

# MINI GUIDEBOOK

Culture and historical monuments

## Southern Mazovia

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**Mazovia.**  
heart of Poland



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## SOUTHERN MAZOVIA

The picturesque views of the southern part of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship are a perfect setting for atmospheric towns, ruins of medieval castles and many other historical monuments.

This pocket guide provides descriptions of the cultural attractions of Radom, as well as the following poviats: radomski, przysuski, szydlowiecki, lipski, kozienicki, piaseczyński, grójecki and białobrzegi. The biggest urban centre in this part of Mazovia is Radom, and numerous towns presented in this guidebook are located in the immediate vicinity of Warsaw. The two afore-mentioned cities constitute the best possible starting points for excursions. Each place presented in this guide is accessible by bus; numerous attractions are also located along the railway lines Warszawa – Kielce and Dęblin – Koluszki cutting through the region. With your own means of transport you are free to move around, irrespective of the timetable.



## MAZOVIAN LANDSCAPES

The diversity of landscape distinguishes the southern part of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. Extensive areas of land are covered with forest including: the Chojnowskie Forests, the Kozienska Forest, the Ilżeckie Forests and the Suchedniowskie Forests. In the Middle Ages, the impenetrable forests were a favourite destination for hunting trips organised for kings, and nowadays they attract tourists craving for peace and quiet. Grójec surroundings are among the most extensive fruit farming regions in Poland. The best time to go there is in May, when all the fruit trees are in full blossom. River valleys add variety to the relatively monotonous lie of the land of southern Mazovia.

Among the most picturesque ones is the Pilica valley. From the left high river bank, you can enjoy breathtaking views. Reportedly, on particularly sunny days, you can even see the Świętokrzyskie Mountains. As for the Vistula valley, it astounds with its enormous size. The queen of Polish rivers still remains a wild river. Flocks of birds frequently gather on its sandbanks.

## KALEIDOSCOPE OF HISTORY

For years, academics have been trying to establish what in fact the name "Mazowsze" means. In general, it splits into two parts: "maz" and "wsze". The latter element is related to the word "vše", which means a settled country. It is much more difficult to give an explanation for the first part; most probably it derives from the words "mazać" and "mazidło" (*to soil*). Presumably, it was a name given to the muddled inhabitants of the land, or it might also derive from the word "maż" (*axle grease*) which is connected with wood tar burning.

Explaining the region's name is as difficult as marking its exact borders. What is characteristic of the southern part of

the Voivodeship, established in 1999, is the fact that...in fact it never belonged to Mazovia. The border on the Pilica was already established when Poland was divided into several duchies by Boleslaus the Wry-mouthed. On several occasions the mazowiecko-kujawska and krakowsko-sandomierska duchies had the same ruler. Since the times of Casimir the Great, the dukes of Mazovia paid liege homage to the Polish king. In time, when the Piast families that ruled specific parts of Mazovia were dying out, the land was incorporated into the Crown. In 1526, the last of the dukes of Mazovia that ruled in Warsaw, Janusz III, died heirless. Since he died only a year and a half after the death of his elder brother, Stanislaus, and both of them were in their prime, the circumstances of their deaths were for a long time the subject of rumours and investigations.



When Mazovia was incorporated into the Crown, the Pilica river became the border between the Małopolska and Mazowiecka provinces. The territories to the north of the border line belonged to the Rawskie (western part) and Mazowieckie Voivodeships, and the southern part of the region was included in the Sandomierskie Voivodeship.

In the Middle Ages, the region was covered with impenetrable forests that were a favourite place for hunting trips of kings and dukes. The major communications route was the Vistula, along which important commercial centres emerged, such as Solec and Czersk. Significant locations were also Warka and Dobre Miasto, located at the Pilica crossing points. Ladislaus Jagiello established numerous towns and cities in the southern part of the region. Not all of them

have retained the same reputation until now. The majority of medieval towns were partially agricultural, and their major source of income was trade. The capital earned in this way was readily invested in crafts; numerous water mills, grinding shops and paper mills were established at that time. The close vicinity to Cracow made the Renaissance appear in the south of the region relatively quickly. Traces of the Renaissance are most easily visible in the architecture; however it had an impact on all fields of art. After a long time spent at the royal court, an outstanding poet Jan Kochanowski, settled down in Czarnolas on the edge of the Kozieniecka Forest (Puszcza Kozieniecka). In the privacy of the family residence he created his best works, e.g. the first Polish drama "Odprawa posłów greckich".

Unfavourable times came in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. An economic crisis plus several epidemics of the bubonic plague coincided with the Swedish invasion. Warsaw incurred the greatest losses; however the situation of other cities, towns and villages was also tragic. A remarkable victory at Warka on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1656, by the Polish army under the command of hetman Stefan Czarniecki, was unfortunately an isolated episode in a long war. The effects of the Swedish invasion were still clearly visible over a century later.

As a result of the third partition of Poland, the part of Mazovia in question became the property of Prussia, just like most of the region. In 1807, the territories were incorporated in the Duchy of Warsaw, and in 1815 into the Kingdom of Poland. The region was further expanded and developed until 1830. The popula-

tion was increasing, and the land development in urban areas changed. Lots of public utility buildings date back to this period, e.g. the town halls in Warka and Grójec. Crafts and trade, as well as education and culture were developing successfully. Jews constituted numerous social groups in the towns of Mazovia, and dealt mostly with trade.

After the November Uprising (1830-1831), the Kingdom of Poland suffered strong Russian repressions; property was confiscated and the Polish army and the Sejm were abolished. Despite that, the regions economy was developing. Railway lines that were being constructed, determined a new arrangement of communications routes and related industrial functions.

The January Uprising claimed thousands of Mazovia inhabitants, and lots

of them were exiled in Siberia. Struggles were exceptionally intensive, for example, near Warka. Post-uprising repressions significantly changed the region's character. Church property was confiscated, and numerous monasteries were closed (e.g. in Opactwo). Dozens of towns and small towns (e.g. Siemno and Czersk) were deprived of their town charters.

In 1914, the German army invaded Warsaw from the region of Studzianki. However, the damage of World War I did not affect the region in question as much as other parts of Mazovia, due to the fact that there was no long-term positional warfare. The interwar period featured dynamic industrialisation. Several strategic production plants were located in the area, e.g. a gunpowder factory in Pionki and a weapons factory in Radom.

