, 9am–6pm Oct–Apr); Warszawa Centralna train station (Map pp88–9; ☎ 8am–8pm May–Sep, 8am–6pm Oct–Apr)

**Travel Agencies**

**Almatur** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 826 3512; www.almatur.com.pl; ul Kopernika 23; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 10am–3pm Sat) Handles student travel.

**Kampio** (Map p84; ☎ 022 823 7070; www.kampio.com.pl; ul Maszynowa 9/2; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Fri) Focuses on ecotourism, organising kayaking, biking, walking and bird-watching trips.

**Orbis Travel** (www.bpb.com.pl in Polish) Plac Konstytucji (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 6288222; Plac Konstytucji 4; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri); ul Bracka (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 827 7140; ul Bracka 16; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri) The largest agency in Poland, with five offices in town.

**STA Travel** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 626 0080; www.sonaatravel.com.pl; ul Krucza 41/43; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Fri, 10am–2pm Sat) Like Almatur, specialises in student travel.

**DANGERS & ANNOYANCES**

Warsaw is no more dangerous than any other European capital city, but you should take precautions while strolling about the streets at night, and watch your possessions on public transport and in other crowded places. Pickpockets are especially active on bus 175 (between the airport and the city centre), on

**WARSAW TOURIST CARD**

If you're planning to spend time in the city and want to see as much as there is to see, consider purchasing a Warsaw Tourist Card. It provides free or discounted access to most of the main museums, free public transport, and discounts at some theatres, sports centres and restaurants. Cards valid for 24 hours/three days cost 35zł/65zł and are sold at tourist information centres and some hotels.

the trams that run along Al Jerolimskie, and in and around the central train station. Beware also of 'mafia taxis' (see p119).

Praga has a reputation as a rough area at night. Most locals use taxis as transport in and out of the neighbourhood, and so should you.

**SIGHTS  
Old Town & Around**

Despite being a mere 40-odd years old, Warsaw's Old Town (Stare Miasto) looks 200 (see p93). It's the first (and sometimes the only) part of the city the tourists hit, and with good reason; this small quarter holds the lion's share of Warsaw's historical monuments, including the Royal Castle, St John's Cathedral, and Citadel.

**CASTLE SQUARE**

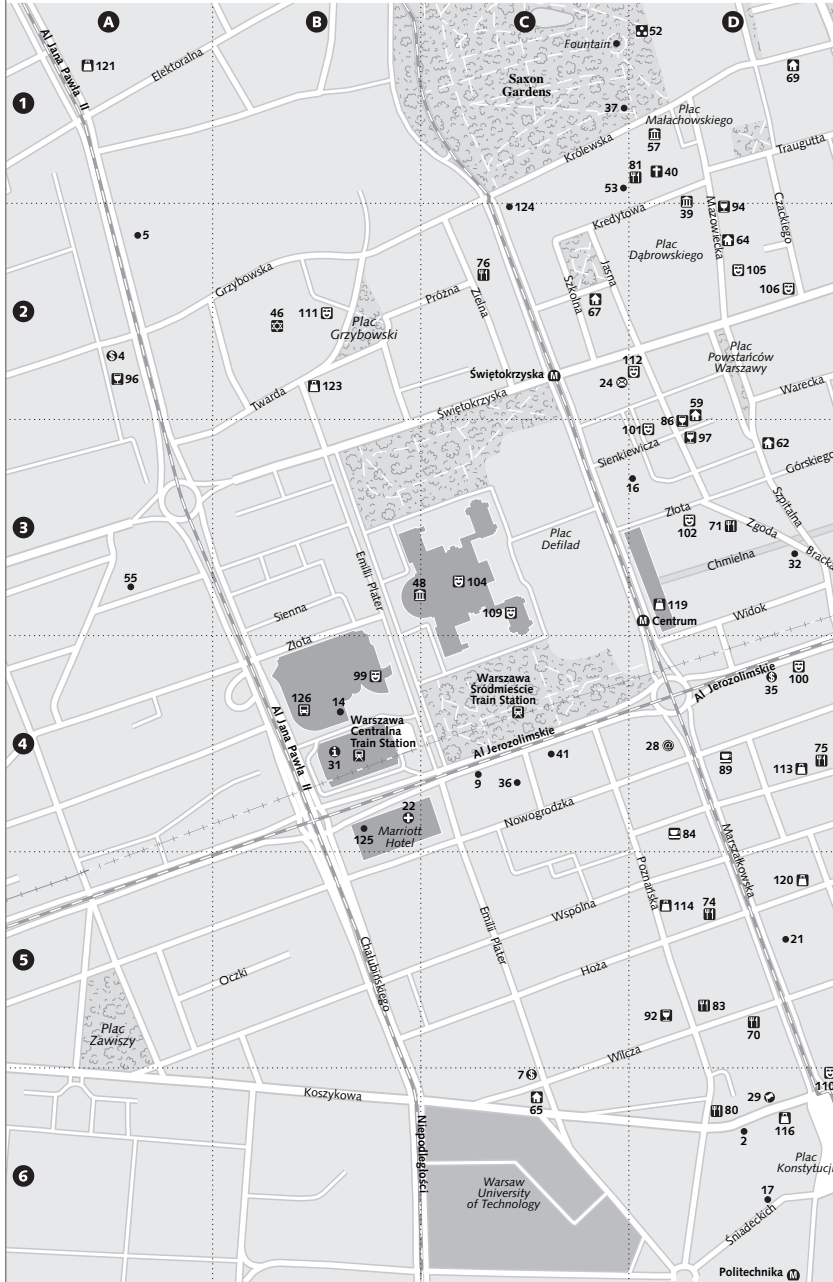
A natural spot from which to start exploring the Old Town is triangular Castle Sq (Plac Zamkowy). Attracting snap-happy tourists by the hundreds each day is the square's centre-piece, the **Sigismund III Vasa Column** (Kolumna Zygmunta III Wazy; Map p92). This lofty 22m-high monument to the king who moved the capital from Kraków to Warsaw was erected by the king's son in 1644 and is Poland's second-oldest secular monument (after Gdańsk's Neptune). It was knocked down during WWII, but the statue survived and was placed on a new column four years after the war. The original, shrapnel-scarred granite column now lies along the south wall of the Royal Castle.

**ROYAL CASTLE**

It's a simple exercise moving on from Castle Sq to the **Royal Castle** (Zamek Królewski; Map p92; ☎ 022 355 5170; www.zamek-krolewski.com.pl; Castle Sq



### CENTRAL WARSAW





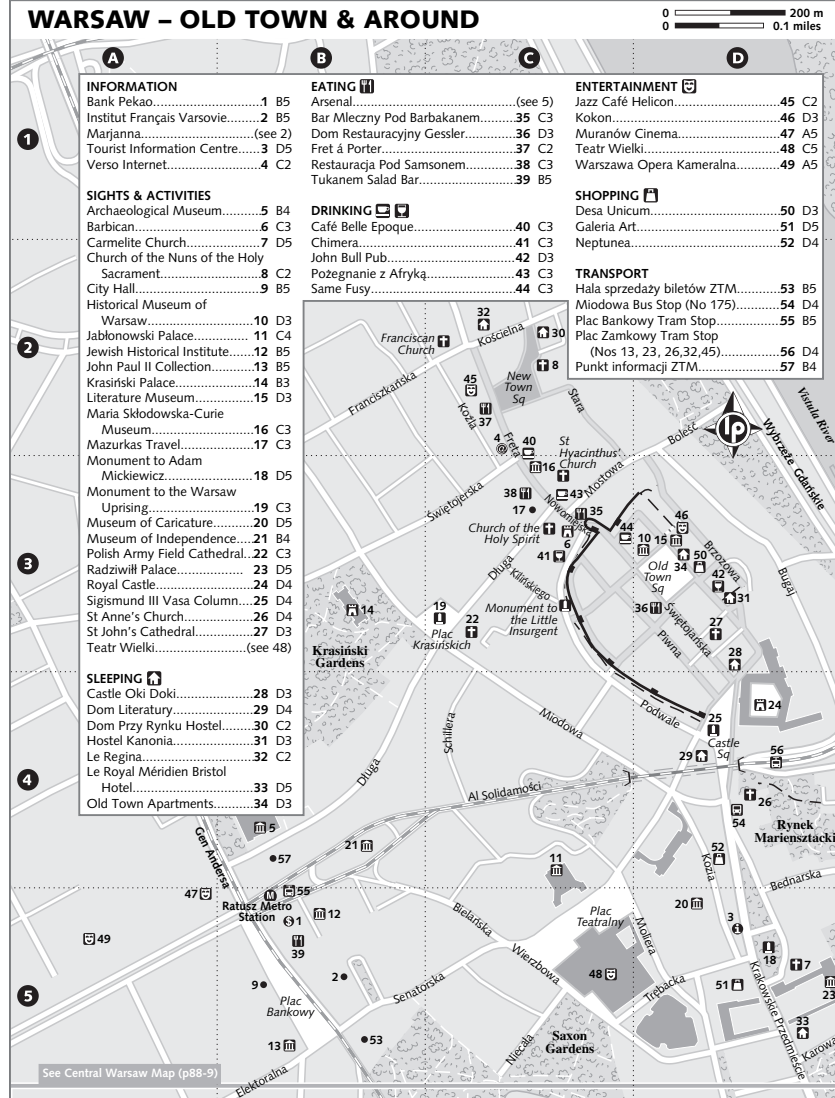
Renaissance parapet. It was partially dismantled in the 19th century but reconstructed after WWII, and it's now a popular spot for buskers and art sellers.

### NEW TOWN

The New Town (Nowe Miasto) is a bit of a misnomer, considering it was founded at the

end of the 14th century and since 1408 has commanded its own jurisdiction and administration. It exudes similar architectural styles to those found in the Old Town, but lacks any defensive walls, probably due to the fact that historically it was inhabited by poor folk.

Ul Freta is the New Town's main street, leading north from the Barbican towards New



### A PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES

Warsaw's Nazi occupiers did a good job of following Hitler's instructions to raze the city after the Warsaw Rising – at the end of WWII, about 15% of the city was left standing. So complete was the destruction that there were even suggestions that the capital should be moved elsewhere, but instead it was decided that parts of the prewar urban fabric would be rebuilt.

According to plan, the most valuable historic monuments were restored to their previous appearance based on original drawings and photographs. Between 1949 and 1963 work was concentrated on the Old Town, aiming to return it to its 17th- and 18th-century appearance – today not a single building in the area looks less than 200 years old. So complete was the restoration that Unesco granted the Old Town World Heritage status in 1980.

The Royal Castle took a little longer. It wasn't until 1971 that reconstruction began, and by 1984 the splendid Baroque castle stood again as if nothing had happened. Although the brick structure is a copy, many original architectural fragments have been incorporated into the walls.

The authorities also had to build, from scratch, a whole new city capable of providing housing and services to its inhabitants. This communist legacy is less impressive. The city centre was, until quite recently, a blend of bunkerlike Stalinist structures and equally dull edifices of a later era, while the outer suburbs, home to the majority of Warsaw's inhabitants, were composed almost exclusively of anonymous, prefabricated concrete blocks.

The city's skyline is still marred by ugly high-rises, but things have improved markedly since 1989. Newly constructed steel-and-glass towers have begun to break up the monotony, and the city outskirts are steadily filling up with aesthetically pleasing villas and family houses. Warsaw may never regain an architectural landscape that truly appeals, but considering all it's been through, it's doing one hell of a job rectifying things.

**Town Sq** (Rynek Nowego Miasta). Marie Curie (see boxed text, p95) was born in 1867 along ul Freta, and her former home now houses the **Maria Skłodowska-Curie Museum** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 8092; ul Freta 16; adult/student 8/3zł, Thu free; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Tue, 9.30am-4pm Wed-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 10am-3pm Sun), which chronicles the life and work of this distinguished scientist.

Even by Polish standards, there are a lot of churches here. Of the six, the **Church of the Nuns of the Holy Sacrament** (Kościół Sakramentek; Map p92; ☎ 022 635 7113; New Town Sq 2) is the most intriguing; the work of prominent architect Tylman van Gameren, it has a fine Baroque exterior and clean white interior.

### UL DŁUGA

Ul Długa leads southwest from ul Freta past the **Polish Army Field Cathedral** (Katedra Polowa Wojska Polskiego; Map p92; ul Długa 13/15), the soldiers' place of worship. There's no homage to the glory of war here; inside the main doors, which feature bas-reliefs of major battles fought by Polish forces, is a gruesome crucifix, with heads protruding from solid metal blocks on all sides of a ruined Jesus. Inside there are numerous plaques to fallen Polish soldiers.

Directly opposite the cathedral stands one of Warsaw's most important landmarks, the

**Monument to the Warsaw Uprising** (Pomnik Powstania Warszawskiego; Map p92). This bronze tableau depicts Armia Krajowa (AK; Home Army) fighters emerging ghostlike from the shattered brickwork of their ruined city, while others descend through a manhole into the network of sewers. The monument was unveiled on 1 August 1989, the 45th anniversary of the uprising (see boxed text, p37).

On the opposite side of ul Bonifraterska is the 1677 **Krasiński Palace** (Pałac Krasińskich; Map p92), designed by the ubiquitous Tylman van Gameren and considered one of the most splendid Baroque palaces in Warsaw. Today it's a branch of the National Library, and if you ask nicely you may be let inside.

### CITADEL

Continuing north of the New Town you'll soon see the **Citadel** (Cytadela; Map p84), a massive 19th-century fortress overlooking the Vistula. Built by the Russian tsar to intimidate Warsaw following the November Insurrection of 1830, it served as a notorious political prison for years and nowadays is used by the military.

The huge gate overlooking the river is known as **Brama Straceń** (Gate of Execution; Map p84), a spot where political prisoners



were executed all too frequently after the 1863 uprising. From the gate, a short cobbled road leads to the **Muzeum Pawilon-X** (Block 10 Museum; Map p84; ☎ 022 839 2383; ul Skazańców 25; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sun), which preserves a wing of the old political prison. The cells are labelled with the names of the more famous prisoners who were incarcerated here, the best known being Józef Piłsudski, who did time in cell No 25 on the 1st floor; another cell contains the anvil on which prisoners were made to forge their own shackles. Inside are paintings by Alexander Sochaczewski (1843–1923), a former inmate who, along with 20,000 other anti-Russian insurgents, was transported to the labour camps of Siberia in 1866. The paintings, such as the huge *Pożegnanie Europy* (Farewell to Europe), depict the suffering of his fellow prisoners. In the museum grounds is an original *kibitka*, the closed prison carriage that was used to transport high-security prisoners to the east.

### South of the Old Town

The area running south from Castle Sq to busy Al Jerozolimskie is the stomping ground of Warsaw's students, shoppers and socialites. This is nothing new, however; for much of the 19th century it was the commercial and cultural heart of Warsaw. During this time the city's university was founded here, as was Teatr Wielki, thought to be Europe's largest theatre.

### PLAC BANKOWY

Like most of Warsaw's squares, Plac Bankowy (Bank Sq) is too big and busy to be appealing. This was once the financial district of 19th-century Warsaw, but the only reminder of this is spread along the western side of the square; here you'll see the imposing **City Hall** (Ratusz; Map p92) and the former stock exchange and Bank of Poland building, both grand neoclassical buildings designed by Antonio Corazzi

in the 1820s. The latter houses the **John Paul II Collection** (Kolekcja im Jana Pawła II; Map p92; ☎ 022 620 2725; Plac Bankowy 1; adult/student 11/5.50zł; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), an art collection donated to the Catholic Church by the Carrol-Porczyński family. It's quite a surprise to find the likes of Dali, Van Gogh, Constable, Rubens, Goya and Renoir gracing the walls of a fairly nondescript museum, and to normally have them all to yourself. Polish artists are also represented, including Warsaw-born Wojciech Gerson (1831–1901), whose massive *Baptism of Lithuania* (1889), which beautifully captures Lithuania's conversion to Christianity, is highly expressive despite lacking colour.

