

Tourist attractions of Opole Silesia



Opole Silesia is an attractive region for every tourist and hiker. Due to its geographical location, it has long been a place of intersecting roads and trade routes. Historical factors have likewise made it a region open to migration and colonisation, as well as a place of asylum for religious refugees. In consequence, it has become a territory in which various cultures have mingled, in particular Polish, German, and Czech. Traces of these cultures and their transformations can be found in the architecture, handicraft and folklore of the region. The cultural heritage of Opole Silesia consists of architectural, folkloric, and natural wealth. Treasures of material culture – palaces, churches (including wooden ones), chapels, monuments, and technological monuments – often appear closely connected with the natural world. Parks, gardens, arboreta, zoological gardens and fishponds once were established in the close vicinity of palaces. Churches and chapels were accompanied with melliferous lime trees, which are now under protection. Sculptures of St. John Nepomucen once adorned bridges, rivers, or crossroads. Apart from an impressive number of man-made monuments, Opole Silesia also has natural monuments of exceptional value. In this respect, it belongs to the most important regions in Poland. There are many rare and endangered plant and animal species, unusual fossils, as well as numerous forms of inanimate nature, such as rivers picturesquely meandering in their natural river beds, springs, caves and the occasional boulder. The most valuable natural areas and objects are protected in landscape parks and nature reserves.



Monuments Castles and palaces

Opole Silesia is a region rich in various types of residential architecture, such as Gothic defence castles, baroque palaces, and small, cosy 19th-century manor houses. Altogether there are more than 160 of them. They are valuable monuments of material culture and proof of the magnificence of the past.



Opole

The Piast Tower – the symbol of Opole – is situated in the Pasięka Island, in the part called Ostrówek, in the place of the early medieval settlement. The only remains of the old prince's castle of the early 13th century (destroyed in the years 1928–1930), is a massive, 35-meter-high cylindrical Gothic donjon of the late 13th century, made out of stone. The basement room has a barrel vault, and the stairs are partly within the thickness of the walls. In the wall coping rebuilt in 1934 there is a lofty spire built in 1962, with a modern wind vane in the shape of the Piast eagle, made by Marian Nowak, an artist from Opole.



Brzeg

The present restored Renaissance castle complex comprises a castle, a gate building, the Gothic castle chapel of St. Hedwig and the remains of Gothic walls, fragments of a garden, and traces of fortifications. Built on the plan of a huge quadrilateral, three-winged, with an arcaded courtyard inside. The gate building in the front wing – the most valuable part of the castle, ornamented with rich Renaissance architectural and sculptural decorations of the mid-16th century. Nowadays the castle is the seat of the Museum of the Silesian Piasts.



Prószków

The family seat of the Prószkowski family, a Renaissance castle built in 1563 with the help of Italian architects, rebuilt in the baroque style in the years 1677–1683. Four-winged, with a rectangular courtyard, bastion corners and two towers in the front elevation. Preserved Renaissance details from 1563, among others – portals. Baroque interior design (17th–18th centuries), with rich stuccowork, especially in the Knights' Chamber and the chapel. An 18th century fountain in the courtyard. A landscape park around the castle established at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.



Moszna

It is one of the youngest residential castles in Silesia, an architectural colossus (63000 m³ of cubic capacity, 7000 m² of surface area, 360 rooms, 99 turrets). An eclectic castle with neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance features. At present, it is the seat of the Neurological Therapy Centre. In the summer, it is the place of the Blooming Azaleas Music Festival.



Kopice

A palace rebuilt and extended in the second half of the 19th century into a monumental three-winged layout with neo-Gothic features. Burnt down in 1958, currently in ruin. The picturesque Schaffgotsch residence is surrounded by ponds with a bridge that used to be decorated with a figure of St. Christopher (nowadays it is situated in Opole, on the University Hill). In the neighbourhood there are farm buildings and a landscape park.