Between 1939-1940, the surroundings of Przysucha were the area of operation of Hubal soldiers, who constituted the last, regular unit of the Polish Army. During the whole period of German occupation, there were guerrilla groups operating in Mazovia. In August 1944, the Red Army and the 1st Division of the Polish Army took part in bloody struggles for the stronghold at Warka and Magnuszew.

After 1945, the region's intensive restoration started. After the restoration, new, centrally-controlled investments started, e.g. a heat and power plant in Kozienice. Between 1975-1999, there were seven small voivodeships in the Mazovia area. The majority of the area in question was located within the area of the Radomskie and Warszawskie Voivodeships.

## RADOM

### *The city of St Casimir*

The city with a population of more than 230 thousand inhabitants is the largest city in the southern part of the Voivodeship. The city of Radom was mentioned for the first time in 1155. It was frequently visited by kings. This is the place from which the son of Casimir Jagiellon, Casimir, ruled the Crown for two years. Proclaimed a saint, today Casimir is the patron of Radom. Being the seat of the king, the city grew in strength; it was an important centre of various crafts, mostly the cloth industry and pottery. In the 19th century, Radom became an important industrial and cultural centre. The most entertaining face of the city is revealed in mid-June. Three-day colourful festivities, to celebrate Radom days, attract numerous guests.

Most of the historical monuments of Radom are located in the city centre, within the so-called miasto Kazimierzowskie (the Old Town), founded in the 14th cen-





ture by Casimir the Great. A fortified castle existing here since the medieval times, was devastated during the Swedish invasion. Ul. Wałowa and Reja mark the course of the former moat. The centre of the city urban design is a quadrangular square. In the square centre you can find the monument known as Pomnik Czynu Legionów Józefa Piłsudskiego (Monument commemorating the heroic deeds of the Piłsudski's Legions). The Neo-Renaissance town hall with a characteristic tower was erected in the middle of the 19th century, in line with a design by Henryk Marconi. Two neighbouring burgher houses that date back to the 17th century are also noticeable. These two charming buildings are known as Dom Gąski (Gąska House) and Dom Esterki (Esterka House). At present, the two buildings house the Museum of Contemporary Art, where you can admire works by Jerzy Nowosielski, Jerzy Duda-Grac, Władysław Hasior and others. The former college of Piarsists, erected between 1737 and 1756 according to the design of Antonio Solario, closes the opposite frontage of the square. The school was attended by Tytus Chałubiński, a doctor known as the "discoverer"

of the Polish Tatras and Zakopane. The fact is commemorated with a plaque on one of the building walls. The back wall of the building, on the side of ul. Wałowa, shows remnants of fortifications dismantled in the 19th century and the outline of Krakowska Gate. At present, the building of the former college houses the Jacek Malczewski Museum. What is mostly admired by visitors is a rich collection of modern paintings. The most valuable canvases exhibited were painted by Jacek Malczewski, born in Radom. This is where you can admire, "Autoportret z muzą" (Self-portrait with a muse) from 1908, among others. However, it would be a mistake to ignore other exhibitions. One of the particularly interesting ones is a collection of non-professional art, including the works of such artists as Teofil Ociepka and Nikifor Krynicki, as well as

collections of exotic art. Visitors particularly interested in history will find there interesting collections on the history of Radom.

From the square you can see the towers of the parish church of St John the Baptist, located at ul. Rwańska. It was founded by King Casimir the Great. The church was built between 1360 and 1370 in the Gothic style. Its present looks are a result of comprehensive alterations made at the beginning of the 20th century. The author of the modifications that were implemented was Józef Pius Dziekoński. The older components that survived include: the northern wall of the central nave plus the Rosary chapel, a late Renaissance chapel of the Kochanowski family and a late Gothic portal that leads from the chancel to the sacristy. A cemetery with two-hun-



dred-year-old gravestones, located next to the church, is a good place to reflect. The presbytery building is worth seeing, since it is the last part of the Radom castle that has survived.

To the east of the square you can find the massive, brick walls of the monastery of Observants and St Catherine's church, considered to be among the best preserved building complexes of Observants in Poland. Erected as a quadrangle, the monastery was built in several stages at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The interior amazes with the main altar presenting a late Gothic Passion, plus polychrome on the southern wall dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, the church features numerous historic epitaphs, coffin portraits, as well as a sarcophagus of Dionizy Czachowski, a commander of the army of the Sandomierskie Voivodeship

during the January Uprising. At Christmas both children and adults enthuse about a moving nativity scene. St Catherine's church is not only a place of religious cult, but also numerous cultural events. The International Festival of Chamber and Organ Music, organised in August and September, is held not only in the churches and concert halls in Radom, but also in Orońsko, Białobrzegi, Szydłowiec, Pionki and Stromiec. The participants of the International Festival of the Ancient Music of Nicholas of Radom (third decade of September) include groups of adults and children. In the fourth week of November, during the Cecilian Days of Church Music, in the churches and concert halls of Radom you can listen to the best regional choirs.

The complex of buildings that used to belong to Observants, is located at the

beginning of ul. Żeromskiego that serves as the city axis. Neoclassical and eclectic burgher houses from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, house shops and public utility institutions. The small St Stanislaus' church located at pl. 3 Maja is also worth visiting. It was erected at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries as an Orthodox church. The Artistic Circles Club "Łażnia" operates in the building of the former municipal baths, located at ul. Żeromskiego 56. The Club is the organiser of the nationally renowned competition for young interpreters of singing poetry. The Singing Poetry Tournament "Łażnia" is held at the first weekend of March. Ul. Żeromskiego adjoins an extensive municipal park, which is an actual oasis of greenery encouraging a slow walk. At the edge of the park you can find the neo-Gothic cathedral of Radom.

An important landmark on the cultural map of the city is the Jan Kochanowski Theatre. Famous for its interesting repertoire, the theatre is also an organiser of events held on a regular basis. Tydzień Sztuk Odważnych (*Week of Bold Plays*) held in the third week of December is a well-known and nationally recognised review of Polish





dramatic works. Performances awarded in the competition are presented in March and April, as part of the Premiere Festival known as "Radom Odważny" (*Bold Radom*). The International Gombrowicz Festival (organised every two years in the second week of October) serves the presentation of the most important adaptations of Gombrowicz's works in Europe.

