

# Kraków's Historic Center and Nowa Huta

Kraków, Poland

Photographs by Alan Ward 2017

# Notes on the Making of the Photographs

The founding charter of Kraków in 1257 was based on Magdeburg Law, which defined the legal system governing the city, the rights of its citizens, as well as the privileges for use of the surrounding landscape. It also brought order to the layout of the city, defining the street pattern and location for fortifications. Kraków's charter specified a main square, centrally located within a grid of streets. The main square was the largest in medieval Europe, at nearly 200m on each side, and has remained intact within a regular pattern of streets and blocks. Magdeburg Law, which was modified over time and varied from city to city, was applied to over one thousand locations in Central and Eastern Europe from the twelfth century through the nineteenth century.

Most of the medieval fortifications in Kraków have been removed and replaced with a linear park around the perimeter of the historic center (1). Other changes to the medieval city have been very few; many buildings remain in use for their intended purposes, including numerous churches and monasteries. There is a variation in the alignment of the street grid in the historic center. To the north, the main square and adjacent streets are oriented from the southeast to northeast (10). South of the main square, streets are rotated to align along the north south axis and to Wawel Hill (3), a prominent landform at a bend on the Vistula River. The Royal Wawel Castle was built on the crest, beginning in the eleventh century (4-7). The castle on a hill has been a symbol of the

city, and one of the most culturally significant sites in the country, after Kraków was made the capital of Poland in 1320.

There is however, a dark side to Kraków in the twentieth century, first when seized by the Germans in 1939, who turned the city into the capital of the General Government of Poland. After five years of erasing Polish culture, genocide and terror, the Germans retreated before advancing Soviet armies on January 17, 1945. Kraków miraculously survived intact, the only large Polish city to avoid destruction. Two days later, Sovietization began along with continued brutal repression. The Soviets built a model communist, industrial town east of the city beginning in 1949, called Nowa Huta (32-35). There were 40,000 workers at an enormous steel-making plant at its peak in the 1970s (32-33). The plan for the new town was centered on an octagonal square with radiating avenues, lined with five and six-story apartment blocks with arcades, resembling the scale of Parisian avenues (34-35). The steel plant, along with other factories built nearby, created some of the worst air pollution in Europe, endangering the health of citizens in the region, as well as the cultural assets of historic Kraków. In 1989, an enormous statue of Lenin was removed from the main street; and in 1993 Soviet troops departed. The steel plant permanently closed in 2020, and since then, Nowa Huta has found new life, while remaining a symbol of failed socialist values.

# List of Photographs

1. Linear park and fortification remnants around the historic center
2. *Brama Floriańska*, St. Florian's Gate, 14<sup>th</sup> century north gate
3. View south on *Kanonicza*, street leading south to Wawel Hill
4. *Katredra Wawelska*, Wawel Cathedral, 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century
5. *Dziedziniec Arkadowy*, courtyard of castle on Wawel Hill
6. *Dziedziniec Arkadowy* and *Baszta Senatorska* beyond
7. Entry on west side of *Dziedziniec Arkadowy*
8. View south on *Grodzka* to *Kościół Bernardynów*
9. *Plac św. Marii Magdaleny*, square at Church of Mary Magdalene
10. View north to *Rynek Główny*, main square, 13<sup>th</sup> century origins
11. *Bazylika Mariacka*, basilica, northeast corner of main square
12. *Sukiennice*, cloth hall, market hall and *Bazylika Mariacka*
13. *Sukiennice*, market hall and *Wieża Ratuszowa*
14. Central passage in *Sukiennice*, market hall
15. West side of *Rynek Główny*, main square and market hall
16. Arcade of market hall and basilica
17. Arcade in market hall
18. Arcade and *Kościół Świętego Wojciecha*, 11<sup>th</sup> century church
19. *Plac Mariacki*, *Kościół św. Barbary*, plaza and church
20. *Plac Mariacki*, plaza and basilica
21. *Plac Mariacki* and *Pralatówka Kościoła Mariackiego*
22. *Kościół pw. św. Jana Chrzciciela*, Church of St. John the Baptist
23. *Zaulek Estreichera*, pedestrian way in Jagiellonian University
24. *Kościół Bernardynów*, Church of St. Bernardino, 17<sup>th</sup> century
25. *Bazylika Dominikanów*, Basilica of the Holy Trinity,, 13<sup>th</sup> century
26. *Bazylika Franciszkanów*, Basilica of St Francis of Assisi
27. *Plac Szczepański*, square built and modified, 14<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century
28. Gate to *Bazylika św. Michała Archaniola*, 18<sup>th</sup> century
29. *Bazylika św. Michała Archaniola*
30. *Klasztor Zakon św. Pawła Pierwszego*, monastery
31. Interior of *Bazylika św. Michała Archaniola*
32. Entry court to steel mill at Nowa Huta
33. View from main lobby at steel mill
34. View north on *Aleja Róż*, pedestrian street
35. Building with arcades on *Plac Centralny im. R. Reagana*



























































































# Notes

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