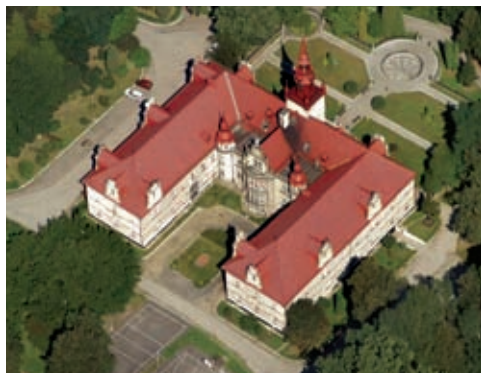
Żyrowa

An early baroque residence belonging to the von Gaschin family from Silesia for more than 200 years, extended in the 18th century and at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries; multi-winged, with two rectangular internal courtyards. An entrance gate in the front wing with a quadrangular tower on the axle, in the corners – towers with baroque cupolas. A vast park surrounding the residence.



Głogówek

A three-winged castle comprising an upper and lower castle with an internal courtyard, erected on the framework of the Gothic castle of the Opole Piasts in the late 13th century. The Oppersdorffs' residence (1561–1945). Built in a few stages, from the Renaissance (the upper castle) to baroque (the lower castle), rebuilt in the baroque style (the chapel with F.A. Sebastiani's paintings). It was under conservation works in the 1950s; it requires reconditioning. A landscape park surrounding the residence.



Tułowiec

An 18th/19th century palace, originally classicistic, rebuilt and extended at the end of the 19th century in the neo-renaissance style. A one-storey layout in the shape of the letter U, with a portico and a tower accentuating the main entrance. The mass of the palace with high roofs, and two corner towers. In front of the palace – a vast terrace with stairs leading into the park. Nowadays it is the seat of the Technical School of Forestry.



Dąbrowa

A late Renaissance castle from the beginning of the 17th century, rebuilt and extended in the neo-Renaissance style. The original part – a one-storey quadrilateral grouped around a rectangular courtyard, with a gate tower in the middle of the front wing. The main portal, the gables and facades from the side of the courtyard – neo-Renaissance, the end of the 19th century. The preserved fragments of scratch-work decorations on the walls from the first half of the 17th century. The castle park established in the 17th century, transformed into a landscape park in the 19th century.



Niemodlin

A castle situated at the end of the town's main street (a market place in the past). The old seat of the Opole princes, originally a Gothic building, rebuilt in late Renaissance and baroque. The present shape of the quadrilateral building with high roofs, an arcade courtyard and corner towers was determined in the 18th century. A tower with a baroque cupola above the main entrance.



Krapkowice

A palace built in 1678 at the place of the former castle, rebuilt after a fire in 1772. Situated on the Osobloga River bank, with terraces strengthened with brickwork. The baroque palace of today is partly deprived of its stylistic features as a result of rebuilding. One-storey, four-winged, with a cloistered courtyard. Nearby, the Gothic church of St. Nicholas with a massive front tower.



Kamień Śląski

A late baroque palace of the 17th/18th centuries, the seat of a few noble Silesian families. Nowadays, it is the Centre of Culture and Science of Faculty of Theology at the University of Opole. In the 1990s it was rebuilt and handed over to the University. As St. Jacek's sanctuary, it is a place of pilgrimages. In the neighbourhood there is a landscape park and a sanatorium called Sebastianium Silesiacum situated in the old farm buildings (rebuilt and modernised).