Visiting Radom, we cannot forget about one of the most beautiful Polish open-air ethnographic museums, that is Muzeum Wsi Radomskiej (*Museum of the Radom Countryside*). Sixty buildings presenting the folk tradition of the region are spread across an area of several dozen hectares. These include thatched peasant homesteads, estates and interesting outbuildings, such as: a chuff cutting house, oiler house, tobacco drying

house and even a pottery kiln. The exhibition also includes windmills and smithies. One of them houses a tavern, where visitors can try farmhouse food. Having had a square meal, it is also worth seeing a rich collection of beehives and carriages. Numerous interesting events are held at the Museum. Palm Sunday combines the spiritual experience of a solemnly-celebrated mass and palm blessing and the picture of fields with a colourful Easter fair. The Bread Fair (first Sunday of September) features the presentation of both traditional baking methods and accompanying ceremonies, as well as the achievements of contemporary bakery. The calendar of events held at the Museum also includes an annual celebration connected with the First Day of Spring, Children's Day and the Potato Fair organised in the autumn.

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

Muzeum Wsi Radomskiej

(*Museum of the Radom Countryside*)

ul. Szydłowiecka 30, tel./fax 048 3329281,

[www.muzeum.radom.pl](http://www.muzeum.radom.pl)

Muzeum Okręgowe im. J. Malczewskiego

(*Jacek Malczewski District Museum*)

Rynek 11, tel. 048 3624329,

[www.muzeum.edu.pl](http://www.muzeum.edu.pl)

Muzeum Sztuki Współczesnej

(*Museum of Contemporary Art*),

ul. Rynek 4/5, tel. 048 3622550

Teatr Powszechny im. J. Kochanowskiego

(*Jan Kochanowski Theatre*)

pl. Jagielloński 15, tel. 048 3845306,

[www.teatr.radom.pl](http://www.teatr.radom.pl)

# OROŃSKO

## *The kingdom of sculpture*

The history of the estate in Orońsko dates back to the medieval times. Currently the heart of the estate complex, the Neoclassical palace, was built in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building design was reportedly developed by a well-known contemporary architect, Franciszek Maria Lanci. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the contemporary owner of Orońsko, a painter Józef Brandt, made the estate a place of meetings of artists and a type of open academy for painting novices.

The tradition is continued by the Centre of Polish Sculpture operating in the estate since 1965. Each year, several hundred artists from home and abroad work

here. The results of their work can be seen during outdoor post-work exhibitions, organised each year. Frequently, the works are exposed in the park, outside exhibition halls, where they perfectly harmonise with the old tree stand and a picturesque park pond. The Centre prides itself on a rich collection of contemporary Polish sculpture. The Orońsko collections include works by Alfons Karny, Gustaw Zemła, Katarzyna Kobro and many other famous sculptors of the last century. Paintings by Józef Brandt are exhibited in the interiors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century palace, restored with the greatest care.

Centrum Rzeźby Polskiej  
(Centre of the Polish Sculpture)  
ul. Topolowa 1, tel./fax 048 6184027  
[www.rzezba-oronsko.pl](http://www.rzezba-oronsko.pl)



## PRZYSUCHA

### *A meeting with an ethnographer*

A remnant of the multi-cultural past of a small town located on the southern outskirts of the Radomska Plain, are its two most important monuments, that is an 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque and classical church and a synagogue from the same time. The two buildings were already several dozen years old, when in 1814 Oskar Kolberg was born in Przysucha. Probably the atmosphere of the small town had a significant influence on the later scientific career of the best known Polish ethnographer. The 19th century, stylishly furnished, estate houses the museum of Oskar Kolberg. Visitors have an opportunity to see a collec-

tion of his manuscripts as well as family documents and portraits. In September, the ceremony for granting the prestigious Oskar Kolberg awards to folk artists is held at the Museum. The most vivid part of the event is a vigorous concert of the prize winners.

Muzeum im. Oskara Kolberga  
(*Oskar Kolberg Museum*),  
al. WOP 11, tel. 048 6752248  
[www.przysucha.pl](http://www.przysucha.pl)

## CHLEWISKA

### *At the former ironworks*

Between 1890-1892 the ironworks, big for those times, were opened in Chlewiska. Between ten and twenty tonnes of crude iron were made each day. The ore was obtained from the nearby wells, mostly from the slopes of Skłobska Mountain. Similar to other facilities of this type, the factories operating in the Staropolski Okręg Przemysłowy (*Staropolski Industrial District*), were powered with the water from a small nearby river. The factory was operating until 1940. What we should know is the fact that it was the last steelworks in Europe that used charcoal for iron making. Today, the preserved buildings of the former steelworks house a field unit of the Museum of Technology in Warsaw. Apart from the ancient machinery, what is very impressive is the extensive view that can be admired from the upper platform of a hoist tower.

Today's place of recreation used to witness the sounds of hammers. The former manor house of the Chlewicki



family houses a luxurious recreational centre. The guests may choose from among the rooms and suites located in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Odrowąż Palace and former 19<sup>th</sup> century Stables. A stylish tavern serves Old Polish dishes. Guests of the Manor House have an opportunity to recuperate, walking among the ancient trees of a ten hectare park, fishing in two park ponds or improving their horse-riding skills. In the winter the centre organises charming sleigh rides. After a ride, you can warm yourself with mead or mulled wine served in the palace dungeons.

Huta Żelaza w Chlewiszkach

*(Ironworks in Chlewiszka)*

Mr Stanisław Turek (administrator),  
ul. Partyzantów 4, tel. 048 6287193



# SZYDŁOWIEC

## A Renaissance town

The powiat town located on the southern outskirts of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship stands out with its diverse history and top class historical monuments. Holding a town charter since 1427, Szydłowiec flourished in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It enjoyed numerous royal privileges and constituted an important centre of various crafts. In subsequent centuries ironworking and building stone, specifically the Poland-wide famous Szydłowiec sandstone working plants, were established here. The population of Szydłowiec was for centuries a multicultural melting pot; in the Renaissance numerous Scots exiled from their mother country settled here, and

the town had a large Jewish population. The Jewish cemetery in Szydłowiec (located between ul. Wschodnia and Staszica) is among the biggest in the country. More than 2.5 thousand gravestones are preserved there and some of them are of huge artistic value.