The eastern side of the square was redeveloped after WWII and is now dominated by a blue skyscraper built on the site of a synagogue destroyed by the Nazis. The story goes that a local rabbi placed a curse on the site and, sure enough, the skyscraper was dogged by problems and took 30 years to build. Just behind it is the **Jewish Historical Institute** (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny; Map p92; ☎ 022 827 9221; www.jhi.pl; ul Tłomackie 3/5; adult/student 10/5zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 11am-6pm Thu), which houses a library and paintings, sculptures, and old religious objects related to Jewish culture. However it's the exhibition on the Warsaw Ghetto (p99) that sticks with you when you leave. Black-and-white photos and 40 minutes of original film footage from the Ghetto hit home – images of the atrocious conditions Jews were forced to endure, with starvation and death part of everyday life, tell a disturbing tale.

The northern end of the square is a busy intersection overlooked by the former Arsenal, a massive 17th-century building that now houses the **Archaeological Museum** (Muzeum Archeologiczne; Map p92; ☎ 022 831 3221; ul Długa 52; adult/student 6/3zł, Sun free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Thu, 11am-6pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sun). Its permanent exhibition on the prehistory of Poland is periodically enlivened by temporary displays.

### SYMBOL OF FAITH

All over Warsaw, on monuments and memorials, in museums and old photographs, you will see a distinctive monogram in the form of a 'P' stuck atop a 'W' in the shape of an anchor, the Catholic symbol of faith. This monogram – 'PW' stands for 'Polska Walczy' (Poland Fights) – was the symbol of the Armia Krajowa (AK; Home Army), the Polish resistance army that led the Warsaw Rising in 1944. Fortuitously, 'PW' can also stand for 'Powstanie Warszawskie' (Warsaw Rising), and the monogram has come to serve as a symbol of that tragic but heroic struggle.

### MARIE CURIE

Warsaw-born Marie Curie (1867–1934) is a household name whose scientific achievements are staggering. She assisted in the discovery of the chemical elements radium and polonium – work that laid the foundations of radiography, nuclear physics and cancer therapy – and isolated pure radium. She was the first woman to be awarded a Nobel prize and the first person ever to win two Nobels.

Born Maria Skłodowska into a family of Polish teachers, she spent the first 24 years of her life in Warsaw before moving to Paris in 1891 to pursue a career in science, earning degrees in physics and mathematics at the Sorbonne. In 1895 she married French physical chemist Pierre Curie (1859–1906), and changed her name to Marie. Despite their laboratory being not much more than a barn, their scientific partnership proved to be extremely fruitful, resulting in the discovery in 1898 of two new radioactive elements, polonium (named after Marie's homeland) and radium. In 1903, they, together with Antoine Henri Becquerel, were awarded the Nobel prize for physics, for the discovery of natural radioactivity.

After Pierre's tragic death in a traffic accident in 1906, Marie devoted her energy to research and succeeded him as lecturer and head of physics at the Sorbonne – the first woman ever to teach at the 650-year-old university. Two years later she became a professor and in 1911 was awarded the Nobel prize for chemistry, for the isolation of pure radium.

Marie Curie was instrumental in founding the Radium Institute in Paris in 1914, which later became a universal centre for nuclear physics and chemistry. She also helped establish the Radium Institute in Warsaw in 1932.

In 1934 she died of leukaemia caused by prolonged exposure to radiation, and in 1995 her remains were reinterred in the Paris Panthéon, making her the first woman to receive this honour in recognition of her own achievements.

Stranded on a nearby traffic island in the middle of Al Solidarności is the **Museum of Independence** (Muzeum Niepodległości; Map p92; ☎ 022 826 9091; Al Solidarności 62; adult/student 5/3zł, Sun free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), which has a small room devoted to the Solidarity movement and stages temporary exhibitions related to Poland's struggles for independence.

### PLAC TEATRALNY

The broad expanse of Plac Teatralny (Theatre Sq) is bordered to the south by the colossal **Teatr Wielki** (p113). This neoclassical edifice was designed by Antonio Corazzi and constructed between 1825 and 1833. After it was burnt out during WWII, only the façade was restored; the rest was reshaped to suit modern needs. The theatre contains a small **museum** (admission free; ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Fri). The neoclassical **Jabłonowski Palace** (Pałac Jabłonowski; Map p92), opposite the theatre, served as the town hall from 1817 until WWII, when it was dismantled due to damage sustained. It was completely rebuilt in 1997.

### SAXON GARDENS & AROUND

The magnificent **Saxon Gardens** (Ogród Saski; Map p92; admission free; ☎ 24hr) date from the early

18th century and were the city's first public park. Modelled on the French gardens at Versailles, the gardens are filled with chestnut trees and Baroque **statues** (allegories of the Virtues, the Sciences and the Elements), and there's an ornamental **lake** overlooked by a 19th-century **water tower** in the form of a circular Greek temple.

If it looks to you as though the gardens are missing a palace, you'd be right. The 18th-century Saxon Palace (Pałac Saski), which once occupied Plac Piłsudskiego (Piłsudski Sq), was, like so many other buildings, destroyed during WWII. All that survived were three arches of a colonnade, which have sheltered the **Tomb of the Unknown Soldier** (Grób Nieznanego Żołnierza; Map pp88–9) since 1925. The guard is changed every hour, and groups of soldiers marching back and forth between the tomb and the Radziwiłł Palace are a regular sight, though the big event is the ceremonial changing of the guard that takes place every Sunday at noon.

South across ul Królewska is the **Zachęta Gallery of Modern Art** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 827 5854; Plac Małachowskiego 3; adult/student 10/7zł, Thu free; ☎ noon-8pm Tue-Sun), a beautiful neoclassical temple that stages temporary exhibitions

of contemporary art, mostly along the lines of video installations. Its bookshop has a fine collection of art books, but most are in Polish. Nearby, the circular dome of the 18th-century **Evangelical Church** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 6817; Plac Małachowskiego 3) proudly overlooks a busy junction. The dome is in fact the largest in Warsaw, and the church is renowned for its excellent acoustics and is the venue for a variety of musical events.

Across the street is the **Ethnographic Museum** (Muzeum Etnograficzne; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 7641; ul Kredytowa 1; adult/student 8/4zł, Wed free; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 11am-6pm Wed, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun). The museum's top floor provides a good introduction into the country's rural heart, with a small but fine assembly of Polish folk art and crafts, but it's the portrait shots of indigenous people from around the world that steal the show.

#### UL KRAKOWSKIE PRZEDMIEŚCIE

This wide boulevard, running from Castle Sq to Nowy Świat, is the start of the Royal Way. It begins proudly with **St Anne's Church** (Kościół Św Anny; Map p92; ☎ 022 826 8991; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 68), which is arguably the most ornate church in the city. It miraculously escaped major damage during WWII, which explains why it sports an original trompe l'œil ceiling, a Rococo high altar and gorgeous organ. The façade is also Baroque in style, although there are neoclassical touches here and there, and the detached **belfry** (adult/child 3/2zł; ☎ 10am-9pm) is thoroughly neo-Renaissance. At the top of the belfry is a viewing platform, which offers superb views over the Old Town.

Heading south you pass the **Monument to Adam Mickiewicz** (Map p92), author of *Pan Tadeusz*, before reaching the former **Carmelite Church** (Kościół Karmelitów; Map p92; ☎ 022 826 0531; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 52/54). This church, too, escaped the ravages of war and, like St Anne's, has 18th-century fittings, including the high altar designed by Tylman van Gameren.

Set next to the church is the neoclassical **Radziwiłł Palace** (Pałac Radziwiłłów; Map p92), which is guarded by four stone lions and an equestrian **Statue of Prince Józef Poniatowski**. The prince was the nephew of the last Polish king, Stanisław August Poniatowski, and commander in chief of the Polish army of the Duchy of Warsaw created by Napoleon. Today the palace is the official residence of the president.

A short detour along ul Kozia leads to the quirky **Museum of Caricature** (Muzeum Karykatury; Map p92; ☎ 022 827 8895; www.muzeumkarykatury.pl; ul Kozia 11; adult/student 6/3zł, free Sat; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri-Sun, 11am-6pm Thu). The museum holds around 15,000 original works by Polish and foreign caricaturists dating from the 18th century onwards, plus satirical and humorous books, magazines, and the like. Displays are rotated on a regular basis.

Past the Bristol (p107) back on the Royal Way, a decorative gate topped with the Polish eagle marks a centre of studentdom. The central campus of **Warsaw University** (Uniwersytet Warszawski; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 552 0000; www.uw.edu.pl; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28) was founded in 1816, although its oldest building, the Kazimierz Palace (Pałac Kazimierzowski), dates from 1634. With its leafy avenues and smiling students, it appears a peaceful place, but like any good university it has been a breeding ground for independent thought and the site of many student protests.

Because it's so close to the university, the **Holy Cross Church** (Kościół Św Krzyża; ☎ 022 826 8910; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 3) has witnessed more student demonstrations and tear gas than any other church in Poland. During the Warsaw Rising, it was the site of heavy fighting between the insurgents and the Germans. It was seriously damaged, but some original Baroque altarpieces have survived and adorn its interior. Note the epitaph to Frédéric Chopin on the second pillar on the left-hand side of the nave. It covers an urn containing the composer's heart, brought from Paris after Chopin's death and placed here in accordance with his will.

The contemplative figure sitting on a plinth south of the university is a **Monument to Nicolaus Copernicus** (Pomnik Mikołaja Kopernika; Map p92), the great Polish astronomer.

#### UL NOWY ŚWIAT

Running from the junction of ul Świętokrzyska and ul Krakowskie Przedmieście to Al Jerozolimskie, **ul Nowy Świat** (New World St) is the busiest street in Warsaw outside the Old Town, but here it's generally Poles who make up the masses.

It's long been the city's fashionable shopping street, and is lined with restaurants, shops and cafés. Most of the buildings date from post-WWII, but the restoration here was so complete that the predominant style

of architecture is 19th-century neoclassical. Aside from shopping, eating and drinking, the best thing to do here (and its side alleys ul Foksal and ul Chmielna) is find a comfy seat and watch the parade of Poles.

A short detour east along ul Ordynacka leads to **Ostrogski Palace** (Map pp88-9). Situated on a high fortified platform on the Vistula escarpment, the small Baroque palace (again designed by Tylman van Gameren) is today the seat of the Chopin Society, which hosts recitals and chamber music concerts in a lovely concert hall inside. There is also a small **Chopin Museum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 5473; www.nifc.pl; ul Okólnik 1; adult/student 8/4zł, Wed free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) with static displays related to the great musician's life; there are a few interesting pieces, such as Chopin's last piano and death mask, but it's really only for fans. Guides are available for 100zł (English guides must be booked in advance).

#### Financial District

The open expanses and tall buildings bounded by ul Marszałkowska, Al Jerozolimskie, ul Jana Pawła II and Al Solidarności collectively constitute Warsaw's financial zone. Its dominating feature (and that of the city) is the **Palace of Culture & Science** (Pałac Kultury i Nauki, PKiN; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 656 7136; www.pkin.pl; Plac Defilad 1; admission free; ☎ 9am-8pm Sun-Thu, 9am-11pm Fri & Sat), which rises high above the newly built skyscrapers that have begun to mark this area in the past 10 years.

Love it or hate it, every visitor to Warsaw should visit the PKiN. This 'gift of friendship' from the Soviet Union was built between 1952 and 1955 and at 231m high still remains the tallest building in Poland. It's never sat well with the locals, who have branded it with one uncomplimentary moniker after another; the Elephant in Lacy Underwear, a reference to both to the building's size and to the fussy sculptures that frill the parapets, is a particular favourite.

The massive structure is home to a huge congress hall, three theatres, a multiplex cinema and two museums, as well as hectares of office space. The basement levels are patrolled by a 50-strong pride of feral cats, who keep the building clear of rats and in return receive pampering from an official vet. However, the best feature of the building is the view it provides (Poles often joke that this is the best view of the city because it's the only one

that doesn't include the 'palace' itself). Take the high-speed lift (enter via the main entrance, facing ul Marszałkowska) to the 30th floor (115m) **viewing terrace** (adult/student 20/15zł; ☎ 9am-8pm Sun-Thu, 9am-11.45pm Fri & Sat) and take it all in – on a clear day the Mazovian plains are laid out before you. One-hour **guided tours** (☎ 022 656 63 45; per person 40zł; ☎ 10am & 2pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug) of the palace allow you to visit the 2800-seat Congress Hall, former gathering place of the Communist Party faithful, impressive marble-lined chambers and meeting rooms, and former Soviet president Brezhnev's favourite chill-out room. Tours must be booked in advance, and there's a five-person minimum.

Photo and film buffs will be intrigued by the **Fotoplastikon** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 617 6173; www.fotoplastikon.stereos.com.pl; Al Jerozolimskie 51; adult/student 20/10zł; ☎ 3-6pm Tue & Thu, 11am-3pm Sat), a late-19th-century forerunner of the cinema. It's reputedly the last working example of its kind in Europe, and consists of a large rotating drum set with individual eyepieces displaying stereoscopic 3D photos, some of them in colour. Each session consists of 48 pictures and takes about 20 minutes.

#### Former Jewish Ghetto

Before WWII, much of Warsaw's thriving Jewish community lived in Mirów and Muranów, two districts to the west of Al Jana Pawła II. It was here that the Nazis created the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940 (see boxed text, p99), which was razed after the 1943 Ghetto Uprising. Today the area is characterised by cheap, communist-era apartment buildings, but a few remnants of Jewish Warsaw still survive.

It is a large area to cover on foot, but fortunately the main sights are clustered together in the northern part. Take tram 16, 17, 19, 29 or 33 northbound on Al Jana Pawła II to the Anielewicz stop, and walk back south one block to the ugly concrete bunker of **Pawiak Prison Museum** (Map p84; ☎ 022 831 1317; ul Dzielna 24/26; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed & Fri, 9am-4pm Thu & Sat, 10am-4pm Sun). Built between 1830 and 1833, Pawiak was Poland's most notorious political prison, once used for incarcerating the enemies of the Russian tsar. During WWII it became even more notorious as the Gestapo's main prison facility – between 1939 and 1944 around 100,000 prisoners passed through its gates, of whom around 37,000



were executed on site and 60,000 transported to the gas chambers. It was blown up by the Nazis in 1944, but half of the mangled gateway, complete with rusting, original barbed wire, and three detention cells (which you can visit) survive, along with chilling memoirs of the horrors suffered by the inmates.

About 200m north of Pawiak, on the corner of ul Anielewicz and ul Zamenhofa, is a tree-lined park, which in summer is dotted with sunbathers. It's an incongruously peaceful setting for the **Ghetto Heroes Monument** (Map p84), a memorial to the thousands who lost their lives in the ill-fated Ghetto Uprising of 1943. The grey stone tower is built of Swedish granite, originally imported by the Nazis to build their own victory monument. On one side a bronze relief depicts a crush of doomed but defiant insurgents; on the other is a scene of martyrdom – a Jewish elder clutching a Torah scroll leads a group of his people, the sinister outlines of Nazi helmets and bayonets visible in the background. In the northwest corner of the park is **Skwer Willy Brandta** (Willy Brandt Sq), with another memorial marking the visit of German Chancellor Willy Brandt to this spot on 7 December 1970. Willy famously fell to his knees in a gesture of contrition for Germany's crimes against Poland.