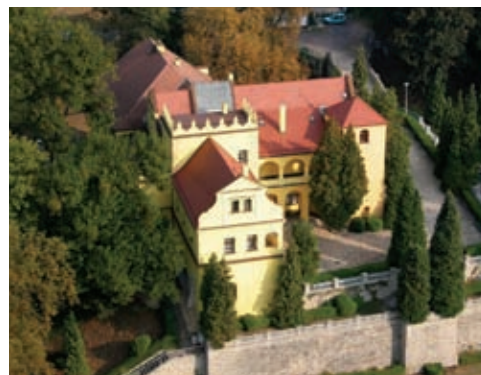
Nysa

The old palace of the Wrocław bishops, nowadays the City Museum – a stately building in the Italian baroque style, four-winged, with an internal courtyard, and rich architectural decoration of the facade and the interior. On the courtyard elevations – three painted sundials dating from 1708 and 1710. Destroyed during the war, it was rebuilt in the years 1963–1984 and adapted as a museum.



Namysłów

A castle situated on a hill, originally surrounded with a moat, built within the town walls. Gothic, three-winged. In the northern wing (dating back to about 1360) ogival windows and arcades have been preserved. The western wing was added after 1533, the southern baroque wing was added in 1771, built from the material retrieved from the demolition of medieval walls. A late Renaissance stone well (of about 1600) in the courtyard.



Rogów Opolski

A castle built at the beginning of the 17th century on the framework of the original fortified castle of the 14th century. Picturesquely situated on the old Odra River bank, surrounded with a park, with traces of fortifications. Renaissance-classicistic, partly reconstructed, with remains of an earlier building. Nowadays it is the seat of the department of historic collections of the Opole Public Library (manuscripts, old prints, maps, graphic art).



Rysiowice

A palace from the end of the 19th century of an eclectic character, with elements of neo-Romanism, neo-Gothic and neo-Renaissance. A quadrilateral, one-storey layout with a small internal courtyard. High steep roofs richly decorated with dormer windows. A round tower in the corner of the building. It is currently being renovated by a private investor.



Jędrzejów

A picturesque 19th century palace with English neo-Gothic features, built on the projection of the letter L. The facade decorated with crenelles, ogival windows, and polygonal towers in the corners. The main entrance accentuated with a massive quadrilateral tower, in the lower side part – a round corner tower.



Otmuchów

A castle situated on a hill, earlier separated from the town by a moat and walls. Gothic-Renaissance, with baroque elements, originally three-winged. Inside, rarely seen broad stone stairs (so-called horse stairs). In the courtyard – a medieval well (reaching the foot of the castle hill). A wall enclosing the courtyard with a Gothic entrance gate from the 15th century. A vast landscape park surrounding the castle.



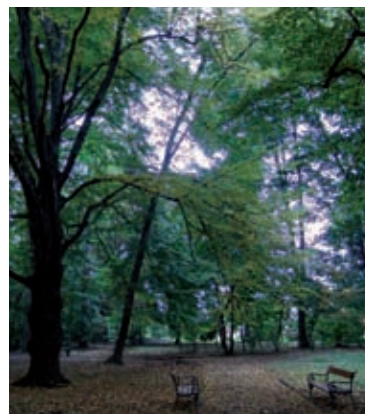
Biechów

A baroque palace destroyed by a fire in 1854, thoroughly rebuilt in the years 1863–1865, and in 1904 renovated and extended. It has a neo-Renaissance character nowadays. In the 1960s it was the seat of an educational centre, nowadays – the Technical School of Household Nutrition. In the neighbourhood, on a hill there is a neo-Gothic chapel, utility buildings and fishponds near a vast landscape park and forest.

Monuments Parks



The castles and palaces in Opole Silesia have been frequently transformed over the centuries. However, there has always been a lot of greenery around them. Huge Gothic buildings used to be situated on hills or in river forks. The baroque palace layouts were accompanied with geometrical gardens in the French style. Neo-style architecture, mainly neo-Gothic, was surrounded with picturesque landscape parks in the English style. Some of the residences have not survived the historical turmoil, but their magnificent parks have remained.