The town centre preserved its medieval urban arrangement. The square features an impressive Renaissance town hall, built between 1602-1629 by two Italian builders, Kacper and Wojciech Fodyga. Erected as a rectangle, the building is decorated with a high attic, a polygonal clock tower and round towers in the corners. In front of the town hall you can see a town whipping post decorated with mascarons.

The oldest monument in the town is a late Gothic church erected between 1493-1509 and financed by the Jakub

Szydłowiecki Foundation. The church exterior stands out with enormous buttresses and numerous decorative elements. We recommend that you visit the church interior to see the amazing Gothic vault. The most valuable furnishings include a late Gothic polyptych located in the chancel, which shows the Assumption and Passion scenes. It was made at the beginning of the 16th century in Szydłowiec.

The Szydłowiec castle is not only the biggest town attraction, but also one of the most beautiful Renaissance residences in Poland. It was built on an artificial island surrounded with a wide moat. A stone castle was built in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Almost a hundred years later the building was given Renaissance features at the request of Mikołaj Szydłowiecki, the castellan of

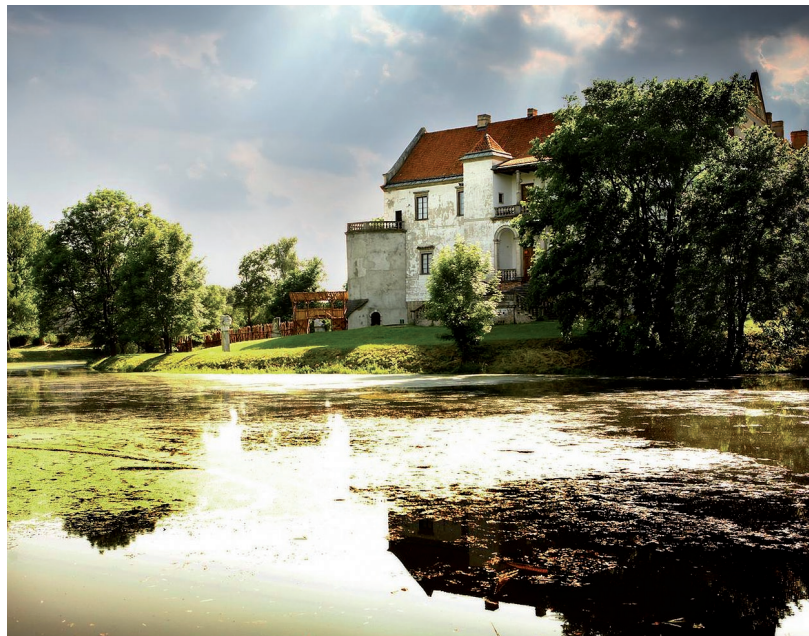
Radom and the highest official responsible for the royal treasury. The castle is surrounded with a vast park. The northeastern side of the three-wing mass of the castle has the most imposing presence. A grand staircase with steps winding around the central pillar attracts attention in the first place. The castle houses the Szydłowiecki Cultural Centre and the Museum of Traditional Musical Instruments. The collection, unique in the country, covers several thousand items, including approximately three hundred exhibited on a permanent basis. The collection includes both the simplest instruments, made of bark, feathers and straw, and rare examples of several-hundred-year-old violins, ancient concertinas, hurdy-gurdies and beautiful musical boxes. Not only can you admire the instruments, but you can also listen

to their sound and even order a copy. A Renaissance chamber with a fireplace witnesses concerts of classical music.

The castle in Szydłowiec is vibrant with life all year round. The Cultural Spring of Szydłowiec has a long tradition and covers a series of interesting events, such as meetings of amateur theatres competing for the "Laur Złotego Gargulca" Award (third decade of May) and a review of folk groups and bands dedicated to Jan Derleta, a renowned artist and animator of the cultural life of the countryside near Szydłowiec (second Sunday of June). On the second Sunday of September, at the castle of Szydłowiec time travels back to several centuries earlier. The best teams of knights in the country compete against each other in a Tournament for the Spade of Krzysztof and Mikołaj Szydłowiecki.

People from Szydłowiec love to have fun, and that is why whole families participate in the town fair celebrated on the first weekend of May. The event's grand scale is amazing - concerts, fairs and competitions take place at the castle, the square and in other corners of this charming town.

Muzeum Ludowych  
Instrumentów Mczynych  
(Museum of Traditional Musical Instruments)  
ul. Sowińskiego 2, tel. 048 6171789  
[www.sckzamek.pl](http://www.sckzamek.pl)  
[www.szydlowiec.pl](http://www.szydlowiec.pl)



## IŁŻA

### **You can learn...pottery with a bit of practice**

The town, located in the picturesque valley of the Iłżanka river, is among the oldest towns in the Voivodeship; Iłża was granted a town charter in 1239. The town owes its charm to the traditional, low buildings that reconstruct its medieval urban development. A parish church of the Assumption overlooks the town buildings. The 17<sup>th</sup> church is remarkable for its rich, Baroque furnishing. The early Baroque altar in the northern aisle is from the Wawel Cathedral. Moreover, visitors are delighted with a stucco decoration of the Mannerist Szyszkowski chapel.

For centuries, Iłża was an important centre of the potter's craft. Craftsmen made use of the resources of first class clay occurring near the town. It was used to make the casting mould for the Sigismund's Bell in the Wawel. The products of Iłża were sold not only at the main square in Kraków, but also exported to Lithuania, Belarus and via Gdansk to Sweden.



The Regional Museum presents a rich collection of Iłża products, and at ul. Wójtowska you can admire two preserved pottery kilns dating back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The conical building was used until the 1960's when the last Iłża potter died. An attempt to reactivate these crafts is the Fair of Folk Art organised in July by Towarzystwo Ochrony i Promocji Zawodów Ginących (*Society for the Protection and Promotion of Dying Crafts*).

A huge tower, a remnant of the castle of Kraków bishops, overlooks the town. In his chronicle, Jan Długosz wrote that the castle was erected between 1326 and 1347 at the request of bishop Jan Grot. Over the centuries, the building was frequently restructured and modernised and rulers made frequent visits here. Ladislaus Jagiello visited Iłża as many as four times, and Ladislaus IV met here his future wife, Cecylia Re-

nata. Devastated in the Swedish invasion, the castle was never restored to its previous grandeur. The last resident left it in 1812. The building material from the gradually demolished castle ruins can be found in the walls of numerous houses in Iłża. Paradoxically, the oldest part of the castle has been preserved until now. It is worth climbing up the steep path that leads to the top of the castle hill. The reward for the effort made is a breathtaking panorama. The castle and its history have inspired the organisation of the Tournament of Knights that takes place in Iłża each year in May. Horse shows, a competition for the best historical costume and struggles between knights take us, for a moment, to an epoch from the past.