Opposite the Ghetto Monument is the site of the proposed **Museum of the History of Polish Jews** (Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich; Map p84; www.jewishmuseum.org.pl). The museum will be a multimedia and education centre, but as it's still in the design stage it's hard to know what will be included, or how the building will even look. At the time of writing, Finnish architects Lahdelma & Mahlamäki had been chosen for the design, and the entire project was expected to cost more than \$US65 million.

From the Ghetto Heroes Monument head north along ul Zamenhofa, past a garden with a little mound topped by a simple limestone block, a **Monument to Mordechaj Anielewicz** (Map p84), leader of the Ghetto Uprising, who perished in a bunker on this site in 1943. At the northern end of ul Zamenhofa turn left along ul Stawki and cross the street at the tram stop. A little further along is the **Umschlagplatz Monument**, marking the site of the *umschlagplatz* (literally, 'taking-away place'), the railway terminus from which Warsaw's Jews were transported to Treblinka. The rectangular monument's marble walls are carved with more than 3000 Jewish forenames, from

Aba to Zygmunt, and the stark message: 'Along this path of suffering and death over 300,000 Jews were driven in 1942–43 from the Warsaw Ghetto to the gas chambers of the Nazi extermination camps'. Its shape is symbolic of the cattle trucks into which the prisoners were herded.

It's a 15-minute walk west along ul Stawki and then south on ul Okopowa to the **Jewish Cemetery** (Cmentarz Żydowski; Map p84; ☎ 022 838 2622; ul Okopowa 49/51; adult/student 4/2z; ☎ 10am–4pm Mon–Thu, 9am–1pm Fri, 9am–4pm Sun). Founded in 1806, it suffered little during the war and still boasts more than 150,000 tombstones, the largest collection of its kind in Europe. Large parts are, however, neglected and very overgrown, making it a forlorn place. A notice near the entrance lists the graves of many eminent Polish Jews, including Ludwik Zamenhof, creator of the international artificial language Esperanto. Look also for the **tomb of Ber Sonnenberg** (1764–1822), one of Europe's finest funerary monuments; take the first paved path on the left beyond the ticket office and when you arrive at a junction on your right, look left: it's the roofed structure over by the wall. The marble relief on one side shows a walled city by a river and a Jewish cemetery; on the other side is the Tower of Babel and a forest hung with musical instruments, as well as a ship sinking in the river.

A five-minute walk northwest from the Palace of Culture & Science leads to Plac Grzybowski, the centrepiece of Warsaw's current Jewish community. Here, behind the **Teatr Żydowski** (Jewish Theatre; p114) is the **Nożyk Synagogue** (Map pp88–9; ☎ 022 620 4324; www.warszawa.jewish.org.pl; ul Twarda 6; admission 6z; ☎ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 11am–6pm Sun May–Sep, 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 11am–4pm Sun Oct–Apr), the city's only synagogue to survive WWII. Built between 1898 and 1902 in neo-Romanesque style, its interior features heavy metal chandeliers and tall vaulted colonnades. It's still used for religious purposes, and you may catch children reading from the Torah during the day.

**Ul Prózna**, a short street leading off Plac Grzybowski, opposite the Teatr Żydowski, is an eerie and incongruous survivor of WWII. Its crumbling, unrestored redbrick façades, the ornamental stucco long since ripped away by bomb blasts, are still pockmarked with bullet and shrapnel scars. A few blocks to the south, in the courtyard of an apartment building at ul Sienna 55, stands one of

## THE WARSAW GHETTO

At the outbreak of WWII Warsaw was home to about 380,000 Jews (almost 30% of the city's total population), more than in any other city in the world except New York.

In October 1940 the Nazis established a ghetto in the predominantly Jewish districts of Muranów and Mirów, west of the city centre, sealed off by a 3m-high brick wall. In the following months about 450,000 Jews from the city and its surroundings were crammed into the area within the walls, creating the largest and most overcrowded ghetto in Europe. By mid-1942 as many as 100,000 people had died of starvation and epidemic diseases, even before deportation to the concentration camps had begun.

In a massive liquidation campaign in the summer of 1942, about 300,000 Jews were transported from the ghetto to the extermination camp at Treblinka. Then in April 1943, when only 50,000 people were left, the Nazis began the final liquidation of the ghetto. In a desperate act of defiance, the survivors took up arms in a spontaneous uprising, the first in any European ghetto.

From the outbreak of the uprising on 19 April it was clear that the Jews had little chance of victory against the heavily armed Nazis. German planes dropped incendiary bombs, turning the entire district into a chaos of burning ruins. Fierce fighting lasted for almost three weeks until, on 8 May, the Nazis surrounded the Jewish command bunker and tossed in a gas bomb.

Around 7000 Jews were killed in the fighting and another 6000 perished in fires and bombed buildings. The Nazis lost 300 men with another 1000 injured. The ghetto was razed to the ground except for a few scraps of wall, which survive to this day.

A number of personal accounts that have been written provide testament to the brutality of life within the ghetto walls. For further reading pick up a copy of any of the following: *A Square of Sky: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Poland*, by Janina David, *Beyond These Walls: Escaping the Warsaw Ghetto*, by Janina Bauman, and *The Diary of Mary Berg: Growing Up in the Warsaw Ghetto*, by Mary Berg.

the few surviving fragments of the redbrick wall (Map pp88–9) that once surrounded the Warsaw Ghetto.

On the southwestern edge of the former ghetto stands the modern **Warsaw Rising Museum** (Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego; Map p84; ☎ 022 539 7905; www.1944.pl; ul Przyokopowej 28; adult/concession 4/2z, audio-guide 5z; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 8am–8pm Thu, 10am–6pm Sat & Sun). The museum is housed in a beautifully restored redbrick power station and it traces the history of the Rising (see boxed text, p37) through three levels of interactive displays, photographs, film archives and the personal accounts of those who survived.

The sheer volume of material is overwhelming, but the museum does an excellent job of instilling visitors with a sense of the desperation Varsovians faced during the war. The ground floor begins with the division of Poland between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 and moves through the major events of WWII. A lift then whisks you to the 2nd floor and the start of the Rising in 1944. The largest exhibit, a *Liberator* bomber similar to the planes that used to drop supplies for insurgents during the Rising, fills

much of the 1st floor. Be sure to take the lift towards the rear of the building that rises to a viewing platform; here pictures pinpoint the handful of buildings on the cityscape that survived the war.

A peaceful green park surrounds the museum and is home to the 'Wall of Remembrance', which records the names of the 10,000 insurgents who died during the Rising.

## South of Al Jerozolimskie

Al Jerozolimskie is a big, ugly thoroughfare that creates a physical east–west border through the city. The area to its south was earmarked by the communists for post-WWII development, and some of the city's boldest socialist-realist architecture can be found here. Ul Marszałkowska, a broad avenue running south from near the financial district, contains the most impressive examples; its stretch between **Plac Konstytucji** (Constitution Sq) and **Plac Zbawiciela** is lined with arcades bearing giant reliefs of heroic workers – the imposing scale and rigid, rectilinear forms are pinnacles of conformity and control. Constitution Sq itself is also worth a look for its two giant colonnades.

Not everything here has been bent to communist ideals. A few side streets close to Al Jerozolimskie still retain a semblance of pre-WWII charm, and are home to 19th-century houses, traditional workshops (p115), and cafés – **ul Wilcza** is particularly fine to stroll. Further south are remnants of the royal house of Poland in the form of Łazienki Park and Wilanów.

### NATIONAL MUSEUM & POLISH ARMY MUSEUM

Containing almost 800,000 items in its permanent galleries, the **National Museum** (Muzeum Narodowe; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 1031; www.mnw.art.pl; Al Jerozolimskie 3; permanent galleries adult/student 12/zł; Sat free, temporary exhibitions 17/10zł, audio-guides 5zł; ☎ permanent galleries 10am-4pm Tue-Sun, temporary exhibitions 10am-4pm Tue & Wed, 10am-8pm Thu & Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) is the largest museum in the country. It's housed in a massive building, which is wheelchair accessible, at the western end of Al Jerozolimskie.

It's impossible to see the entire collection in one day, so it's best to choose your galleries wisely. With exhibits ranging from archaeology to 20th-century Polish art, choosing can be a hard task.

No-one should miss the **Faras Collection**, however. This display of early Christian art originates from a town on the banks of the Nile in what is now Sudan, and was rescued by Polish archaeologists from the rising waters of the Aswan High Dam. Frescoes and architectural fragments, dating from the 8th to 12th centuries, combine ancient Egyptian symbolism (winged sun discs and lotus flowers, for example) with Christian iconography, and include beautiful, expressive and often colourful images.

The gallery of **Medieval art** features a superb collection of religious painting and sculpture from all over Poland, with many gruesome renditions of the Crucifixion and scenes of grisly martyrdom. Most impressive is the huge Wrocław triptych depicting the *Martyrdom of St Barbara* (1447). The carved reliefs showing scenes from the saint's life and death are beautifully made despite their disturbing subject.

More **Polish art**, this time from the 16th to mid-20th centuries, is housed on the upper floors. Of the many, many paintings look for works by Jan Matejko, such as his epic *The Battle of Grunwald* (1878). The two main figures are the white-clad Ulrich, grand mas-

ter of the Teutonic Knights, to the left; and Witold, grand duke of Lithuania, dressed in red and sword raised in victory, perched atop a wild-eyed steed on the right. In the same room is Matejko's famous painting of *Stańczyk* (1862), the 16th-century court jester of King Sigismund the Old; here he represents the nation's conscience, meditating sadly on a major military defeat while the king and queen dance in the background.

Next door, and housed in the same building, is the **Polish Army Museum** (Muzeum Wojska Polskiego; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 629 5271; Al Jerozolimskie 3; adult/student 12/zł, Sat free; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Sun), which presents the history of the Polish army from the creation of the Polish state until WWII. Heavy armour, tanks and fighter planes from WWII are displayed in the park adjoining the museum.

### AL UJAZDOWSKIE & AROUND

As the Royal Way leaves ul Nowy Świat it becomes Al Ujazdowskie, a wide, tree-lined boulevard with many an old mansion now home to an embassy of a foreign power. Near its northern section the road passes through Plac Trzech Krzyży (Three Crosses Sq), a square centred on 19th-century **St Alexander's Church** (Kościół Św Aleksandra; Map pp88-9), which is modelled on the Roman Pantheon.

As Al Ujazdowskie continues south it runs close to **Ujazdów Castle** (Zamek Ujazdowski; Map pp88-9), a fairytale-like edifice in its third incarnation. Erected in the 1620s for King Zygmunt III Waza as his summer residence, it was burned down by the Nazis in 1944, blown up by the communists in 1954 and eventually rebuilt in the 1970s. For the nonce it houses changing exhibitions of modern art from the **Centre for Contemporary Art** (Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 628 1271; www.csw.art.pl; Al Ujazdowskie 6; adult/student 12/6zł, Thu free; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 11am-9pm Fri); a new centre is planned near the Palace of Culture & Science.

Immediately to the south of the castle are the **Botanical Gardens** (Ogród Botaniczny; Map p84; ☎ 022 628 7514; Al Ujazdowskie 4; adult/student 5/2.50zł; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun Apr-Aug, 10am-7pm Sep, 10am-6pm Oct), established in 1818, and a short distance to the west of the gardens is the **Mauzoleum Walki i Męczeństwa** (Mausoleum of Struggle & Martyrdom; Map p84; ☎ 022 629 4919; Al Szuca 25; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Wed, 9am-4pm Thu & Sat, 10am-5pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sun), a branch of the

Pawiak Prison Museum. Like Pawiak, this building was used by the Gestapo for interrogation, torture and murder, and now stands as a memorial to the thousands of Poles who passed through its doors. With its depressing basement holding cells and Gestapo officer's interrogation room (complete with original bullwhips, coshes, knuckledusters etc), it's a hard place to visit.

### ŁAZIENKI PARK

This **park** (Park Łazienkowski; Map p84; ☎ 022 625 7944; www.lazienki-krolewskie.pl; ul Agrykola 1; admission free; ☎ dawn-sunset) – pronounced wah-zhen-kee – is a beautiful place of manicured greens and wild patches. Its popularity extends to families, Sunday strollers, proud peacocks and the many red squirrels that call it home.

Once a hunting ground attached to Ujazdów Castle, Łazienki was acquired by King Stanisław August Poniatowski in 1764 and transformed into a splendid park complete with palace, amphitheatre and various follies and other buildings. The centrepiece of the park is the neoclassical **Palace on the Water** (Pałac na Wyspie; ☎ 022 625 7944; adult/concession 12/9zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun), the former residence of the king. It straddles an ornamental lake (gondola rides 6/4zł per adult/child) and like most other Łazienki buildings was designed by the court architect Domenico Merlini. During WWII the Nazis attempted to blow it up, but succeeded only in starting a fire that destroyed much of the 1st floor. Renovated and refurbished, the palace is open to guided tours – highlights include the 17th-century marble reliefs depicting scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* gracing the original bathhouse (*łazienki* in Polish, hence the name), and the ornate ballroom.

Near the palace is the **Island Amphitheatre** (Amfiteatr na Wyspie), built in 1790 and based on the appearance of the Roman theatre at Herculaneum. It is set on an islet in the lake, allowing part of the action to take place on the water.

About halfway between the palace and Al Ujazdowskie is the circular **Water Reservoir** (Wodocbiór; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun), which stored water for distribution through wooden pipes to the palace and its fountain; it now houses an art gallery. Only a short walk north you'll find the **White House** (Biały Dom; adult/student 5/3zł; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun), which was erected in 1774 as a temporary residence

for the king until the palace was finished. It's incredibly small for a royal home and has managed to retain most of its original 18th-century interior.

A few other buildings are scattered throughout the park, the most architecturally intriguing of which is the 18th-century **Belvedere Palace** (Pałac Belweder; Map p84; ul Belwederska 52) at the southern limit of Al Ujazdowskie. It served as the official residence of Marshal Józef Piłsudski (from 1926 to 1935) and Polish presidents from 1945 to 1952 and 1989 to 1994, and now houses an upmarket restaurant.

### WILANÓW

Warsaw's crowning glory in the park-palace arena is Wilanów (vee-lah-noof), some 6km south of Łazienki. Its origins date back to 1677, when King Jan III Sobieski bought the land and set about turning the existing manor house into an Italian Baroque villa (calling it in Italian *'villa nuova'* from which the Polish name is derived) fit for a royal summer residence.

Wilanów changed hands several times over the ensuing centuries, and with every new owner it acquired a bit of Baroque here and a touch of neoclassical there. Miraculously, it survived WWII almost unscathed and most of its furnishings and art were retrieved after the war.

The best place to start exploring the complex is **Wilanów Palace** (Map p84; ☎ 022 842 8101; www.wilanow-palac.art.pl; ul Wiertnicza 1; adult/concession 16/8zł, Polish guide 60zł, foreign-language guide 120zł, Sat free; ☎ 9am-6pm Sun, Mon & Wed, 9am-4pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 10am-4pm Sat May-mid-Sep, 9am-4pm Wed-Mon mid-Sep-Apr). Its highlights include the two-storey Grand Entrance Hall, the Grand Dining Room, and the Gallery of Polish Portraits, featuring a collection of paintings from the 16th to 19th centuries. Note the so-called coffin portraits – a very Polish feature – that are images painted on a piece of tin or copperplate personifying the deceased, then attached to the coffin during the funeral. The exterior of the palace is adorned with impressive murals, including a 17th-century sundial with a bas-relief of Chronos, god of time. As guides are expensive, you might be better off picking up an audio-guide (6zł).