The park in Głogówek

A two-tier park, interesting as far as its landscape and nature are concerned, situated near the castle, established probably in the 16th century; its present shape was given to it in the middle of the 19th century. It is one of the best-maintained parks of that type in the region. Many specimens of monumental trees as well as protected rare plant species can be found here. Numerous specimens of blooming ivy are entwined around tree trunks; in the undergrowth there are, among others, snowdrops, lungworts, yellow Stars-of-Bethlehem, as well as many species of bryophytes gradually becoming extinct in Poland. A statue of St. John Nepomucen dating from 1744 has been preserved in the park.



The park in Dobra

Designed in the middle of the 19th century by Gustaw Meyer, the famous garden architect. One of the characteristics of the historical layout is the use of the natural conditions of the land – the river with its natural broads and the forest with its old forest stand. The central part of the park's arrangement is a clearing along the river, which is the main landscape axle. A park hotel in the Swiss style was built on the outskirts of the park; it was later transformed into a restaurant. Boats were used for entertainment on the park pond. There were greenhouses covering the area of 3.5 ha in the neighbourhood. Azaleas and rhododendrons were planted among the Białka River broads; some of them can still be admired today.



The park on the Bolko Island in Opole

A natural enclave in the town's centre, one of the most interesting and best-preserved parks. It comprises natural deciduous forests, picturesque meadows, canals and ponds, which make up the natural and cultural layout of the park. The historical main scenic axis of the park dividing the park into two parts begins on the terrace at the main entrance. It is topped with a landscape interior formed by the pond with an island and the terrace with the cafe building. A monumental specimen of the petiolar oak called the Piast oak grows near the pond.



The park in Prószków

This park's origins go back to the times of the Royal Pomological Institute established in 1868. Even earlier, there had been trees growing in the park – some of the remaining specimens are much older than the Institute, for instance petiolar oaks. The trees and bushes were imported from different climatic zones, such as Europe, the Middle East, China, India, both Americas, and Africa. By 1895, 900 species of trees and bushes had been planted in the park, and altogether there were a few thousand varieties. The most interesting species that can be admired here nowadays are the following: the swamp cypress, the grand fir, the Rumelian pine, the pubescent oak, the black oak, the white fringetree, the Ginkgo biloba, and the Magnolia acuminata (the cucumber tree, one of the most splendid specimens in Poland). There are also many interesting species of herbaceous plants, mainly ornamental ones such as the Siberian squill, the Epimedium alpinum, the winter aconite, the grape hyacinth, and the blue anemone, very rarely found in parks.



The park in Pokój

The preserved baroque French garden and English park belong to the most valuable park layouts in the region. It was established by Prince Carl Christian Erdmann, then owner of Pokój. In the French garden there is, among other things, a water salon (as a result of a construction disaster, it is a rococo ruin), and a cast-iron lion. It was sculptured by a well-known artist, T. Kalide. The oldest and most splendid Weymouth pine in Poland grows in the French garden. Nearby, in Winna Góra, there is a picturesque English park, with ponds, canals, mysterious buildings and monuments. On one of the islands stands Matilda's Temple, with its ancient silhouette. A little palace called the Salon and an artificial hillock – the Minerva Hill – have survived.

Monuments Churches and monasteries



Sacral architecture in Opole Silesia reflects the style transformations taking place throughout history, astonishing the tourist with the diversity of buildings' forms, and the richness of architectural details and materials. As early as Middle Ages monastic orders were brought to these lands. They made their presence felt by building vast monastic complexes – the most numerous of them are the Franciscan order's buildings, in Opole, Nysa, Głogówek, and Otmuchów. The most characteristic monasteries for the modern age – the baroque and counter-reformation times – are the Jesuit monasteries, for example a complex of buildings in Nysa.



Opole

The cathedral Church of the Holy Cross – a Gothic church with neo-Gothic elements, a hall, three-aisled church, with two towers at the western side. Inside, a stellar vault from the mid- 16th century. Among the most valuable elements of the interior design are: a Gothic painting called *The Holy Mother of Opole*, dating back to about 1480, in the side altar, a Renaissance tombstone of prince Jan Dobry (deceased 1532) built in the wall of the Piast Chapel, a late Gothic triptych of the *Sacra Conversazione* type dating from 1519 and a baroque picture of the Piasts' genealogical tree from about 1700, as well as a late Renaissance mannerist pulpit from 1653 and a late Gothic baptismal font from the middle of the 15th century with the city's coat of arms.