Muzeum Regionalne  
ul. Błazińska 1, tel. 048 6162929  
[www.ilza.pl](http://www.ilza.pl)





## SIENNO

### *Polkas, waltzes and...*

Today a gmina village, it was granted its town charter in the first half of the 15th century; then lost it as a punishment inflicted by the Russians for the January Uprising. The most precious monument of Sienna is a Gothic church erected between 1431-1441 and financed by the Dobiesław Oleśnicki Foundation. Enthusiasts of feasting and popular music should visit the place. On the first weekend of May, wedding party bands play on the main square, and on the fourth Sunday of August, Meetings of Street Bands take place.

## SOLEC ON THE VISTULA

### *On the Vistula route*

Solec seduces with its peace and quiet. It is hardly possible to imagine that a busy river port operated here in medieval times. The products shipped to Gdańsk included pots from Ilża. Solec enjoyed town status from the 14th century until 1870. Casimir the Great built here a stone castle. What remain from the building, that was devastated during the Swedish invasion, are fragments of the walls and one of the towers. The proof of the significance of Solec in the past is the disproportionate number of churches to the size of the village. The most valuable historical monument of Solec is the par-

ish church. Erected together with the castle by King Casimir, the church was converted in subsequent centuries according to the late Renaissance style. The church's furnishing, dating back to the 16th-18th centuries, was preserved. The furnishing of an early Baroque church of the Order of the Reformati comes from the same epoch. The 18th century church of St Stanislaus and the wooden church of St Barbara are also worth seeing.

## SKARYSZEW

### *Horse market*

Horse markets in Skaryszew are already several hundred years old. The right to organise the markets was granted by Ladislaus Jagiello in appreciation for the settlement inhabitants who gave their horses to the knights heading for Grunwald. The privilege was granted to Skaryszew together with the town charter in 1433. A two-day market is organised each year on the Monday after Ash Wednesday. Each year, the market in Skaryszew gathers between ten and twenty thousand horse buyers, breeders and enthusiasts. The enthusiasts are attracted not only by the beauty of the animals, but also by the specific local market customs: Horse purchasing is like a ritual. It starts

with a close visual inspection of an animal and the way it moves. Then the bargaining begins. If the two parties reach an agreement, the transaction is confirmed with a characteristic deal clinching. Apart from horses, the market in Skaryszew offers horse riding accessories, and even britzkas or carriages.

## PIONKI

### *"Explosive" town*

The beginnings of Pionki go back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. For the next seven centuries the settlement developed through clearing the surrounding Koziemiecka Forest (Puszcza Koziemiecka) and fish farming in ponds made on the Zagożdżonka river.

The location of Pionki, in the middle of nowhere surrounded by forests and marshes, and at the same time near a railway line, was a decisive argument for opening the National Factory of Gunpowder and Explosives here in 1922. The town's urban development and the majority of public utility buildings date back to the times of its intensive development in the interwar period. Pionki has remained an important centre of the chemical industry. The existence of

large industrial establishments had a beneficial impact on the development of sports infrastructure in the town, which witnessed the training of numerous Olympic athletes. Not everyone knows that Pionki is the seat of the national boogie-woogie association. In March, the sports hall in Pionki witnesses the national boogie-woogie contest.

It seems that in the near future the greatest tourist attraction in Pionki will be an open-air museum of the narrow-gauge railway. After visiting the exhibition in the former engine house, you can move along to have a train trip in the Koziemiecka Forest (Puszcza Koziemiecka).

Skansen Leśnej Kolei Wąskotorowej (under construction) (*Open-Air Museum of the Forest Narrow-Gauge Railway (under construction)*)

ul. Partyzantów 1  
www.fpkw.pl  
www.pionki.pl

## ZWOLEŃ

### *In tribute to Jan Kochanowski*

Zwoleń was founded by King Ladislaus Jagiello in the 1420's. Situated along an important trade route from Lublin to Częstochowa via Radom, it was thriving until the times of the Swedish invasion. The most valuable historical monument of Zwoleń is a late Gothic church of the Holy Cross. It was erected between 1564-1595. Two Renaissance chapels were added in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Neogothic side aisles and a tower date back to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The best known Polish Renaissance poet, Jan Kochanowski, and his family were buried in St Francis' chapel. The epitaph of Jan Kochanowski from the Zwoleń church, made 20 years after his death, is

considered to be his sole reliable image. You should also see St Stanislaus' chapel and its Baroque altar.

You can admire the Jan Kochanowski monument situated in the centre of a large square, unveiled in 1961. A colourful fair known as "Imieniny Pana Jana" (*John's namesday*) is organised at the monument over the last weekend of June.

www.zwolen.pl

## CZARNOLAS

### **Poetry from under the lime tree**

The most famous resident of Czarnolas was Jan Kochanowski. He was born in nearby Sycyna in 1530 and settled in Czarnolas around 1570. It is where Kochanowski's Laments, "Odprawa posłów greckich" and an epigram on a lime tree came into being. The traces of the Renaissance reality should be looked for in the poetry, since not many original mementos from Kochanowski's epoch have been preserved. The poet's museum is located in a classical estate from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, built for Duchess Teresa Jabłonowska from the Lubomirski family. In front of the building you can see the poet's monument sculptured by Mieczysław Welter. Among

the exhibits collected at the museum, visitors' attention is attracted by a Baroque armchair covered with gilt goatskin and featuring the Kochanowski family crest, as well as the iron doorframe from the poet's house. Scenes from everyday life of the Kochanowskis were also reconstructed, depicting the poet at work surrounded by his daughters. The building is surrounded by a pretty landscape park. In the park there is a Neogothic chapel. According to legend, the chapel was built on the foundations of the Kochanowski family hearth. An exhibition created inside the chapel presents scenes from the poet's stay at Wawel. Walking among the trees, you can also find a symbolic gravestone of the poet's daughter, Ursula. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the sarcophagus was placed in the place where reportedly the famous lime tree grew.