The side gate next to the northern wing of the palace leads to the **gardens and parks** (adult/student 5/3zł, Thu free; ☎ 9.30am-sunset), which, like the palace itself, display a variety of styles.



The central part comprises a manicured, two-level Baroque Italian garden, which extends from the palace down to the **lake** (boat trips adult/concession 6/4zł), the south is Anglo-Chinese in design, and the northern section is an English landscape park.

The **Orangerie** (Oranżeria; adult/student 5/3zł, Thu free; ☎ 10am-6pm Wed-Mon May-mid-Sep, 10am-4pm Wed-Mon Sep-mid-May), off the northern wing of the palace, features decorative art and sculpture from the 16th to 19th centuries.

Standing separately from the rest of the complex just outside the palace gates is the **Poster Museum** (Muzeum Plakatu; Map p84; ☎ 022 842 4848; www.postermuseum.pl; ul Kostki Potockiego 10/16; adult/student 9/5zł, Mon free; ☎ noon-4pm Mon, 10am-5pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep, noon-4pm Mon, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Oct-May). Its vaults house a massive 55,000 posters – one of the largest collections in the world – but only a fraction of this is shown at one time. Exhibitions change regularly, making it a museum to visit time and time again.

Get to Wilanów on bus 116 or 180 from any stop on ul Krakowskie Przedmieście, ul Nowy Świat or Al Ujazdowski.

## Praga

Crossing the Vistula from the Old Town into Praga, Warsaw's eastern suburb, is like entering another city. Clean, level streets and renovated buildings are replaced by broken roads and crumbling façades, and much of the populace is working class and poor.

Despite the grit, Praga is *the* place to be. The area is slowly being gentrified as artists, musicians and entrepreneurs move in, attracted by its pre-WWII buildings (as it was not directly involved in the battles of 1944, Praga didn't suffer much damage) and cheap rent. Ventures open and close on a regular basis but the list of established places grows steadily longer. **InfoPraga** (Map p84; ☎ 022 670 0156; www.infopraga.com.pl in Polish; ul Żąbkowska 36; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat), the suburb's tourist and cultural information office, is handy for keeping pace with Praga developments.

Directly across from the Old Town and close to the river is the city's **Zoological Gardens** (Ogród Zoologiczny; Map p84; ☎ 022 619 4041; ul Ratuszowa 1/3; adult/student 12/6zł; ☎ 9am-6pm). Established in 1928, the zoo has some 3000 animals representing 280 species from around the world. Close by, rising from behind a clump of trees just off Praga's main thoroughfare, Al Solidarności, are the five onion-shaped domes

of the **Orthodox Church** (Cerkiew Prawosławna; Map p84; ☎ 022 619 0886; Al Solidarności 52). Built in the 1860s in Russo-Byzantine style, its small nave still retains original Byzantine portraits and gold upon gold.

Further into the neighbourhood is the disused redbrick **Koneser Vodka Factory** (Map p84; ul Żąbkowska 27/31), dating from the early 20th century. It houses two progressive galleries, **Luksfera** (☎ 022 619 9163; www.luksfera.pl; admission 2zł; ☎ 2-7pm Wed-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) and **Klimy Bocheńskiej** (☎ 022 670 2190; www.bochenskagallery.pl; admission 2zł; ☎ noon-7pm Wed-Sun), the first of which specialises in photography and the second contemporary art from a wide range of media. Another kilometre east is **Fabryka Trzciny** (p113), a former marmalade factory that's become one of the city's leading art centres, hosting a broad range of events plus a gallery and restaurant.

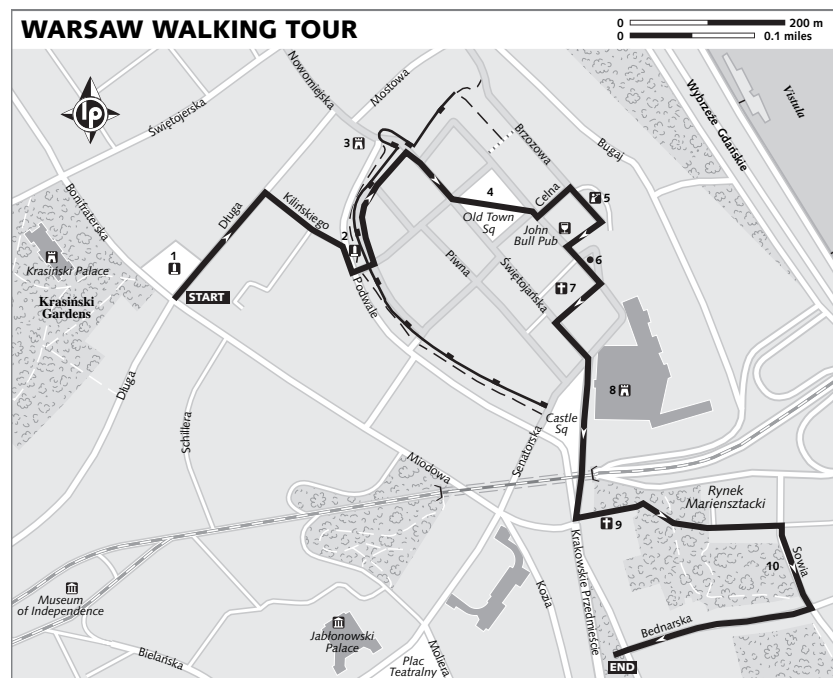
Note that Praga is not safe to wander at night; it's best to travel from A to B by taxi.

## WALKING TOUR

This short stroll through Warsaw's beautifully renovated Old Town takes in its big sights and back alleyways.

Start just west of the Old Town at the **Monument to the Warsaw Uprising** (1; p93), then head northeast along ul Długa and take the first right into ul Kilińskiego. At the far end are the redbrick fortifications of the Old Town; go right and then left into the garden below the walls to see the **Monument to the Little Insurgent** (2), a memorial to the children who died in the Warsaw Rising. Follow the path northwards along the inside of the walls to the **Barbican** (3; p91).

Turn right and follow ul Nowomiejska to the **Old Town Sq** (4; p91). Stop to admire its gabled houses, then head diagonally across the square and go left down ul Celna, then right to a **viewpoint** (5) looking across the river to Praga. Go up the stairs to the left of the rear entrance to the John Bull Pub to reach the picturesque little square **Plac Kanonia** (6); the cracked 17th-century bell in the middle was rescued from the WWII ruins of **St John's Cathedral** (7; p91). Beyond the bell, go through the arch on the right – the gallery above the arch was once a private passage linking the cathedral to the king's residence in the Royal Castle – and along the alley beside the cathedral, then left at the end to reach Castle Sq and the **Royal Castle** (8; p87).



### WALK FACTS

**Start/Finish** Plac Krasińskich/Royal Way  
**Distance** 2km  
**Duration** one hour

At the southern end of Castle Sq, climb the bell tower of **St Anne's Church** (9; p96) before taking a cobbled path that slopes down and around behind the church. The path leads to the little square of Rynek Mariensztacki, which lies at the heart of the attractive **Mariensztat** (10) district. Rebuilt in 1948, with buildings inspired by Warsaw's 18th-century architecture, it was the city's first socialist housing development. Turn right along ul Sowie, then climb up the cobbled lane of ul Bednarska to finish on the Royal Way at ul Krakowskie Przedmieście.

## COURSES

Many private schools offer Polish-language courses. Three-week intensive courses are around 1500zł to 2000zł. Personalised lessons cost anything from 30zł to 60zł an hour.

**Academia Polonica** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 0801 000 853; www.academiapolonica.com; Al Jerozolimskie 55/14)

**IKO** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 2259; www.iko.com.pl; ul Kopernika 3)

**Polonicum** (Centre of Polish Language & Culture for Foreigners at Warsaw University; Map p92; ☎ 552 1530; www.polonicum.uw.edu.pl; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28)

**Schola Polonica** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 625 2652; www.schola.pl; ul Jaracza 3/19)

## WARSAW FOR CHILDREN

At first glance Warsaw doesn't appear the best place to bring children for a holiday, but there's enough here to keep them entertained. Topping the list of attractions is the Zoological Gardens (opposite), followed by the Polish Army Museum (p100) with its big tanks and planes, some of which can be climbed into.

Parks abound. Łazienki Park (p101) has plenty of space to run, plus egoistic peacocks to spot, hungry ducks to feed, and a boat trip to take, while Saxon Gardens (Map p95) and Ujazdowski Park (Map pp88-9) have good playgrounds. There are boat trips at Wilanów (p101) too.



The view from the Palace of Culture & Science (p97) is impressive for all ages.

A useful English-language guidebook aimed at expat families in Warsaw, *The Capital For Children* (28zł), is available from branches of EMPIK and American Bookstore (p85). Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children*, by Cathy Lanigan, is also a useful resource.

## TOURS

**Mazurkas Travel** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 6633; www.mazurkas.com.pl; ul Długa 8/14; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) Warsaw's major tour operator with morning sightseeing tours (140zł per person) of the city plus trips to Kraków, Gdańsk and Białowieża.

**Our Roots** (☎ 022 620 0556; our-roots.jewish.org.pl) Specialises in tours of Jewish sites; the Jewish Warsaw tour lasts five hours and costs 400zł. Other tours can be organised on request.

**PIPIN** (Map p84; ☎ 510 432 564; www.pipin.pl; ul Koński Jar 10/35) Vintage car and bicycle tours of the city's main sights, along with a few of its lesser-known corners.

**Trakt** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 8068; www.trakt.com.pl; ul Kredytowa 6; 🕒 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat & Sun) Offers guided tours (930zł) in 20 languages, including English and German, for two to four persons, for up to four hours.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The following list of the city's main festivals is by no means exhaustive. Check Warsaw Tour's website (www.warsawtour.pl) for an extensive list.

**Mozart Festival** (www.operakameralna.pl) Staged annually from mid-June to the end of July and organised by the Warsaw Opera Kameralna. Features performances of all 26 of Mozart's stage productions plus a selection of his other works.

### TOURS BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

A single ticket on Warsaw's public transport system can go a long way, if you know which bus or tram to take. **Bus 180** runs the entire length of the Royal Way, connecting the Royal Castle with Wilanów Palace, while the double-decker **bus 100** passes the Old Town, Citadel, Palace of Culture & Science, Museum of Warsaw Rising and the zoo. On weekends and public holidays, a renovated historical tram, known as **Tram T**, covers much the same route at bus 100. For exact routes and times consult www.ztm.waw.pl (in Polish) or pick up a brochure at one of the city's tourist offices (p87).

**Art of the Street Festival** (Festiwal Sztuka Ulicy; www.sztaukaulicy.pl) Held in early July, this five-day festival features street theatre, open-air art installations and 'happenings' staged unpredictably in public places such as Old Town Sq, the Royal Way, public parks and even bus stops.

**Warsaw Summer Jazz Days** (www.adamiakjazz.pl in Polish) This series of concerts, throughout July and August, brings leading international jazz stars to town, mixed in with performances by local talent. Major gigs are held in Congress Hall at the Palace of Culture & Science.

**Anniversary of Warsaw Rising** (www.1944.pl) Festivals and concerts commemorate the 1944 uprising against Nazi occupiers. A minute of silence is held at 5pm.

**Warsaw Autumn International Festival of Contemporary Music** (www.warsaw-autumn.art.pl) This 50-year-old festival, held over 10 days in September, is the city's pride and joy and offers a chance to hear the world's best avant-garde music, including new works by major Polish composers.

**Frédéric Chopin International Piano Competition** (www.konkurs.chopin.pl) This world-renowned piano competition takes place every five years; the next one is in September and October 2010.

**Warsaw International Film Festival** See opposite.

**JVC Jazz Festival Warsaw** (www.festivalproductions.net) One of the most prestigious jazz festivals in Europe, this three-day event takes place in October. Has already played host to most of the jazz greats, from Dizzy Gillespie to Miles Davis.

## SLEEPING

While Warsaw has a variety of sleeping options, it still needs to go a long way to match its bar and restaurant selection. There's no real 'hotel district' either, with accommodation scattered the width and breadth of the city and the Old Town lacking a healthy choice of hotels, hostels and midrange places.

That's not to say things aren't improving. The number of independent hostels has begun to creep into the double-digit figures and there is a cluster of five-star hotels in and around the financial district. Midrange hotels remain a problem though – few exist for a city this size, and most lack charm and character. Note that many hotels offer cheaper rates than those quoted below on weekends.

The city's tourist information offices (p87) can help you to find and book accommodation if you so require.

## Old Town & Around

### BUDGET

**Hostel Kanonia** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 0676; www.kanonia.pl; ul Jezuicka 2; dm/d 35/100zł; 📺) Kanonia is

## FOCUS ON FILM FANATIC

Arguably Poland's largest film festival is the Warsaw International Film Festival (www.wff.pl). Entertaining the country's cinema buffs since before the fall of communism, this 10-day film extravaganza packs its programme with art-house film premieres, lectures and screen-writing workshops. The festival's director is Stefan Laudyn, who has overseen proceedings since 1991, and is in a good position to comment on Polish cinema – he is the founder of the Warsaw Film Foundation, and a board member of the European Film Academy. Author Neal Bedford asked him a few questions about the festival, Polish film and his home, Warsaw:

**What's the focus of the festival? Has it always been international or did it begin as a vehicle for Polish cinema?** It's always been international, but at some point I realised it can also be a great opportunity to promote Polish cinema – since 2000 we organise a sidebar event named Warsaw Screenings, presenting new Polish films to foreign professionals. Subsequently Polish movies are invited to leading international events.

**Does the festival have a central theme? Does it change every year?** Our motto is: films about people and for people. We create the programme having in mind our audience is interested in the culture of our neighbours from the region, our continent, and the world – in that order. We avoid being too mainstream, but at the same time experimental fare is not really our cup of tea. The programming team of 10 people watches hundreds and hundreds of films from all over the world to choose what we believe is the crème of current production.

**Your thoughts on present Polish film? Are the bad old days of big-brother communism gone or are there still some restrictions in place?** Ironically, the best Polish films were made in the old days – by Has, Polański, Munk, Wajda, early Kieślowski. Nowadays there's a shortage of good stories, but I believe there are young people somewhere as talented as their famous older colleagues.

**If a person wanted an introduction to Polish film, what five films would you recommend?** *Miś* (Teddy Bear), by Stanisław Bareja, *Rejs* (The Cruise), by Marek Piwowski, *Jańcio Wodnik* (Johnnie the Aquarius), by Jan Jakub Kolski, *Człowiek z marmuru* (Man of Marble), by Andrzej Wajda, and *Amator* (Camera Buff), by Krzysztof Kieślowski.

**Do you have a favourite Polish film, director, and actor/actress?** Sure, but in the case of films it changes year to year – currently it's *Sztuczki* (Tricks), by Andrzej Jakimowski. Actress Krystyna Janda, who received Best Actress Award at Cannes in 1990 – I admire since last century. Actor Andrzej Chyra – I was there in 1999 when he became famous overnight after the first screening of *Dług* (The Debt).

**Do you have a favourite Warsaw cinema?** Kinoteka – a miniplex situated in the Palace of Culture. It has a spectacular location, nice interior and good programming. The Warsaw festival is held there.

**One good thing about Warsaw?** It has hidden jewels, off the tourist tracks, known mostly to locals.

**One bad thing about Warsaw?** That 1930s Warsaw doesn't exist. 'Hitler and Stalin did their job' as my old friend Muniak Staszczuk from T.Love sang.