Opole

The Holy Trinity Church called the Franciscan Church – with the tombs of the Opole Princes. A Gothic church, with early Gothic, late Renaissance and baroque elements. A hall, three-aisled church, surrounded with five chapels, the oldest one of which is the chapel of St. Anne dating from 1309, restored to the function of a Piast mausoleum in the years 1952–1959. Its interior was redecorated in the baroque style in the 17th and 18th centuries. A tower was added in 1899. In the crypt under the presbytery there are coffins of the Opole princes and the oldest Gothic polychromy with the Crucifixion group dating back to the third decade of the 14th century. The Franciscan monastery adjoins the church.



Opole

The Church of Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Adalbert, called the Church on the Hill, the remains of the Dominican monastery. A Gothic basilica with a baroque interior and neo-Roman facade. A rich late baroque and rococo interior design from about the mid 18th century, with a valuable Gothic triptych – the altar of the Four Virgins type (about 1400). The old monastery built in the 18th century on the remains of the previous one from the first half of the 17th century. In 1846 it was transformed into a hospital. Nowadays, after renovation, it is the seat of the University of Opole.



Nysa

The Church of St. James and St. Agnes, called the Nysa Cathedral – one of the biggest Gothic churches in Poland. An impressive building with many art treasures such as a valuable complex of grave sculptures (15th–18th centuries). In several of the Gothic chapels there are late Renaissance and baroque altars. In the baroque chapels there are stuccoworks and polychromies made by F.A. Scheffler. Especially interesting: the main altar – a late Gothic/Renaissance triptych, a sculpture of St. Anne of 1500, a baptismal font from the late 15th century. Nearby, a detached late Gothic belfry.



Nysa

The Church of St. Peter and Paul – originally belonging to the members of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. One of the most outstanding monuments of late baroque in Silesia, erected in the years 1720–1727. It is a stately building with a beautiful facade and magnificent interior, with an illusionist polychromy on the vaults made in 1730 by the Scheffler brothers. A rich late baroque interior design with rococo and classicistic elements. In close vicinity, there is an old monastery; it used to be a theological seminary, nowadays it is retreat centre, a Catholic secondary school and a hospital.



Brzeg

The Church of St. Nicholas – a Gothic, three-aisled church, erected in the years 1370–1417 in place of an earlier church, it has one of the highest naves in Silesia (about 30 meters). The towers were added in the years 1884–1885. Destroyed during the war, it was rebuilt in the 1960s. Of the former rich interior design, the bourgeois epitaphs have been preserved – from Renaissance to baroque ones. In the presbytery there is a Gothic triptych of 1500, in the vestry – valuable Gothic polychromies (1418–1428). The Trail of Medieval Polychromies starts in the church.



Góra Św. Anny (St. Anne's Mountain)

A Franciscan monastic-Calvary complex funded by the noble Gaschin family for the Franciscans brought here in 1655. It consists of a church, a monastery, an arcaded courtyard called “The Paradise Square”, a Calvary (a complex of chapels on the hill side), a Lourdes Grotto, and a pilgrim house. The Church of St. Anne, baroque, with Gothic remains and later additions. Rich neo-baroque interior design added after 1882. There are paintings on the vaults, and in the main altar there is a Gothic figure of St. Anne and the Virgin and Child from the second half of the 15th century. It was made a minor basilica in 1980, on the 500th anniversary of the sanctuary's founding; in 1983 it was visited by Pope John Paul II. A monastery adjoining the church, built in the years 1733–1749. The Lourdes Grotto situated nearby, in the place of the former basalt quarry; in front of the Grotto there is a square surrounded with 14 grotto-chapels. Calvary – a complex of about 40 chapels, situated on the hill sides, making up the Way of the Cross and the ways of the Holy Mother. Nearby, the Pilgrim's House with places for about 1,000 pilgrims.