Each year, on a Saturday before St John's Day, Midsummer Night Meetings are held in Czarnolas, typically abounding in poetry and entertainment. During the fair, the prize winners of the national competition for a jug full of honey from Czarnolas for poetry related to the Czarnolas tradition, receive their awards.

Muzeum Jana Kochanowskiego  
(Jan Kochanowski Museum)  
tel. 048 6772005

## OPACTWO

### *Like a phoenix from the ashes*

On the way from Koziernice to Dęblin right past Sieciechów, you can see the white walls of the church in Opactwo. Situated in the Vistula valley, the settlement prides itself on the 18<sup>th</sup> century complex of buildings formerly the property of the Benedictines, composed of a church, partially destroyed monastery and the abbot's palace. The Benedictines managed the buildings from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, however the only remnant from medieval times are fragments of older buildings preserved in the foundations and walls of the contemporary church. The church of the Assumption is among the most valuable Rococo objects in the

Mazowieckie Voivodeship. It was erected in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a replacement for a monastery burnt down in a fire started by a careless novice. The church interior amazes with splendid frescos by Szymon Mańkowski.

## KOZIERNICE

### *The place where a king was born*

Situated between vast forests and the Vistula valley, Koziernice was a royal property from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. This is where rulers came to hunt in the first place. In 1467 the future king, Sigismund the Elder, was born here. An obelisk situated on the eastern side of the gate leading to the palace of Koziernice, commemorates this event. Quite modest, the monument is considered to be the oldest one of its' type in Poland.

The palace in Koziernice was built for the last Polish ruler, Stanislaus August. It was restructured twice. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Franciszek Arveuf converted it into the French Renaissance style. After devastation during World War II, the only

fragment that remained is the outbuilding; the rest of the building was reconstructed, however without paying attention to retaining the characteristic features of the style. The palace walls look onto a 19<sup>th</sup> century basin shaped as a four-leafed figure. The basin is surrounded with columns made of sandstone from Szydłowiec.

The Regional Museum is located in the former coach house. A permanent exhibition shows the material culture and folk handicraft of Koziernice, and is supplemented with temporary exhibitions. Visitors should also visit the Art Promotion Centre located in the tower. It cultivates the traditions of local artistic work and gives an opportunity to present the work of all artistically talented people.

On the first weekend of July, in the Koziernice amphitheatre, you can listen to amateur singers from all over Poland. En-

tering the Bogusław Klimczuk Song Festival, you have to interpret one song of a Polish stage star born in Kozenice. Both, the artists and the audience can be sure of unforgettable enjoyment.

On the outskirts of Kozenice you can find stables of English thoroughbred horses, established in 1924. This Poland-wide famous horse breeding facility organises horse riding lessons and provides saddle horses. Regional show jumping contests organised here are very popular and attract large audiences.

Muzeum Regionalne (*Regional Museum*)

ul. Parkowa 5b, tel./fax 048 6143372

Centrum Promocji Sztuki (*Art Promotio Centre*)

ul. Parkowa 3b

www.kozenice.pl

Stadnina Koni Kozenice (*Kozenice Hors Stales*)

ul. Wiślana 12, tel./fax 048 6142333

www.skkozenice.pl

## WARKA

### *For our freedom and yours*

The town, located on a high bank of the Pilica river, was granted a town charter at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries Warka was a well-known centre of trade and crafts. The name of the town refers most probably to the beer brewed here, that was already famous outside Mazovia in medieval times. Although in 1656 the army led by Stefan Czarniecki won the battle of Warka with the Swedish army, the town was destroyed in the Swedish invasion and never recovered to its former grandeur. The population is nowadays less than 12 thousand inhabitants and the town is an important centre of the food industry. The brewery in Warka keeps up the centuries-old tradition.

The town centre constitutes a quadratic square with a classical town hall dating back to the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Plans for the future include reactivation of the Museum of Warka History in a nearby estate at ul. Długa. The parish church of St Nicholas, located on the picturesque riverside bank, was erected in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Due to subsequent conversions, the church lost the characteristics typical of its style. Inside the church you can admire the preserved, interesting late Renaissance furnishing. At the cemetery opposite the church you can find the gravestone of Piotr Wysocki. The leader of ensigns who started the November Uprising and who was born in Warka on 10th September 1797. After the Uprising, he was exiled in Siberia and came back to his hometown almost a quarter of a century later.

Another church of historical value in Warka is the church of the Franciscans. The Baroque church of Our Lady of the Scapular was erected between 1652-1746. Inside the church the visitors' attention is attracted to the Baroque altars and a Rococo pulpit. The church vaults feature tombs of the Mazovian dukes Trojden and Ziemowit III as well as of the wife of Duke Janusz I, Danuta Anna.

In the eastern corner of the town, the Winiary quarter, you can find a palace erected at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century according to the design by Augustyn Locci. This is where Kazimierz Pułaski, the later participant of the Confederacy of Bar and one of the leaders in the battles for the independence of the United States, was born on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1747. In front of the palace you can admire his impressive monument. The building houses a muse-

um that gathers mementos of Pułaski and other Poles that contributed to battles on the other side of the Atlantic. The exhibition is surrounded with stylish furniture and carpets. The first floor of the museum houses temporary exhibitions. The museum also organises numerous concerts, exhibitions and lectures. A spruce landscape park surrounding the palace encourages an exploratory walk.

On the first Sunday of July, in cooperation with the W.A.R.K.A association, the Museum organises a historical and cultural picnic known as "Vivat Pułaski". At that time you can admire colourful parades moving along the streets, led by Kazimierz Pułaski himself supported by his personal company. The picnic organisers' aim at promotion of American culture and that is why you can hear a big beat band, see old big boats of a car and groups of

children and youths disguised in colourful costumes. Fair participants can expect numerous contests and tournaments with a country music concert in the evening.

Muzeum im. Kazimierza Pułaskiego  
(Kazimierz Pułaski Museum)  
ul. Pułaskiego 12, tel. 048 66772267  
[www.muzeum.ewarka.pl](http://www.muzeum.ewarka.pl)  
[www.warka.pl](http://www.warka.pl)



## MNISZEW

### *Tanks and trenches*

An authentic open-air war museum commemorates difficult battles that were fought between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> August 1944 for the stronghold at Warka and Magnuszów. Keeping a forward position was to be a starting point to go further west for the joined forces of the Red Army and the 1<sup>st</sup> Corps of the Polish Army.