**Where can you buy tickets to the Warsaw International Film Festival?** Presale starts a week before the event at EMPIK's ul Marszałkowska branch (p85). Many screenings are sold out before the festival commences so it's best to get in early. Last year we had over 92,000 admissions.

one of a new breed of private hostels setting up shop in Warsaw. Its location couldn't be better, tucked away in the heart of the Old Town, and with simple, functional rooms, a bar, and bike rental, it goes a long way in fulfilling most backpackers' needs.

**Dom Przy Rynku Hostel** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 5033; www.cityhostel.net; Rynek Nowego Miasto 4; dm 50zł; ☒ Jul-Sep; ☒) Located in a quiet corner of the busy New Town, Przy Rynku is a neat, clean and friendly hostel occupying a 19th-century house. Its rooms sleep two to five persons and there's a big kitchen and laundry facilities for guest use.

#### MIDRANGE

**Old Town Apartments** (Map p92; ☎ 022 887 9800; www.warsawshotel.com; Old Town Sq 12/14; apt from 170zł) This agency rents out a range of apartments sleeping one to six people, with superb central locations on and around the Old Town's main square. All are attractively furnished and include bathroom and kitchen with cooker and fridge, but no phone.

**Castle Oki Doki** (Map p92; ☎ 022 425 0100; www.castleokidoki.pl; ul Świętojańska 2; dm 60-70zł, d 210-420zł; ☒) Owned and run by Oki Doki Hostel (see right), this newcomer to the Old Town's accommodation scene is housed in a 17th-century tenement house. All rooms overlook either Castle Sq or St John's Cathedral, and come in a range of playful styles – choose from 'Alice in Wonderland', 'Orient Express', 'Mermaid' and the like. The more expensive variety have four-star luxury.

**Dom Literatary** (House of Literature; Map p92; ☎ 022 635 0404; www.fundacjadl.com in Polish; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 87/89; s/d from 180/300zł; ☒) In short, Dom Literatary is a plush hotel with a wonderful location and far too many stairs. It's also the headquarters of the Polish PEN Club, a writers' organisation. If you're happy enough to lug your bags to the 3rd floor, you'll enjoy views over the Old Town and rooms with formal décor, deep sofas and wooden beams on the ceiling.

#### TOP END

**Le Regina** (Map p92; ☎ 022 531 6000; www.leregina.com; ul Kościelna 12; rm from 1000zł; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Housed in a lovely arcaded 18th century-style palace just a few minutes' walk from the Old Town, the Regina manages a successful combination of traditional architecture and contemporary design. Rooms

are light and airy, decorated in shades of chocolate and vanilla, with lots of polished walnut, gleaming chrome and marble in the more expensive rooms. Check the website for specials – they can be as low as 50% of the rack rate.

#### South of the Old Town BUDGET

**Smolna Youth Hostel** (Map pp88-9; ☎ /fax 022 827 8952; www.hostelsmolna30.pl; ul Smolna 30; dm from 36zł, s/d 65/120zł) A huge hostel popular with school groups, this central option complements its basic rooms with singles and doubles that have private bathrooms. While there's not a lot in the way of extra frills, it's clean and safe, and has a kitchen.

**our pick Oki Doki Hostel** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 5112; www.okidoki.pl; Plac Dąbrowskiego 3; dm 42-55zł, s/d from 115/145zł; ☒) Oki Doki has made excellent use of this former trade union building and created a hostel of some standing. Each of its bright, large rooms is individually named and decorated (like blue? ask for '7th Heaven'; reading? take 'Gazetka') and all contain lockers for guests. The owners are well travelled and know the needs of backpackers, providing a late-opening bar (where you can buy breakfast in the morning), a self-service laundry and bike rental.

**Hostel Helvetia** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 7108; www.hostel-helvetia.pl; ul Kopernika 36/40; dm from 43zł, s with/without bathroom 150/130zł, d 180/150zł; ☒) Another of Warsaw's quality hostels, Helvetia has spick-and-span rooms painted in warm, bright colours with wooden floors and a good amount of space. Bicycles and scooters are available for rent, laundry and kitchen facilities are in top order, and with only 38 beds, it's best to book ahead in summer.

#### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Mazowiecki** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 2365; www.hotelbelwederski.pl; ul Mazowiecka 10; s with/without bathroom 198/150zł, d 248/200zł) Once reserved as military accommodation, the Hotel Mazowiecki now offers its rooms to all and sundry. The shared bathrooms are a little worse for wear, but those in private rooms are of a far better standard.

**Hotel Gromada** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 582 9900; www.gromada.pl; Plac Powstańców Warszawy 2; s with/without bathroom 198/150zł, d 248/200zł; ☒ ☒) The 300-bed Hotel Gromada is an ugly blob on the

Warsaw skyline, but its rooms are in good condition and the Old Town and Nowy Świat are close at hand.

**Hotel Harenda** (Map p92; ☎ 022 826 0071; www.hotelharenda.com.pl; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 4/6; s/d/ste 300/380/520zł; ☒ ☒) Housed in an elegant neoclassical building, the Harenda boasts a quiet location close to the Old Town and an appealingly old-fashioned ambience. The single rooms are on the small side but the bathrooms are spotless; you're paying for the location here.

#### TOP END

**Sofitel Victoria** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 657 8011; www.sofitel.com; ul Królewska 11; r from 600zł; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Conveniently located midway between the Old Town and the Palace of Culture & Science, the Sofitel is Warsaw's newest offering in hotel luxury. With all the bits and bobs you'd expect from a top hotel (great concierge service, full wellness centre, the occasional celebrity overnighting), it's a fine choice, and an even better one if you can secure a discount from the website.

**Le Royal Méridien Bristol Hotel** (Map p92; ☎ 022 551 1000; www.warsaw.lemeridien.com; ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 42/44; s/d from 750zł; ☒ ☒ ☒ ☒) Established in 1899 and restored to its former glory after a massive renovation, the Bristol is touted as Poland's most luxurious hotel. Its neoclassical façade, spectacularly floodlit at night, conceals a feast of original Art Nouveau features, and huge rooms that are both traditional and homy. Attentive staff cater to your every whim, and the Old Town is only a few minutes' walk away.

#### Financial District

##### MIDRANGE

**Premiere Classe** (Map p84; ☎ 022 624 0800; www.premiereclasse.com.pl; ul Towarowa 2; r 184zł; ☒ ☒) Rooms at this modern, purpose-built hotel are a little small, but standards are high for what you pay. It's also not very handy to the city's attractions, but it is on the bus 175 route between the airport and the Old Town.

**Friends Guesthouse** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 309 323 334; ul Sienkiewicza 4; s/d 190/240zł) This gay-friendly guesthouse offers three compact but smartly decorated rooms, each with a private shower, and shared toilet and kitchenette. Laundry facilities are free of charge, staff are friendly and professional, and the location is ideal. There's a two-night minimum stay.

**Hotel Maria** (Map p84; ☎ 022 838 4062; www.hotelmaria.pl; Al Jana Pawła II 71; s/d 320/380zł; ☒ ☒) The family-friendly Maria is a modern, low-rise, 22-room hotel conveniently located for visiting the city's Jewish sights. Its rooms are mostly spacious, bright and cheerful, but a few are bland and unexciting so if possible have a look before booking.

#### South of Al Jerozolimskie BUDGET

**Nathan's Villa Hostel** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 622 2946; www.nathansvilla.com; ul Piękna 24/26; dm from 45zł, s/d 130/160zł; ☒ ☒) An established hostel set in a quiet courtyard, south of the centre. Like any good place, it has a kitchen, common room and reading room, but also provides free laundry and a simple breakfast. Take bus 131, 501, 505 or 525 from Warszawa Centralna train station to the Plac Konstytucji stop.

**Biuro Podróży Syrena** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 628 4978; www.kwatery-prywatne.pl; ul Krucza 17; s/d from 60/90zł, apt from 120zł; ☒) office 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat, 2-7pm Sun) This agency offers rooms in private apartments, as well as whole apartments, for short-term rental. All the accommodation is in the city centre and one-night rental is accepted. The only hassle is picking up and dropping off the key.

**Camping 123** (Map p84; ☎ 022 823 3748; camp123@frikio6.onet.pl; ul Warszawskiej 1920r 15/17; per person/car/tent 12/12/12zł; ☒ ☒) Set in extensive grounds near the Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal, Camping 123 has well-tended grass, tree-shaded areas and good facilities, including a tennis court and laundry. Wood-panelled, two-person bungalows (90zł) are also available, but beware, the walls are paper-thin.

##### MIDRANGE

**Warsaw Apartments** (Map p84; ☎ 022 550 4550; www.warsaw-apartments.com.pl; ul Augustówka 9; 1-1/2-person apt 235/265zł; ☒) This agency manages three modern apartment blocks on the outskirts of Warsaw. All are in good order, and the apartments have phone, TV, cooker and refrigerator, which can be rented by the night; for stays of over a month the nightly rate falls by almost 50%.

**Hotel Agrykola** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 622 9110; www.hotelagrykola.pl in Polish; ul Myśliwiecka 9; dm from 50zł, s/d 249/300zł; ☒ ☒) Halfway between hostel and hotel, the Agrykola is a bright, modern place incorporating a sports centre. It has a restaurant, sauna and solarium, and there's

no curfew. It's a little off the beaten track; take bus 107 from Al Jerozolimskie (the stop outside the Novotel, a block east of the central train station) to the Rozbrat stop; the entrance is back on the other side of the roundabout, beneath the overpass.

#### TOP END

**our pick Hotel Rialto** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 584 8700; www.hotelrialto.com.pl; ul Wilcza 73; r from 460zł; ☎ ☑ ☒) Billed as Poland's first boutique hotel, this converted town house is a monument to early-20th-century design and craftsmanship. Each of the hotel's 44 rooms is individually decorated in Art Nouveau or Art Deco style, with antique and reproduction furniture, period light fittings and mosaic-tiled or marbled bathrooms. There are plenty of modern touches where it counts, such as flat-screen TVs, power showers, and a sauna and steam room. The celebrated Kurt Scheller's Restaurant (p110) fills the ground floor.

#### Praga

##### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Praski** (Map p84; ☎ 022 818 4989; www.praski.pl; Al Solidarności 61; s/d 240/270zł; ☎) As hotels go, Praski won't excite too many travellers, but it's a solid midrange option little more than 1km from the Old Town. Rooms are decked out in appealing shades of burgundy, rose and green, and there are cheaper rooms with shared bathrooms (single 150zł, double 200zł) on offer.

**Hotel Hetman** (Map p84; ☎ 022 511 9800; www.hotelhetman.pl; ul Kłopotowskiego 36; s/d 330/380zł; ☎ ☑) Across the river but only just over a kilometre's walk or bus ride from the Old Town, the Hetman sports English-speaking staff, brand-new rooms decked out in soothing shades of pink and green, gleaming bathrooms, and a fitness room with Jacuzzi. It's in a quiet location, but buses and trams to all parts of the city stop nearby.

#### EATING

Of all the cities in Poland, you'll eat the best in Warsaw. It's not just hearty Polish cuisine on offer either – you'll find a growing selection of European, Southeast Asian, Indian and Japanese restaurants worthy of your hard-earned cash. Naturally prices have risen with the increased variety and the country's entry into the EU, but you can still find some good, cheap eats in the centre, particularly in the form of Poland's classic milk bars.

The largest concentration of eateries exists on and around Nowy Świat and south of Al Jerozolimskie. The Old Town generally houses expensive tourist traps, but there is a handful of quality spots if you take the time to look.

The price breakdown for Warsaw restaurants (based on the average cost of a main course) is: budget (less than 20zł), midrange (25zł to 50zł) and top end (more than 50zł).

#### Old Town & Around

##### BUDGET

**Bar Mleczny Pod Barbakanem** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 4737; ul Mostowa 27/29; mains 3-8zł; ☎) 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat & Sun) Just outside the Barbican, this popular milk bar looks as though it hasn't changed for decades. It serves cheap, unpretentious Polish standards in a location that would be the envy of many upmarket eateries.

##### MIDRANGE

**Restauracja Pod Samsonem** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 1788; ul Freta 3/5; mains 15-30zł; ☎) 10am-11pm) Situated in the New Town, Pod Samsonem is frequented by locals and tourists looking for inexpensive and tasty Polish food infused with a Jewish flavour – marinated herring, gefilte fish and *kawior po żydowsku* ('Jewish caviar' – chopped chicken liver with garlic). It's always busy and you may have to wait, especially for the popular outdoor tables.

**Fret à Porter** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 3754; ul Freta 37; mains 25-56zł; ☎) noon-11pm) Choose between the pavement terrace, with views of tree-lined New Town Sq, and the eccentric dining room with its modern art on rag-rolled brick walls and multicoloured napkins clashing with Regency-striped upholstery. The menu also indulges in bold contrasts, ranging from traditional Polish dishes (green lentil soup with mint, roast duck and grilled pork) to exotic offerings such as kangaroo and emu steaks.

##### TOP END

**Dom Restauracyjny Gessler** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 4427; Old Town Sq 21/21a; mains 50-100zł; ☎) 11am-midnight) Gessler has a well-founded reputation as the top restaurant on the Old Town's main square. Its two dining areas are quite distinct – the ground floor is an elegant, formal restaurant, while a rustic country inn fills labyrinthine brick-vaulted cellars below. With this kind of set-up the menu is of course dominated by traditional Polish dishes, ranging from *żurek* (traditional sour

rye soup) to roast venison with cranberries. Reservations recommended.

#### South of the Old Town

##### BUDGET

**Tukanem Salad Bar** Plac Bankowy (Map p92; ☎ 022 531 2520; Plac Bankowy 2; salad portions 3-5zł; ☎) 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat; ul Koszykowa (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 630 8820; ul Koszykowa 54; ☎) 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat; ul Kredytowa (Map p92; ☎ 022 827 7119; ul Kredytowa 2; ☎) 10am-6pm Mon-Fri) The 'Toucan' works on three tried and tested principles: fresh food, low prices, and quick service. It offers a wide range of mainly vegetarian salads in simple surrounds, but fuller meals are also available, normally during lunch hours.

**Vegabar** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 211 3484; ul Oboźna 9; soups 5.50-7.50zł, mains 7-18zł; ☎) 11am-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-9pm Sat, noon-7pm Sun) Imaginative veggie-mains and soups are the stock products of Vegabar, a tiny establishment just off Krakowskie Przedmieście. Everything is freshly prepared daily, so you'll instantly feel those vitamins doing their job. Turn up for lunch and you can pick up a soup and main for around 20zł.

**our pick Cò tú** (Map pp88-9; Hadlowo-Uslugowe 21; mains 10-14zł; ☎) 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun) The wok at this simple Asian diner never rests as hungry Poles can't get enough of the excellent dishes coming from the kitchen. The menu is enormous, covering all the main bases (seafood, vegetable, beef, chicken, pork), and you'll never have to wait more than 10 minutes for your food despite the queues. Hadlowo-Uslugowe is accessed through the archway at Nowy Świat 26.

**Qlinarynia** (Map pp88-9; ul Zielna 5; mains around 12zł; ☎) 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat) Don't expect friendly service or a warm welcome at this simple yet colourful milk bar. But do expect fast service, top-rate home-cooked Polish food (including a smattering of European classics, such as lasagne and quiche), and a packed house. Enter from ul Marszałkowska; it's easy to spot among the liquor stores and sex shops.

**Bar Krokciecik** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 3037; ul Zgoda 1; mains 7-19zł; ☎) 9am-8pm) Decent Polish food this close to Nowy Świat and the financial district isn't hard to find, but not at these prices. So there's no wonder it's sometimes hard to find a seat at Krokciecik, a modern take on the milk bar serving soups, salads and hot dishes such as *fasolka po bretońsku* (sausage and bean casserole), *strogonow z wołowiny*

(beef stroganoff) and *ragout z kurczaka* (chicken ragout).