Brzeg

The Church of the Holy Cross in the Castle Square, built by the Jesuits in the years 1734–1739, with a two-tower facade dating from 1856. An outstanding monument of late baroque, with illusionist polychromies on the vaults and the altar wall, made in the years 1739–1745 by Jan Kuben (renovated at the end of the 1990s). A rich interior design, of a uniform style – rococo, about 1750. A Renaissance painting of the Holy Mother with Child of about 1530. In front of the church there are two baroque figures of 1722 – one of St. Jude Thaddeus and the other of St. John Nepomucen.



Paczków

The Church of St. John the Evangelist – a Gothic church with Renaissance, baroque and neo-Gothic elements, fortified. A brick church built on a high stone pedestal. Erected in the years 1361–1389; a Gothic chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary (nowadays called the Maltitz chapel) was added in the first half of the 15th century. The western elevation with a Gothic stone portal from the late 14th century with rich sculptural decorations. Inside, diversified late Gothic vaults from the second half of the 15th century.



Отмучów

The Church of St. Nicholas and St. Francis Xavier – a baroque church, built in the years 1691–1693, with a stately two-tower eastern facade. The main stone-marble portal, towers topped with baroque spherical cupolas, sundials painted above the side entrances. Rich baroque architectural, painting and stucco design and stylistically uniform interior design from the end of the 17th century with valuable paintings by Michael Willmann (the so-called Silesian Rembrandt) and other artists from his workshop. Moreover, many 18th and 19th century paintings. Also, Gothic and baroque sculptures.



Глуchoлaзы

The Church of St. Lawrence, late baroque with an early Gothic facade with a richly decorated portal (the second half of the 13th century) and connected towers with neo-baroque cupolas. A late baroque and rococo 18th century interior design. There are, among other things, numerous rococo side altars, the painting *Bewailing* based on Van Dyck (M. Willmann's workshop, 17th century), a late Gothic sculpture of the Holy Mother with Child, from about 1500, a neo-baroque main altar of 1921. Outside the presbytery there is a stone plate with a low relief showing the Crucifixion, dating back to the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.



Czarnewaśy

A Norbertine monastic complex – an abbey founded in 1228 by the Opole prince Kazimierz I. The medieval church and monastery were surrounded with fortifications in about 1600. Abandoned during the 30-year-war, it was burnt down by the Swedish army in 1643. The new building was erected in the place of the medieval one in 1648. It comprises a church, a monastery and a so-called prelate, which are surrounded with partly preserved fortifications. An outstanding baroque work of residential grandeur and a diversity of architectural forms of elevations and interiors. Nowadays it is St. Henry's social care institution for handicapped children.



Jemielnica

The former Cistercian abbey, founded by the Opole prince Bolko I for the Cistercians brought here after 1280 from Rudy. After the dissolution of the order in 1810, it was transformed into a parish church, a presbytery and offices. It consists of a church, a monastery, outbuildings and gardens. Its present baroque form was given to it in the first half of the 18th century. The interior of the church represents late baroque (e.g. there are some late 17th century paintings by M. Willmann) and 18th century rococo styles.

The interiors of churches

The interiors of the Opole region's churches conceal innumerable treasures of spiritual culture – paintings, sculptures, and handicraft. Their creators' talents as well as the founders' aesthetic tastes can be best displayed by the medieval wall paintings in the churches of the Brzeg and Nysa regions, the Gothic graves of the Opole princes in the Franciscan Church in Opole, the bishops' graves in the Nysa Cathedral, the grave of George III Oppersdorff in the parish church in Głogów, and the late baroque illusionist polychromies in the churches in Nysa, Brzeg and Głogów.