The weapons and means of transport used during the battles are exhibited on a sandy hill. The network of trenches, entanglements and dugouts has also been reconstructed. Although the exhibition has visibly aged since the time it was established in 1977, it still delights the eye of enthusiasts of the military.

## CZERSK

### *The jewels of Queen Bona*

Nowadays out of the way, in medieval times Czersk was an important centre of the duke's power and a vibrant centre of trade. When the Vistula moved away from the town in 16<sup>th</sup> century, it lost its defensive and economic advantages. The most valuable historical monument of Czersk is the ruins of a Gothic castle. The stronghold was erected at the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries by Duke Janusz I. The parts of the medieval building that have been preserved until now are three towers and a wall connecting them. A pit in the middle of the courtyard is probably a former well. A square tower with an entrance gate functioned as a guardhouse, the highest tower was allotted as a store-

house and the eastern tower was a prison. The towers provide a vast view on the Vistula valley. The planter of the orchards located on the gently sloping hills was Queen Bona. Poland's Italian queen also used to plant vineyards around the castle. According to legend, the queen tore apart one of her valuable necklaces when she was leaving Poland for Italy. Reportedly, on moonlight nights, the queen still looks for her lost jewels around the courtyard of the Czersk castle.

In memory of past years, an event known as "Queen Bona Gardens" is organised at the castle each year on the first weekend of June. The historical fair gathers crowds of people. As many people participate in the Days of European Heritage organised in September.



# GÓRA KALWARIA

## Multicultural centre

In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in a small settlement on the left bank of the Vistula river, bishop Stefan Wierzbowski established a Calvary to be a copy of the original Jerusalem Calvary. In a cross-shaped plan, 6 churches, 35 chapels and 5 monasteries were erected. The turmoil's of history have brought destruction to most of them. In the place where formerly the arms of the Calvary Cross met, on an artificial hill, a Baroque church of the Exaltation of the Cross, which is a former Calvary chapel known as Pontius Pilate's house, is located. In the crypt underneath the altar bishop Stefan Wierzbowski was buried.

A graceful, classical town hall dating back to 1834 is located to the east of the church, with the former shambles with column arcades adjoining to it. A reconstructed, 18<sup>th</sup> century palace of bishops is located at the back of the town hall.

In the easternmost corner of the square there is a grand complex of buildings that used to belong to Observants. A Baroque church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was erected in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, according to the design of Jakub Fontana. The rich, Baroque furnishing of the church has been preserved. The 17<sup>th</sup> century painting of Our Lady of the Mountains is famous for miracles. In the chapel of St Walerian, the patron of Czersk, in a marble sarcophagus the Saint's relics were laid down.

In 1802, the authorities allowed Jews to build their homes in Góra Kalwaria. Until

the outbreak of World War II, Jews constituted more than a half of the towns' population. Góra Kalwaria was one of the main centres of Hasidism in Mazovia and the seat of a well-known family of zaddiks – Alter. A completely reconstructed synagogue is located at ul. Pijarska 5. Opposite, in a former prayer house, operates the house of religious studies of the Alter family. Next to it; you can find a zaddik estate dating back to 1859.

On the town outskirts, near the Last Supper Chapel that was preserved from the Calvary, a private museum has been established by Bożena and Wojciech Prus-Wiśniewski. The museum owns a collection of ethnographic, archaeological and historical exhibits related to the history of the region, as well as a rich collection related to the natural environment and souvenirs from numerous countries.

Muzeum Regionalne (*Regional Museum*)  
ul. Marianki 41a, tel. 022 7273726





## OBORY

### *On good terms with muses*

A Baroque estate was erected between 1681-1688 for the Great Royal Chancellor Jan Wielopolski. The designer came from the circle of the famous architect Tylman from Gameren. The characteristic feature of the building is its mansard roof. The estate is surrounded by a vast park with numerous vintage trees. For many years, the manor house in Obory has functioned as the workplace for writers. The greatest Polish writers produce their work in the historic building. The peaceful atmosphere brings inspiration. There is a way to visit the temple of muses - there exists the possibility to organise a reception or a conference in the stylish interiors of the building.

Dom Pracy Twórczej im. Bolesława Prusa  
(*Bolesław Prus House of Creative Work*)  
ul. Literatów 2, tel./fax 022 7540107  
www.palacobory.go3.pl

## KONSTANCIN- JEZIORNA

### *Healing waters*

In 1897, the owner of the Obory property, Witold Skórzewski, established a summer resort in the pine forests on the Jeziorka. Luxurious villas sprang up among old forest trees. Lots of glamorous buildings dating back to the turn of the centuries have been preserved until now; a walk along ul. Sienkiewicza and Batorego is particularly recommended. A healthy microclimate, the resources of therapeutic mud and rich sources of brine make Konstancin a valuable health resort, and at the same time one of the most elegant locations near Warsaw. An extensive park in the English style was es-

tablished in the town centre, where you can find a brine graduation tower. The facility is 40 m long and 6 m high. Brine drops flow down thick bundles of wicker, creating a mist permeated with minerals. Visits to the tower help fight infections of the upper respiratory tract, and additionally protect against conditions related to urban air pollution.

On the outskirts of Konstancin, in Czarnów, operates the Museum of Story Tellers, the only one of this type in the world. Each week, the Museum organises meetings with people telling excellent stories. Each meeting is different, and story tellers come from all over the world. That is why it is impossible to feel bored with visits to the Museum. The purpose for the establishment of this place, as declared by its founder Michał Malinowski, is not only to enchant the audience, but

also to preserve the tradition of the word of mouth that is irrevocably disappearing in the era of multimedia.

## PIASECZNO

### ***On a narrow gauge track***

The history of the town, that is nowadays in the first place a constantly expanding 'bedroom suburb' of Warsaw, goes back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Piaseczno was granted a town charter in 1429. A classical town hall from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century located on a big, rectangular square attracts the attention of visitors. A four-storey tower features a clock, Piaseczno's coat of arms and...a Turkish crescent. The last symbol reportedly commemorates the visit of the Turkish envoy Numan-Bej, who visited Piaseczno on his way to the Warsaw residence of King Stanislaus August in 1777.