##### MIDRANGE

**Arsenal** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 8377; ul Długa 52; mains 15-35zł; ☎) 9am-11pm) Parents, children, pasta lovers and archaeological buffs will all be satisfied with Arsenal. It's located next to the Archaeological Museum (p94), serves scrummy home-made pasta with a range of sauces, and has a playground, playroom, and kids' menu for the little-uns.

**Restauracja Polska** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 3877; ul Nowy Świat 21; mains 25-50zł; ☎) noon-11pm) The Polska is a classic old-fashioned Polish restaurant of the type that Polish families favour for special occasions – folksy farmhouse décor, lacy tablecloths, bouquets of flowers everywhere, and smartly dressed, attentive staff. The menu is devoted to hearty home cooking – this is the place to try authentic *pierogi* (dumplings), *żurek*, *schab z dzika* (roast wild boar with crispy dumplings) and other *dania staropolskie* (old Polish dishes). The restaurant is set well back from the street – enter the gate at No 21 and go straight ahead until you see it on your right. Don't be put off by the scruffy exterior.

**Sense** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 6570; ul Nowy Świat 19; mains 20-60zł; ☎) noon-11pm Mon-Thu, noon-12.30am Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) We're not sure why the menu is headed up with sexual references (we could make a few guesses, though), but the Asian fusion selections under 'foreplay', 'hardcore', and 'wet 'n' wild' will certainly give your tastebuds an orgasm. Sense is not only hugely popular for its food, but also for its cocktails, highballs and minimalist interior.

##### TOP END

**Deco Kredens** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 0660; ul Ordynacka 13; mains 35-75zł; ☎) 10am-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-11pm Sat & Sun) This place flaunts an appealingly over-the-top Art Deco dining room, which looks for all the world like a 1930s bordello (minus the ladies). Fat armchairs tempt you to linger over a menu of Polish and international cuisine – the crispy roast duck, served on a wooden platter with potato pancakes, beetroot and baked apple, is superb.

#### South of Al Jerozolimskie

##### BUDGET

**Greenway** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 696 9321; ul Hoża 54; mains 5-10zł; ☎) 10am-9pm) One branch of a country-wide chain swept to popularity by its healthy



food selection. Take your pick from the international menu, which includes Mexican goulash, Warsaw curry, samosas and enchiladas. Portions are hefty, and there's no table service.

**Wook** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 630 7474; Al Jerozolimskie 65/79; soups 4zł, mains 6zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) Despite its poor location in the bowels of the Marriott, Wook manages to attract plenty of hungry locals with dainty yet tasty portions of imaginative Asian food. Mix and match with a couple of choices (crispy duck followed by wan tan noodles with cabbage anyone?) and you'll come away satisfied.

### MIDRANGE

**Dzonka** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 5015; ul Hoża 54; mains 10-30zł; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) With only six tables, 'petite' is no over-exaggeration for Dzonka's size. Small it may be, but big it is on Asian cuisine, serving up steaming Thai soups, Mandarin chicken and spicy (by Polish standards) beef Szechwan. Reservation recommended.

**Warsaw Tortilla Factory** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 8622; ul Wilcza 46; mains 15-30zł; ☎ noon-1am Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) This is the closest you'll come to authentic Mexican food in the city. And it does a decent job too of the burritos, enchiladas, nachos and tortillas. The décor of red brick, dark wood and steel isn't very Mexican, and neither is the 'hangover brunch' served till 5pm at weekends, but who cares when it's all accompanied by spiced-up Bloody Marys.

**Tandoor Palace** (Map p84; ☎ 022 825 2375; ul Marszałkowska 21/25; mains 25-50zł; ☎ noon-10.30pm) Billed as the best Indian restaurant in Poland, the Palace's food is prepared by experienced North Indian chefs using a genuine *tandoor* (clay oven). The extensive menu ranges from classics such as butter chicken, *shahi korma* (chicken or lamb in a mild, creamy sauce with crushed almonds) and *biryani* to Kashmiri balti dishes and sizzling platters.

**India Curry** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 438 9350; ul Żurawia 22; mains 30-46zł; ☎ 11am-11pm) The strong smells of India – the ones that churn, rather than turn, the stomach – wafting from the door are a good sign that this place does decent curry. The usual selection of tandoori chicken and rogan josh is available, and vegetarians will be happy with the likes of *malai kofta* (balls of cottage cheese stuffed with nuts in a coconut, herb and cashew sauce) and *aloo bhindi bhaji* (curried potato and okra).

**Bacio** (Kiss; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 626 8303; ul Wilcza 43; mains 30-50zł; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Fri, 1pm-midnight Sat & Sun) Romance is a wonderful thing, and if you like it shoved down your throat then you'll go weak at the knees over Bacio. The décor here is over the top, featuring a copy of Klimt's *The Kiss*, a portrait of Juliet, and more dried flowers, cat paraphernalia and horse pictures than a little girl could ever wish for. This shrine to amour also specialises in authentic Italian home cooking, from melt-in-the-mouth carpaccio to linguine with wild mushrooms.

### TOP END

**Ourpick Kurt Scheller's Restaurant** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 584 8771; Hotel Rialto, ul Wilcza 73; mains 50-150zł; ☎ noon-10.30pm Sun-Fri, 5.30-10.30pm Sat) Swiss-born Mr Scheller whips up some of the city's most sought-after cuisine in this beautiful Art Deco restaurant. The menu is a trip for the taste-buds, swinging from Asian to Polish and back again, but always focusing on ingredients in season. There are also plenty of unusual morsels, such as creamy horseradish soup with veal tongue stripes, but be sure to save a little room for the wonderful desserts. Cooking courses are also offered (see p65).

**Tomo** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 434 2344; ul Krucza 16/22; mains 50-100zł; ☎ noon-11pm) You could do worse than spend an hour at Tomo's sushi bar, gazing at the little boats ferrying tiny morsels of sushi and maki in never-ending circles. The likes of tempura and teriyaki are also available, and staff are friendly and English-speaking.

### DRINKING Bars

Most drinking establishments open at 11am or noon and close when *ostatni gość* (the last guest) leaves – in practice, any time between midnight and 4am.

**Chimera** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 6919; ul Podwale 29) Chimera is two bars in one – a basement filled with aging furniture and bric-a-brac, and an outside courtyard perfect for people watching. It's just outside the Old Town and a wonderful place to relax after a long wander.

**John Bull Pub** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 0367; ul Jezuicka 4) Located in the cultural heart of the Old Town, and with views of the Vistula from the terrace, the John Bull is a comfortable and cosy spot to rest and sip a quiet ale. As far as the overseas British pub is concerned, this is a good one.

### CONCENTRATED DRINKING

Warsaw's nightlife is as diverse as it is dispersed, but there are a few central points where bar hopping doesn't require taking the bus.

Dive through the archway at ul Nowy Świat 26 and you'll discover **Centrum Hadlowo-Uślągowe** (Map pp88-9), a collection of bars, eateries and shops in stark contrast to the rapidly modernising face of 21st-century Warsaw. Here tiny drinking holes with names such as Pemek and Windigo fill a T-junction of squat concrete bunkers, attracting a young, bohemian crowd eager to avail of the relaxed vibe and cosy retro furniture. There's also outdoor seating, but the open-air party moves inside at 10pm due to city regulations. Lining the stomach is no problem either, with Turkish available from Kafefajka and Antalya, sushi from Besuto, and Asian from Cò tú (p109).

Close to the university at ul Dobra 33/35 is another concentration of bars, this time appealing to the city's student population. Here you'll find **Aurora** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 498 4565; ul Dobra 33/35), **Diuna** (Map pp88-9; ul Dobra 33/35) and **Jadłodajnia Filozoficzna** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 0501 040855; ul Dobra 33/35), all housed in what look like old construction-site offices. Each has its own distinctive musical flavour (live or DJ-supplied), whether it be punk/rock, experimental electronica, or reggae and jazz, but on almost any given night of the week the atmosphere is lively and the beer cheap.

**Między Nami** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 5417; www.miedzynamicafe.com in Polish; ul Bracka 20) A mix of bar, restaurant and café, 'Between You & Me' attracts a trendy set with its designer furniture, whitewashed walls and excellent vegetarian menu. There's no sign over the door; look for the Gauloises Blondes awnings.

**NoBo** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 622 4007; ul Wilcza 58a) A sumptuous mix of crimson and maroon décor and comfy sofas, all set to a chilled-out backbeat. Whether you're here to enjoy the fusion menu or an evening with friends, don't forget those mojitos.

**Paparazzi** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 4219; ul Mazowiecka 12) Paparazzi may have enjoyed a recent renovation, but it still remains a favourite with the trendy crowd. Its speciality is cocktails, and with a talented and friendly bar staff, it truly has raised the standards.

**Plan B** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 0508 316 974; www.planbe.pl in Polish; Al Wyzwolenia 18) This small bar squeezed into a stretched attic overlooking Plac Zbawiciela borders on dingy, but the mix of students and young office workers don't seem to mind. Find some couch space and relax to smooth beats from regular DJs.

The following are also worth stopping at: **Café Bar Lemon** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 829 5545; ul Sienkiewicza 6; ☎ 24hr) For late starters or the terminally enervated. With a kitchen also open for morning refuels, it really does cover all the bases. Club, bar, café – you decide.

**Sheesha Lounge** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 2525; ul Sienkiewicza 3) Water pipes, belly dancers, henna tattooing and DJs spinning exotic tunes; a bar-restaurant with a modern Middle Eastern feast for all the senses.

### Cafés

Café culture is a relatively new phenomenon to Warsaw, but locals adore it. You'll find places across the city, and new ones popping up on a regular basis.

**Café Blikle** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 4568; ul Nowy Świat 35; coffee from 9zł; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) The mere fact that Blikle has survived two world wars and the pressure of communism makes it a household name. But what makes this legendary café truly famous is its donuts, for which people have been queuing up for generations. Join the back of the line and find out why.

**Green Coffee** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 629 8373; ul Marszałkowska 84/92; coffee 9zł, snacks 7-15zł; ☎ 7am-11pm) The rich aroma of coffee pervades your senses as you enter this relaxed café on an otherwise nondescript section of Marszałkowska. The coffee is reputedly the best in town, and the food an inviting mix of cakes, quiches, sandwiches and muffins. Service apparently depends on the weather.

**Pożegnanie z Afryką** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 4420; ul Freta 4/6; coffees 8-10zł, snacks 8-12zł; ☎ 11am-9pm) 'Out of Africa' is a tiny café offering nothing but coffee – but what coffee! Choose from around 50 varieties, served in a little pot, and a range of tempting cakes. This is the original shop in a chain of about 20 branches scattered around Poland's major cities.

**Coffee Karma** (Map p84; ☎ 022 875 8709; Plac Zbawiciela 3/5; sandwiches & snacks 8-12zł; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-10pm Sat & Sun) 'Karma, you nuns and monks, are your intentions', so the Buddhist

## COFFEE & A GOOD READ

Poles have had a long love affair with literature, but the new love is coffee. It was therefore only a matter of time before someone came up with the café-bookshop, thus providing locals with a practical *ménage à trois*. These intellectual establishments have sprung up across town, offering racks of books alongside coffee, tea and snacks. They're wonderful places to spend a few hours, dipping into a book or catching a literary event or concert, which many hold on a regular basis. Some of the more frequented places include the following:

**Antykwariat** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 629 9929; ul Żurawia 45; coffee 8zł; ☎ 1-11pm Mon-Fri, 4-11pm Sat & Sun) Lovely sepia-tinted atmosphere, with all scuffed wood, mismatched furniture, old cushions and overflowing shelves of books. Best enjoyed in winter, as there's no garden.

**Chłodna 25** (Map p84; ☎ 022 620 2413; ul Chłodna 25; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Thu, 8am-midnight Fri, noon-midnight Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Bohemian haunt attracting journalists, artists, musicians and anyone else who can fit through the door. Concerts, films, debates and lecturers feature regularly; wine, beer and homemade cakes available.

**Czuffy Barbarzyńca** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 3294; ul Dobra 31; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Thu, 10am-midnight Fri & Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Stripped-back space where books, discussions and readings come first and coffee (albeit good) is just along for the ride. The 'Gentle Barbarian' was the city's first café-bookshop.

**Kafka** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 0822; ul Oboźna 3; ☎ 9am-10pm) Quiet café serving healthy cakes, quiches and sweet-and-sour pancakes (3zł to 10zł). Choose from its massive selection of secondhand books and kick back on its low couches or outdoor seating.

**Numery Litery** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 622 0560; ul Wilcza 26; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, noon-8pm Sat & Sun) Small, peaceful pocket for quiet reflection or a chilled chat. Extensive coffee and tea collection and plenty of children's books and coffee-table toms (mostly in English).

**Tarabuk** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 0819; ul Browarna 6; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-10pm Sat & Sun) Cosy café that not only provides space for books and coffee, but also concerts, readings, lectures and vodka.

saying goes. Few truly religious folk frequent Karma, but at least the café owner's intentions are pure and simple – thick smoothies, strong coffee and an easygoing air. The intentions of guests are to secure an outdoor table in summer or a low couch behind large bay windows in winter, something that can often prove hard to do.

**Café Belle Epoque** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 4105; ul Freta 18; tea 10zł, mains 10-20zł; ☎ 1-11pm) This atmospheric café is a fairyland of chiffon, velvet and lacy lampshades, crammed with bric-a-brac and dusty antiques – you can buy pretty much anything you see here. An excellent range of speciality teas is accompanied by a menu of cakes, snacks and light meals.

**Same Fusy** (Only Tea Leaves; Map p92; ☎ 022 635 9104; ul Nowomiejska 10; tea 12-19zł, snacks 8-12zł; ☎ 1-11pm) This place is a superbly designed surprise: an Oriental-style café on the 1st floor and a stylish tearoom downstairs. Over a hundred different types of tea, from the accepted norm to the 'out of the ordinary'.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Warsaw's range of classical and contemporary entertainment options is the best in the country. The city is home to many classical

music, opera and theatre venues, and the list of clubs and jazz bars grows longer every year. Film is also well represented in both mainstream and art-house cinemas.

Detailed listings of museums, art galleries, cinemas, theatres, musical events and festivals (in Polish only) can be found in the Friday edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and in the monthly cultural magazine *WiK* (Warszawa i Kultura). The free what's-on monthly *Aktivist* is distributed through restaurants, bars and clubs.

As for useful English-language listings, the monthly *Warsaw Insider* and the entertainment columns of the weekly *Warsaw Voice* provide some information on cultural events, as well as on bars, pubs and other nightspots.

Tickets for theatre, opera, musical events and visiting shows can be bought from **Eventim** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 9454; www.eventim.pl; Al Jeruzolimskie 25; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) and some EMPiK stores (see p85).

## Clubs

**Balsam** (Map p84; ☎ 022 898 2843; www.balsam.net.pl in Polish; ul Raclawicka 99) A unique club, located inside an old military fort. It's good for lunch during the day but clubbers hold court at night and party hard under its vaulted ceilings.

**Fabryka Trzciny** (Map p84; ☎ 022 619 0513; www.fabrykatrzcin.pl; ul Otwocka 14) Located in a revamped factory in the heart of Praga, this art centre hosts a range of events, including well-patronised clubbing nights.

**Harlem** (Map p84; www.warsaw-harlem.com in Polish; ul Kolejowa 8/10) This converted warehouse that has become one of the most popular clubs in town. DJs pump out hip-hop, R & B and gangsta rap to a crowd dressed straight out of a blinged MTV video.