Małujowice

The Gothic church of St. James the Apostle, erected about 1309, partly rebuilt in the 16th century, with a rich Gothic masonry dressing. On the porch's walls there are some remains of a Renaissance scratch-work decoration. In 1865 the greatest group of Gothic polychromies was discovered on all of the interior walls (so-called Silesian Avignon); they were created in 3 stages: in 1360–1370 (the work of the creator from Prague), found in the attic, in the first half of the 15th century (Marian and symbolical scenes), found in the presbytery, and before 1483 (an extensive cycle of scenes from the Old and New Testament and the Last Judgment – an example of the so-called *Biblia pauperum*) found on the nave's walls. On the nave's ceiling there is an early 16th century polychromy.



Opole

St. Anne's Chapel called the Piast chapel – the oldest (Gothic) part of the Franciscan church, erected about 1309, founded by the Piasts as a burial chapel, thoroughly renovated and transformed into the Silesian Piasts' mausoleum in the years 1952–1959. Inside, valuable Gothic tombstones of the Opole princes dating back to 1378–1382, with carved figures of the deceased (sarcophaguses of 1952). Moreover, there are 16th and 17th century epitaphs and tombstone plates there. The chapel's interior design – an altar, a polychromy on the vault and a portal – dating back to 1952–1959. Fragments of Gothic polychromies with figural scenes of the second half of the 14th century were transferred to the monastery's galleries.



Góra Św. Anny (St. Anne's Mountain)

This sanctuary has been the centre of worship of St. Anne and the Virgin and Child for over 500 years and it has also been the most important place of pilgrimages in the Opole Diocese and Upper Silesia. In the sanctuary's central point, in the main altar, there is a valuable Gothic figure – a reliquary of St. Anne and the Virgin and Child, made in the second half of the 15th century in lime wood; it is about 66 cm high, a polychromy. It is one of the oldest representations of St. Anne in Silesia.



Głogówek

An early baroque marble gravestone of George III Oppersdorff, of 1634, in the chapel of St. Bartholomew's church. A baroque Loretine House in St. Francis' church – a true copy of Casa Santa in Loreto – built in the years 1630–1634, originally outside the church. On the walls there is a valuable and well-preserved painting decoration made by A. Sebastini in the years 1770–1780.



Brzeg

A baroque Church of Raising Aloft of the Holy Cross – an outstanding and exceptional monument with a valuable illusionist polychromy made in the years 1739–1745 by the Jesuit Jan Kuben on the vault and the altar wall, with figural scenes against an architectural background. The complete restoration of the church's interior was carried out in the years 1990–2000 by conservator J. Czajor from Opole.

Monuments Wooden sacral buildings



Apart from brick architecture, the Opole region has an exceptionally large number of preserved country wooden churches. There are about 70 of them, and they are concentrated especially in the northern districts of Kluczbork, Namysłów and Olesno, where they form an interesting trail of wooden sacral buildings. They used to be graveyard or votive churches; now they often amaze the tourist with their fantastic shapes and the richness of their paintings and sculptures.



Olesno

The wooden pilgrimage church of St. Anne, consisting of two parts connected with a passage: a late Gothic church of 1518 and a baroque star-shaped central part added in the years 1668–1670. The older part and the passage is surrounded with arcades outside. There is a tower added over the nave part. The central part is surrounded with radial chapels. A rich baroque 17th/18th century interior design.



Czarnowąs

The church of St. Anne erected in the years 1687–1688, surrounded with arcades on columns. The inside covered with a ceiling. It was completely destroyed by a fire on 19 August 2005. It was rebuilt with utmost care in a shape almost identical to that of the original church.



Baborów

The baroque church of St. Joseph, built in the years 1700–1702, central, on the projection of a Greek cross. Inside on the vaults there is a richly decorated polychromy from the beginning of the 18th century with four large scenes in decorative floral frames. The ornaments are very rich, uniform, baroque; from the beginning of the 18th century.