A Gothic and Renaissance church of St Ann was erected in the second half

Muzeum Opowiadaczy Historii  
(*Museum of Story Tellers*)  
ul. Diamentowa 8, tel. 022 7546225  
www.storytellersmuseum.org  
www.konstancin.com

of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and rebuilt several times. Gothic portals from 1565 have been preserved, with the hand made doors preserved in the portal leading to the sacristy. On the church wall from the square side, you can find the remains of a metal pillory (a type of whipping post) where offenders were put. The majority of the church furnishing dates back to Baroque times, but a late Gothic crucifix from the beginning of the 16th century has also been preserved. The building of the former presbytery houses a small Regional Museum that gathers keepsakes related to the history of the region.

A great attraction of Piaseczno and its vicinity is a narrow-gauge railway that used to connect Warsaw and Grójec. At weekends, small railway cars pulled by an ancient engine start a trip with a destination a dozen or so kilometres away, in

Tarczyn. An important moment of the trip is a bonfire on a forest meadow near the railway line.

Muzeum Regionalne (*Regional Museum*)  
pl. Piłsudskiego 10, tel./fax 022 7372399

Piaseczyńskie Towarzystwo Kolei Wąskotorowej  
(*Piaseczno Narrow-Gauge Railway Asscition*)  
ul. Sienkiewicza 14, tel./fax 022 7567638  
www.kolejka-piaseczno.com

## GRÓJEC

### *Where apple trees blossom*

Grójec, in medieval times known as Grodziec, was one of the most important locations of southern Mazovia. The town lost its significance after the Swedish invasion. Today, it is a centre of a huge fruit farming region. In the springtime, the surrounding region is covered in white blossom. On this occasion, Grójec riotously celebrates the Fair of Blossoming Apple Trees on the last weekend of May.

Not many historical relics have been preserved. On a big, rectangular square you can admire a classical town hall, built around 1821, and designed by Hilary Szpilowski. Several other classical public utility buildings are located

at ul. Warszawska which branches off from the square. If you are interested in the examples of small-town wooden architecture, you should go to ul. Mszczonowska.

The parish church of St Nicholas is located on a hill considered to be a remnant of an early medieval town. Due to multiple reconstructions, the church has lost its original Gothic features. Inside the church, visitors' attention is drawn to a late Gothic crucifix that ornaments the alcove in the presbytery and a Gothic baptismal font made of sandstone. The stone has visible marks of sword sharpening. In front of the church you can find the monument of Piotr Skarga made by Andrzej Renes. The Jesuit known for his ardent sermons was born in Grójec in 1536.

## BEŁSK DUŻY

### *Hero from Somosierra*

The tower of the classical church of the Holy Trinity overlooks the village surrounded by orchards. The church was built between 1776-1779 according to the design of Hilary Szpilowski, and rebuilt in the 1930's. The majority of the furnishings date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Numerous epitaphs, with a portrait of the Rawa Voivode and lord of a nearby Mała Wieś, Bazyli Walicki, attract visitors' attention. His wife, Klementyna, was the sister of Colonel Jan Koziatowski. A central figure of the Napoleonic wars, and the commander of a charge of the Polish light cavalrymen during the battles of the Spanish Somosierra, was buried in the Bełsk church.

## LEWICZYN

### *Sanctuary surrounded by orchards*

A small, charming church is not only one of the oldest wooden churches in Mazovia, but also one of the most beautiful Marian sanctuaries of the region.

According to a local tradition, the hill where the church is located is artificial and commemorates a successful battle of one of the Mazovian dukes.

The church was founded in 1606 by the Deputy Master of the Pantry, Prokop Oborski. The Baroque main altar was built around 1750. The portrait of the Virgin Mary of Lewiczyn famous for miracles, located in the altar, is reportedly one of the thirteen paintings by St Lukas. However, according to art historians, the portrait

dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. For centuries, pilgrims made numerous votive offerings to the Virgin Mary of Lewiczyn. These include a late Gothic reliquary of the Tree of the Holy Cross, a monstrance founded by King Sigismund III Vasa and a chasuble made of the vizier's tent voted by King Jan III Sobieski, which were the spoils of the Vienna battle.

From spring to autumn, the area surrounding the church drowns in flowers. Near the church, several old grave-stones of interesting forms have been preserved.

## NOWE MIASTO ON THE PILICA

### *On a high river bank*

The town situated in a picturesque location on the left bank of the Pilica river, was granted a town charter in 1400. A series of keepsakes related to the history of the region are exhibited in a small museum. The oldest exhibits include neolite tools, medieval receptacles and antique books from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The most valuable historical monument of Nowe Miasto is a Baroque church and the Capuchin monastery. The three-aisle basilica was completed in 1786 and further developed in the century to follow. According to the strict monastic rule, the Baroque interior is modest and decorated in

dark brown shades. The paintings hanging in the altars were made by famous artists of the epoch: Franciszek Smuglewicz, Szymon Czechowicz and Józef Buchbinder. Father Honorat Koźmiński, a charismatic confessor and founder of numerous religious congregations, announced as a blessed person in 1988, lived in the local monastery from 1892 to his death eighteen years later. The monastery museum exhibits keepsakes of the monk, such as his confessional.

A characteristic element of the landscape of Nowe Miasto is a late Baroque palace built in 1753 for General Franciszek Gronowski. Among other residences of Mazovia, the one in Nowe Miasto stands out with a semi-circular break on the side of the garden going down in the direction of the Pilica. In front of the palace you can admire a vast view of the

river valley. The building is currently undergoing repairs; according to the plans it is supposed to be either a cultural facility or a conference centre.

A particularly good day to make a visit here is the Corpus Christi Day. Altars are decorated with green birch branches, the streets drown in flower petals and the instruments of the brass band reflect the sunshine.

Muzeum bł. ojca Honorata Koźmińskiego  
(*Museum of the Blessed Honorat Koźmiński*)  
Klasztor o.o. Kapucynów(*Capuchin monastery*),  
tel. 048 6741036

Muzeum Regionalne (*Regional Museum*)  
pl. o. H. Koźmińskiego 7a, tel. 048 6643042  
[www.nowemiasto.pl](http://www.nowemiasto.pl)

# JEDLIŃSK

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## ***Tradition of “Kusaki”***

Each year on the last day of Carnival a ritual ‘death beheading’ takes place on the Jedlińsk square. According to an old tradition, the town streets are crowded with people in a bizarre disguise, known as *kusaki*. These include devils, Jews, Gypsies and folk musicians. They act various scenes, based on 19<sup>th</sup> century folk literature. The whole town has a lot of fun, including numerous guests coming on that day.