**Klubokawiarnia** (Map pp88-9; www.klubo.pl in Polish; ul Czackiego 3/5) Under the steady gaze of communist icons, dance the night away to great music with a chilled party crowd at this basement club. Regular fancy-dress events are held spice up an already funky night.

**M25** (Map p84; ☎ 022 863 4567; www.m25.waw.pl in Polish; ul Mińska 25) 'In Electronica We Trust' is M25's motto, and in M25 we trust. This cavernous place has one of the best sound systems in town and is to the fore in dance and cultural events in Warsaw.

**Stodoła** (Map p84; ☎ 022 825 6031; www.stodoła.pl; ul Batorego 10) Originally the canteen for builders of the Palace of Culture & Science, Stodoła is one of Warsaw's biggest and longest running student clubs. It hosts events, club nights and touring bands when they're in town.

**Underground Music Café** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 7048; www.under.pl in Polish; ul Marszałkowska 126/134) A swarm of students and backpackers pour into this basement club for its cheap beer, dark lighting and selection of music that varies from '70s and '80s to house, R & B and hip-hop.

The following are some other places worth noting:

**Hybrydy** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 822 3003; www.hybrydy.com.pl in Polish; ul Złota 7/9) Well-established student club with two rooms and a mix of acid jazz, soul, big beats and live music.

**Luzztro** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 6472; Al Jeruzolimskie 6) Throwback to the dark underground clubs of old, with house, drum 'n' bass and electro.

**Piekarnia** (Map p84; ☎ 022 636 4979; www.piekarnia.pl in Polish; ul Młocińska 11) Old fav' of the clubbing scene, with a packed dance floor. They don't call it 'The Bakery' for nothing.

## Jazz

**Akwarium Jazzarium** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 620 5072; ul Złota 59) Reopened in August 2007, this was Warsaw's first jazz club. Only the white piano remains from the old days but with John Coltrane's eyes staring at you from one wall,

you are left in no doubt that this place knows its heritage.

**Jazz Café Helicon** (Map p92; ☎ 022 635 9505; ul Freta 45/47) This small café-bar is a top-drawer jazz venue. A former music store, it still sells jazz and blues CDs and has added trumpets hanging over tables and black-and-white tiling on the floor.

**Klub Tygmont** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 3409; ul Mazowiecka 6/8) Hosting both local and international acts, the live jazz here is both varied and plentiful. Concerts start around 9pm but it fills up early, so either reserve a table or turn up at opening time (6pm). Dinner is also available.

## Classical Music & Opera

**Filharmonia Narodowa** (National Philharmonic; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 551 7128; www.filharmonia.pl; ul Jasna 5; ☎ 10am-2pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat) Home of the world-famous National Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir of Poland, founded in 1901, this venue has a concert hall (enter from ul Sienkiewicza 10) and a chamber-music hall (enter from ul Moniuszki 5), both of which stage regular concerts. The box office entrance is on ul Sienkiewicza.

**Warszawa Opera Kameralna** (Warsaw Chamber Opera; Map p92; ☎ 022 831 2240; www.operakameralna.pl; Al Solidarności 76b; ☎ box office 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 3 hours before performance Sat & Sun) The Warszawa Opera's repertoire ranges from medieval mystery plays to contemporary works, but it's most famous for its performances of Mozart's operas – the annual Mozart Festival (p104) is staged here.

**Teatr Wielki** (Grand Theatre; Map p92; ☎ 022 692 0208; www.teatrwielki.pl; Plac Teatralny 1; ☎ box office 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) This magnificent neoclassical theatre, dating from 1833 and rebuilt after WWII, is the city's main stage for opera and ballet, with a repertoire of international classics and works by Polish composers, notably Stanisław Moniuszko.

**Chopin Society** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 5473; www.nifc.pl; Ostrogski Palace, ul Okólnik 1) The society organises piano recitals in the beautiful auditorium in Ostrogski Palace (also home to the Chopin Museum, p97). Every Sunday from May to September, piano recitals are held at Chopin's birthplace in Żelazowa Wola (p120).

## Cinemas

Most films (except for children's films, which are dubbed into Polish) are screened in their original language with Polish subtitles. Check

## GAY & LESBIAN WARSAW

Warsaw's gay nightlife has been inching out of the closet since the mid-1990s, and there is now a fair selection of gay and lesbian venues. For a guide to all the latest places and events, check out the websites [www.innastrona.pl](http://www.innastrona.pl), [www.gay.pl](http://www.gay.pl) and [www.warsaw.gayguide.net](http://www.warsaw.gayguide.net).

**Fantom** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 5409; ul Bracka 20a; admission 15zł; ☎ 2pm-2am Mon-Thu, 2pm-3am Fri, 2pm-4am Sat, 6pm-2am Sun) Poland's longest-running gay club, Fantom has been on the go since 1994 and stages a huge party every Saturday starting at 10pm. It's a steamy, full-on experience, complete with sauna, Jacuzzi, sex shop and video lounge; the inconspicuous entrance (a black door with 'Fantom' stencilled on it) is in the courtyard behind Między Nami.

**Kokon** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 9539; ul Brzozowa 37; admission 9zł; ☎ 4pm-3am) The Kokon is a four-floor gay club in the heart of the Old Town, done up with designer chic and featuring 1970s and '80s hits, 'gay house' music and a weekly drag show.

**Rasko** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 890 0299; ul Krochmalna 32a; ☎ 5pm-late) One of Warsaw's most popular gay and lesbian bars, Rasko is a cosy and welcoming little pub with regular karaoke and drag nights.

listings on [www.kino.pl](http://www.kino.pl) (in Polish only, but decipherable – click on 'Repertuar', then 'Warszawa', then the name of the cinema); admission ranges from 5zł to 20zł. Cinemas in Warsaw include the following:

**Cinema City Sadyba** (Map p84; ☎ 022 550 3333; ul Powsińska 31) Modern 12-screen multiplex with wheelchair access.

**Iluzjon Filmoteki Narodowej** (Map p84; ☎ 022 646 1260; [www.fn.org.pl](http://www.fn.org.pl); ul Narbutta 50a) Home to the national film archive, and also Warsaw's main art-house cinema.

**Kino Luna** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 7828; [www.kino.luna.pl](http://www.kino.luna.pl) in Polish; ul Marszałkowska 28) Mainly art-house films from around the world.

**Kinoteka** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 550 7070; [www.kinoteka.pl](http://www.kinoteka.pl); Plac Defilad 1) Multiplex housed in the Palace of Culture & Science; entrance faces Al Jerozolimskie.

**Muranów Cinema** (Map p92; ☎ 022 831 0358; ul Gen Andersa 1) Screens art-house films.

## Theatre

Polish theatre has long had a high profile and continues to do so. Warsaw has about 20 theatres, including some of the best in the country. Most theatres close in July and August for their annual holidays. The leading playhouses, all of which lean towards contemporary productions:

**Teatr Ateneum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 625 7330; [www.teatrateneum.pl](http://www.teatrateneum.pl) in Polish; ul Jaracza 2)

**Teatr Dramatyczny** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 656 6844; [www.teatrdramatyczny.pl](http://www.teatrdramatyczny.pl); Palace of Culture & Science, Plac Defilad 1)

**Teatr Polonia** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 622 2132; [www.teatrpolonia.pl](http://www.teatrpolonia.pl) in Polish; ul Marszałkowska 56) Run by Krystyna Janda, winner of Best Actress at Cannes in 1990.

**Teatr Powszechny** (Map p84; ☎ 022 818 0001; ul Zamojskiego 20)

The **Teatr Żydowski** (Jewish Theatre; Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 620 7025; [www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl](http://www.teatr-zydowski.art.pl); Plac Grzybowski 12/16) derives its inspiration from Jewish culture and traditions, and some of its productions are performed in Yiddish – Polish and English translations are provided through headphones.

## SHOPPING

Like any modern Eastern European city, Warsaw has all the brand name stores and plethora of shopping malls you'd expect in the West. For the most part, prices are a little cheaper here, but things probably won't stay that way for long.

The upshot of all this commercialisation is the slow death of establishments that have existed since the communist era and beyond – a case of goodbye Marx, hello Marks & Spencer. Some still exist (see opposite) but whether they can weather the shopping storm is anyone's guess.

The main shopping area lies in the maze of streets between the Palace of Culture & Science and ul Nowy Świat, and along the eastern part of Al Jerozolimskie and the southern part of ul Marszałkowska.

## Arts, Crafts & Souvenirs

**Cepelia** ([www.cepelia.pl](http://www.cepelia.pl); ☎ stores 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Plac Konstytucji (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 499 9703; Plac Konstytucji 5); ul Chmielna (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 816 1481; ul Chmielna 8); ul Krucza (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 499 9705; ul Krucza 23); ul Marszałkowska (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 628 7757;

ul Marszałkowska 99/101) An established organisation dedicated to promoting Polish arts and crafts, Cepelia stocks its shops with woodwork, pottery, sculpture, fabrics, embroidery, lace, paintings and traditional costumes from various Polish regions.

**Neptunea** (Map p92; ☎ 022 826 0247; [www.neptunea.pl](http://www.neptunea.pl); ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 47/51; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Talk about a mish-mash of items. Neptunea is a purveyor of Polish jewellery, carved stoneware and crafts, along with furniture, shells and even musical instruments from across the globe.

**Desa Unicum** ([www.desa.pl](http://www.desa.pl) in Polish) Old Town Sq (Map p92; ☎ 022 621 6615; Old Town Sq 4/6; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat); ul Nowy Świat (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 827 4760; ul Nowy Świat 51; ☎ 11am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat) Desa Unicum is an art and antiques dealership that sells a range of old furniture, silverware, watches, paintings, icons and jewellery. Check customs regulations on p506 before purchasing anything.

**Galeria Grafiki i Plakatu** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 621 4077; ul Hoża 40; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) This small gallery stocks what is unquestionably the best selection of original prints and graphic art in Poland. It also has a good range of posters.

**Galeria Art** (Map p92; ☎ 022 828 5170; [www.galeria.art.pl](http://www.galeria.art.pl); ul Krakowskie Przedmieście 17; ☎ 11.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-5pm Sat) Owned by the Union of Polish Artists, this gallery offers a broad range of contemporary Polish art for sale, and an English-speaking manager who may – or may not – be of help.

## TRUE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Forget the shopping malls and generic shops, they're for kids. *Real* shoppers should take to the back streets of Warsaw, where the art of handmade products is still alive, and quality over quantity is paramount. Here are a few of the city's better spots:

**Aniela** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 628 9108; ul Żurawia 26; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri) Possibly the last corset maker in Warsaw; slim-lined, and tight fitting, since 1896.

**Bracia Łopieńscy** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 629 2045; ul Poznańska 24; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) The oldest bronze-metal foundry in Warsaw has been in business since 1862. Pick up exceptional pieces in the shape of candleholders, mirror and picture frames, wall lamps etc.

**Cafe Blikle** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 4568; ul Nowy Świat 35; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun) A Warsaw institution; producing cakes and pastries since 1869 (see p111).

**Jan Kielman & Sons** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 828 4630; [www.kielman.pl](http://www.kielman.pl); ul Chmielna 6; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) The Kielman clan has been making shoes since 1883. Their leather footwear starts at 1900zł, but you'll probably have them for life.

**Wyrobow Oświetleniowych** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 620 4376; [www.oswietlenie.strefa.pl](http://www.oswietlenie.strefa.pl); ul Emilii Plater 36; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Need an exquisite chandelier? Pick up a Gothic or *fin-de-siècle* number here. Most end up in museums and palaces, but there are a few pieces available (wall lamps start at 700zł) for the average Joe.

## Markets

**Bazarna Kole** (Map p84; ul Obozowa; ☎ early morning-2pm Sat & Sun) This huge antiques and bric-a-brac market, located in the western suburb of Koło, offers everything from old farm implements and furniture to WWII relics such as rusted German helmets, ammo boxes and shell casings. You will have to pick through the junk to find a bargain, but that's half the fun. Take tram 12, 13 or 24 to the Dalibora stop.

**Hala Mirowska** (Map p84; Al Jana Pawła II; ☎ dawn-dusk) Despite being converted into a modern supermarket, Hala Mirowska is worth visiting for its architecture alone. The redbrick pavilion of this 19th-century marketplace is in exceptional condition, and there's still a semblance of market atmosphere here; a few stalls selling fresh flowers and fruit and vegetables line its south and west sides.

**Gielda Foto** (Map p84; ☎ 022 825 6031; ul Batorego 10; ☎ 10am-2pm Sun) Camera buffs should have this market high on their list of things to do in Warsaw. Housed in the Stodoła student club, it has an incredible array of cameras and accessories, ranging from pre-WWII goods to the newest equipment. Most are in working order, and cheaper than can be found in retail outlets.

## Shopping Centres

**Arkadia** (Map p84; ☎ 022 323 6767; Al Jana Pawła II 82; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) The largest shopping mall in Poland, with almost 200 stores under one roof. It's handy to the Dworzec Gdański metro station.



### THE RUSSIAN MARKET

Once Europe's biggest flea market, selling everything from ex-Soviet military items and illegal booze to power tools and underwear, this Warsaw institution was closed in August 2007 due to the rebuilding of Stadion Dziesięciolecia for the Euro 2012. At the time of writing it was homeless; consult the city's tourist information centres (p87) for more up-to-date details.

**Galeria Centrum** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 551 4517; ul Marszałkowska 104/122; ☎ 9.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-8pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) A privatised version of the formerly state-owned chain of Domy Towarowe shops, this department store sells mass-market men's, women's and children's clothing, accessories, shoes, cosmetics and jewellery.

**Sadyba Best Mall** (Map p84; ☎ 022 550 3000; ul Powsińska 31; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) A modern mall housing a wide range of fashion stores, shoe shops, jewellery and perfume stores, an American Bookstore branch, a multiplex cinema and a dozen different eating places.

**Złote Tarasy** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 222 2200; ul Złota 59; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-8pm Sun) The latest mall to hit Warsaw, with almost every high street name you can think of. Its distinctive curved glass roof is clearly visible near the Palace of Science & Culture.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

#### AIRPORT

**Warsaw-Frédéric Chopin Airport** (Port Lotniczy im F Chopina; Map p84; ☎ 022 650 4220; www.lotnisko-cho-pina.pl) lies in the suburb of Okęcie, at the southern end of ul Żwirki i Wigury, 10km south of the city centre; it handles all domestic and international flights.

In the Terminal 1 international arrivals (*odloty*) hall, there is a **tourist information desk** (☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr), which sells city maps and can help visitors find accommodation. You will also find some **currency-exchange counters** (☎ 24hr), half a dozen ATMs, several car-hire agencies and a **left-luggage office** (per bag per day 5zł; ☎ 24hr). You can buy tickets for public transport from **Ruch newsagency** (☎ 5am-10pm).

The upper level of Terminal 1 houses international departures (*przyloty*), which has airline offices, a **bank** (☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat), and a **post office** (☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat).

Budget airlines, including Wizz, Germanwings, Ryanair, EasyJet and SkyEurope, use Terminal Etiuda (Map p84), a separate building that's a few minutes' walk south of the main terminal building. It's a basic, overcrowded place with few amenities, aside from a **tourist information desk** (☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 8am-6pm Oct-Apr).

Terminal 2 was still under construction at the time of writing, and will hopefully be open by the time it receives flights.

### FLIGHTS

You'll find information about domestic routes and fares on p520. Tickets can be booked at **LOT** (Polish Airlines; Map pp88-9; ☎ 0801 703 703; www.lot.com; Marriott Hotel, Al Jerolimskie 65/79; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) or at most travel agencies. The LOT timetable lists international flights to and from Poland on various airlines, along with LOT's own international and domestic flights.

### Bus

Warsaw is home to two **Państwowa Komunikacja Samochodowa** (PKS; www.pks.warszawa.pl in Polish) bus terminals. **Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 822 4811; Al Jerolimskie 144), west of the city centre, handles the majority of international routes and domestic routes south, north and west. **Warszawa Stadion** (Stadium Bus Terminal; Map p84; ☎ 022 818 1589; ul Zamojskiego 1), on the east side of the river, deals mainly with domestic and international bus traffic east-bound. Bus tickets are sold at the respective terminals. Some international services depart from the Warszawa Centralna bus terminal on the north side of Warszawa Centralna train station.

PKS operates several buses a day from Warszawa Zachodnia to Gdańsk (42zł to 48zł, five to seven hours), Częstochowa (35zł, 3½ hours), Kazimierz Dolny (22zł, 2½ hours), Kraków (38zł to 43zł, five to 5½ hours), Olsztyn (22zł to 34zł, 3½ to four hours), Toruń (32zł to 54zł, four hours), Wrocław (46zł to 50zł, five to 6½ hours) and Zakopane (54zł, 7½ hours). Services from Warszawa Stadion include a few daily buses to Lublin (21zł to 40zł, three hours), Białystok (26zł, 3¼ hours), and Zamość (32zł, five hours).

**Polski Express** (www.polskiexpress.net, in Polish) coaches depart from Warsaw's Frédéric Chopin airport and pick up passengers at its own **bus stop** (Map pp88-9; Al Jana Pawła II), next to Warszawa Centralna train station. Tickets for Polski Express routes are available from either of its offices – the main office **Centralny Punkt Informacji i Sprzedaży Biletów** (Central Information & Ticket Sales Point; ☎ 022 854 0285; ☎ 6.30am-9.30pm) is beside the bus stop – and from selected Orbis Travel outlets and **Almatur** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 2639; www.almatur.com.pl; ul Kopernika 23; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat). Polski Express buses travel to Białystok (41zł, four hours; one daily), Gdynia via Gdańsk (45zł to 59zł, seven hours, two daily), Kraków (83zł, eight hours, one daily), Lublin (41zł to 50zł, 3½ hours, seven daily), Szczecin (69zł to 83zł, 10 hours, two daily), and Łódź (36zł to 39zł, 2½ hours, seven daily).

For information on international bus routes, see the Land section in Getting There & Away in the Transport chapter (p518).

### Car

All the major international car-hire companies have offices in Warsaw (p523), many of which are based at the airport. Polish companies offer cheaper rates, but may have fewer English-speaking staff and rental options. Dependable local operators include **Local Rent-a-Car** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 826 7100; www.lrc.com.pl; ul Marszałkowska 140), which offers an Opel Corsa in the summer months for €44 a day, or €238 a week, including tax, collision damage waiver (CDW), theft protection and unlimited mileage. **Gromada Rent a Car** (Map pp88-9; ☎ 022 846 5404; Plac Powstańców Warszawy 2), at Hotel Gromada, is another local option, with cars for as little as €30 a day.

### Train

Warsaw has several train stations, but the one that most travellers use almost exclusively is **Warszawa Centralna train station** (Dworzec Centralny, Warsaw Central; Map pp88-9; Al Jerolimskie 54); it handles the overwhelming majority of domestic trains and all international services. Refer to the Getting There & Away section in the destination chapters for information about services to/from Warsaw. For details of international trains, see the Land section in the Transport chapter (p518).

Remember, Warszawa Centralna is not always where domestic and international trains

terminate, so make sure you get off the train sharply when it arrives.

The station's spacious main hall houses ticket counters, ATMs and snack bars, as well as a post office, newsagents (where you can buy public-transport tickets) and a tourist information desk (p87). Along the underground passages leading to the tracks and platforms are a dozen *kantors* (one of which is open 24 hours), a **left-luggage office** (☎ 7am-9pm; per 24hr 5-10zł), luggage lockers (4zł per 24 hours), eateries, several other places to buy tickets for local public transport, internet cafés and bookshops.

Tickets for domestic trains are available from counters at the east end of the main hall (but allow at least an hour for possible queuing), and international train tickets are available from either the helpful **information office** (☎ 022 474 1760; ☎ 9am-8pm) at the west end, one lonely counter at the east end, or from any major Orbis Travel office (p87). Tickets for immediate departures on domestic trains are also available from numerous, well-signed booths in the underpasses leading to Warszawa Centralna.

Some domestic trains also stop at **Warszawa Śródmieście train station** (Map pp88-9; Al Jerolimskie), which is 300m east of Warszawa Centralna, at **Warszawa Zachodnia train station** (Map p84; Al Jerolimskie), next to Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal, and at Warszawa Wschodnia, in Praga, on the east bank of the Vistula.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

The cheapest way of getting from the airport to the city (and vice versa) is by city bus 175 (2.40zł, every eight to 15 minutes, 4.50am to 11.10pm), which will take you all the way to the Miodowa stop (Map p92; 30 to 40 minutes) in the Old Town, passing en route along Al Jerolimskie, ul Nowy Świat and ul Krakowskie Przedmieście.

The night bus 611 replaces bus 175, connecting the airport with Warszawa Centralna train station every 30 minutes between 11pm and 5am. The bus stop is on a traffic island outside the international arrivals hall – look for the red-and-yellow bus shelter. There's a second stop outside Terminal Etiuda. Watch your bags closely – this line is a favourite playground for thieves and pickpockets. Don't forget to buy tickets at the airport's Ruch newsagency, located in the arrivals hall, and

to validate them in one of the ticket machines when you board the bus.

The taxi stand is right outside the door of the arrivals hall and handles taxis run by MPT Radio Taxi, Sawa Taxi and Merc Taxi. They all have desks inside the terminal, so you can ask about the fare to your destination – it should be around 30zł to Centralna station and 40zł to the Old Town.

## Bicycle

Cycling in Warsaw is a double-edged sword. The city is generally flat and easy to navigate, distances aren't too great, and cycle paths are on the increase. However, Warsaw drivers don't give a toss about cyclists and you'll soon be following the locals' lead and sharing the footpath with pedestrians. Bike hire is available from Oki Doki Hostel (p106) and Local Rent-a-Car (p117) for around 35zł per day, and Hostel Helvetia (p106) offers bike rental to guests.

## Car & Motorcycle

Warsaw's streets are full of potholes – some more dangerous than others – so driving demands constant attention.

The local government has introduced paid parking on central streets. You pay using coins (usually 2zł per hour) in the nearest ticket machine (*parkomat*) and get a receipt that you display in the windscreen. For security, try to park your car in a guarded car park (*parking strzeżony*). There are some in central Warsaw, including one on ul Parkingowa, behind the Novotel (Map pp88–9).

**PZM** (☎ 022 849 9361, 9637; ul Kazimierzowska 66) operates a 24-hour road breakdown service (*pomoc drogowa*).

See p117 for local car-hire agencies.

## Public Transport

Warsaw's integrated public-transport system is operated by **Zarząd Transportu Miejskiego** (City Transportation Board; ☎ 24hr info line 022-9484; www.ztm.waw.pl) and consists of a network of tram, bus and metro lines, all using the same ticketing system. The main routes operate from about 5am to about 11pm, and services are frequent and pretty reliable, though it's often crowded during rush hours (7am till 9am and 3.30pm till 6.30pm Monday to Friday). Friday and Saturday nights the metro runs until 2.30am. After 11pm several night bus routes link major suburbs to the city centre. The night-service

'hub' is at ul Emilii Plater, next to the Palace of Culture & Science, from where buses depart every half-hour.

It's best to buy a ticket before boarding buses, trams and metros; exact change is normally required when purchasing a ticket on buses or trams and drivers may refuse to sell them if they are running behind schedule. Tickets are sold at Ruch and Relay newsstands, hotels, post offices, metro stations and various general stores – look for a sign saying 'Sprzedaży Biletów ZTM'.

Tickets, timetables and information are available at the following ZTM information desks:

**Hala sprzedaży biletów ZTM** (Map p92; ul Senatorska 37; ☎ 7am–5pm Mon–Fri) Enter from Plac Bankowy.

**Punkt informacji ZTM** (Map p92; Pawilon 09, Ratusz metro station; ☎ 7am–8pm Mon–Fri)

**Punkt informacji ZTM** (Map p84; Pawilon 1002, Plac Wilsona metro station; ☎ 7am–8pm Mon–Fri)

A *jednorazowy bilet* (single-journey ticket) costs 2.40zł (3zł from driver; 1.25zł for school children aged seven or over; kids under seven ride free); these tickets are not valid for transferring between services. A *90-minutowy bilet* (90-minute ticket) costs 6zł, and is valid for 90 minutes from the time of validation, with unlimited transfers. Also available are one-/three-/seven-day unlimited transfer tickets for Warsaw (7.20/12/24zł), and Warsaw and its surrounding suburbs, including all 700 and 800 buses (9.60/14.40/32zł). These tickets cover night buses; otherwise a single fare costs 4.80zł. Foreign students under 26 years of age who have an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) get a discount of 48% (in Warsaw only; no other Polish city gives ISIC student concessions).

There are no conductors on board vehicles. Validate your ticket by feeding it (magnetic stripe facing down) into the little yellow machine on the bus or tram or in the metro-station lobby the first time you board; this stamps the time and date on it (or the route number for single-fare tickets). Inspections are common and fines are high (120zł as an instant fine or 84zł within seven days at an information desk, plus 2.40zł for a ticket). Watch out for pickpockets on crowded buses and trams (especially airport bus 175 and trams running along Al Jerozolimskie).

The construction of Warsaw's metro system began in 1983 and so far only a single

line is in operation, running from the southern suburb of Ursynów (Kabaty station) to Marymont via the city centre. A northern extension to Młociny should be complete by 2008, and there are long-term plans to build a second, east–west line. Yellow signs with a big red letter 'M' indicate the entrances to metro stations. Every station has a public toilet and there are lifts for disabled passengers. You use the same tickets as on trams and buses, but you validate the ticket at the gate at the entrance to the platform, not inside the vehicle. Trains run every eight minutes (every four minutes during rush hours).

## Taxi

Taxis in Warsaw are easily available and not too expensive: around 6zł flag fall and 3/6zł per kilometre during the day/night. Reliable companies include **MPT Radio Taxi** (☎ 9191), which has English-speaking dispatchers, **Super Taxi** (☎ 9622), **Tele Taxi** (☎ 9627) and **OK! Taxi** (☎ 9628).

All are recognisable by signs on the taxi's roof with the company name and phone number. Beware of 'pirate' or 'mafia' taxis, which do not display a phone number or company logo – the drivers may try to overcharge you and turn rude and aggressive if you question the fare. They no longer patrol the airport, Centralna station, or luxury hotels, but still haunt tourist spots looking for likely victims.

All official taxis in Warsaw have their meters adjusted to the appropriate tariff, so you just pay what the meter says. When you board a taxi, make sure the meter is turned on in your presence, which ensures you don't have the previous passenger's fare added to yours. Taxis can be waved down on the street, but it is better to order a taxi by phone; there's no extra charge for this service.

# AROUND WARSAW

## KAMPINOS NATIONAL PARK

Popularly known as the Puszcza Kampinowska, the **Kampinos National Park** (Kampinoski Park Narodowy; off Map p84; ☎ 022 722 6001; kampinoski-pn.gov.pl) begins just outside Warsaw's northwestern administrative boundaries and stretches west for about 40km. It's one of the largest national parks in Poland, with around three-quarters of its area covered by forest, mainly pine and oak.

The park includes Europe's largest area of inland sand dunes, mostly tree-covered and up to 30m high, and it's a strange feeling to have sand between your toes so far from the sea. Other parts of the park are barely accessible peat bogs that shelter much of its animal life.

Elks, beavers and lynxes live in the park but are hard to spot; you are more likely to see other animals such as hares, foxes, deer and, occasionally, wild boars. The park is home to some bird life, including black storks, cranes, herons and marsh harriers.

Kampinos is popular with hikers and cyclists from the capital, who take advantage of its 300km of marked walking and cycling trails. The eastern part of the park, closer to the city, is more favoured by walkers as it's accessible by public transport; the western part is less visited. As well as half- and one-day hikes, there are two long trails that traverse the entire length of the park, both starting from Dziekanów Leśny on the eastern edge of the park. The red trail (54km) ends in Brochów, and the green one (51km) in Żelazowa Wola.

If you plan on hiking in the park, buy a copy of the *Compass Kampinoski Park Narodowy* map (scale 1:30,000), available from bookshops in Warsaw (p85).

On the southern boundary of the park around 1km west of the tiny village of Kampinos is a large wooden house that is the **Muzeum Puszczy Kampinoskiej** (Kampinos Forest Museum; off Map p84; ☎ 022 725 0123; Granica; admission free; ☎ 9am–4pm Tue–Sun). Inside, static displays wax lyrical on the park's flora and fauna, while outside there's a small exhibition (in English and Polish) on the country's national parks and a group of forest buildings which collectively create a small **skansen**.

Bivouac sites designated for camping are the only accommodation options within the park's boundaries, but there are hotels close by in Czarnów, Laski, Leszno, Tułowice and Zaborów. Warsaw's tourist information centres (p87) have a full list of places to stay near the park.

## Getting There & Away

The most popular jumping-off point for walks in the eastern part of the park is the village of Truskaw. To get there from central Warsaw, take tram 4 or 36 northbound on ul Marszałkowska to Plac Wilsona, then city bus 708 (two or three an hour on weekdays, hourly on Saturday).

PKS buses run from Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal to Kampinos (8.60zł, one hour, three daily).

## ŻELAZOWA WOLA

If it wasn't for Poland's most famous musician, Żelazowa Wola (zheh-lah-zo-vah vo-lah) wouldn't be on the tourist map. This tiny village 53km west of Warsaw is the birthplace of Frédéric Chopin, and the house where he was born on 22 February 1810 has been restored and furnished in period style to create a **museum** (☎ 046 863 3300; adult/student museum & park ticket 12/6zł, park only 4/2zł, free Fri; manor house ☎ 9am-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Apr–mid-Oct, 9am-4pm Tue-Sun mid-Oct–mid-Apr, park 9am-5.30pm Mon, 9am-8pm Tue-Sun May-Aug, 9am-5.30pm Mar-Apr & Sep–mid-Oct, 9am-4pm mid-Oct–Feb). It's a lovely little country house with beautiful gardens, but there is little in the way of original memorabilia. Nonetheless, the tranquillity and charm of the place make it a pleasant stop.

**Piano recitals**, often performed by top-rank virtuosos, are normally held here each

Sunday from the first Sunday in May to the last Sunday in September. There are usually two concerts, up to an hour long, at noon and 3pm; there's no fee other than the park entry ticket. The programme can be found on [www.nifc.pl](http://www.nifc.pl).

There's a restaurant opposite the entrance to the museum, but nowhere to stay overnight. The nearest accommodation is in Sochaczew, 6km away.

### Getting There & Away

PKS buses run from the Warszawa Zachodnia bus terminal to Żelazowa Wola (10zł, 1¼ hours, three daily). There's a morning departure from Warsaw at 9.33am; a bus returning to Warsaw leaves Żelazowa Wola at 4.38pm.

Several travel agencies and the Chopin Museum (p97) in Warsaw put together organised tours for the Sunday concerts – a more comfortable option. Check with Warsaw's tourist information centres (p87) for details, or catch the 1.30pm bus from the Chopin Museum.