Kolanowice

The church of St. Barbara of 1473, it used to be the monastic church of the Bernardines situated in Opole, at the Freedom Square. In 1811 it was deconstructed and sold to the inhabitants of Kolanowice. It has a stromal construction and is surrounded with low wooden arcades. The choir's parapet and the galleries are decorated with scenes from St. Barbara's life (about 1700). The main baroque altar from 1680 with the painting *The Crucifixion*, two baroque side altars.

Opole-Bierkowice

The larch church of St. Catherine, erected in Gręboszów in 1613 by an evangelical community, later taken over by Catholics. Taken to the Museum of the Opole Village in 1975. It is an example of a wooden stromal building with a high shingle roof. Inside, there is a baroque altar, a Renaissance pulpit decorated with paintings, and peasants' epitaphs from the 18th and 19th centuries, from the graveyard chapel in Ligota Górna.



Chocianowice

The church of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, erected in 1662 in late Gothic tradition, in the place of a former church. Until 1810 it was under the auspices of the Knights of the Cross with the Red Star. It has a stromal construction, and a tower on the western side. Outside, it is surrounded with low wooden arcades, inside – covered with a ceiling.

A late baroque 18th century interior design. The main altar dating from 1726; in the altar there is a late Gothic painting of the Virgin Mary and Child from the beginning of the 16th century.



Wędrzyna

The Church of John the Baptist, built at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries, with a tower at the western side added in 1818, renovated in 1959. Late baroque 18th century interior design: an altar, a pulpit, a confessional, benches, and wooden procession candlesticks.



Dobrzeń Wielki

The pilgrimage church of St. Roch, built in 1658 or 1671, rebuilt in 1752. Surrounded with low wooden arcades on columns. Baroque interior design: late 17th century altars, an early 18th century pulpit, regency-rococo organs from the middle of the 18th century, baroque 18th century paintings and sculptures.



Bierdzany

The Church of St. Hedwig, erected in 1711, thoroughly renovated about 1930, when a spherical cupola crowning the tower was added. It is one of the two churches in the Opolskie Province with a tower containing a so-called large room, an overhung room for bells. In 1961 during restoration works an old figural polychromy with scenes from the Old and New Testament was discovered on the inside walls. Rich baroque interior design.



Wierzbiica Górna

The church of St. Jacek, built at the beginning of the 18th century, it has a framework construction – it is the only such building in the district of Kluczbork. It is a hall church with a transept and a square tower at the western side, it is covered with a shingle roof. Inside, there is a late baroque pulpit altar and galleries.



Laskowice

The church of St. Lawrence built in 1686 with a tower at the western side. Partly surrounded with low wooden arcades on columns. Inside, along the northern wall of the nave there is a gallery that is an extension of the choir supported on 5 spiral columns. A late 17th century baroque altar.



Michalice

The church of St. Michael the Archangel, picturesquely situated on a little hill, built in 1614, renovated several times, and thoroughly renovated in 1914 and in 1937, when the 17th century polychromies were exposed. It has a stromal construction; a square tower with a spherical cupola was added in 1730. The inside is covered with a ceiling supported in the middle on a spiral column. Very rich and stylistically uniform baroque interior design.



Lasowice Małe

The church of the Assumption built in 1688, with a tower at the western side. Rich baroque 17th and 18th century interior design: an early 18th century main altar, a 17th century left side altar with a Gothic sculpture of St. James the Older (the second half of the 14th century), the right side altar with a 17th century painting of the Virgin Mary with Child.



Lasowice Wielkie

The Church of All Saints, built in 1599, with a tower at the western side and a brick vestry at the northern side (1905). Partly surrounded with low wooden arcades on columns on the northern side of the nave. A pulpit with a sculpture of Christ on the canopy from the beginning of the 18th century. An 18th century baptismal font, baroque sculptures of St. John Nepomucen and St. Ignatius from the 17th century. In the presbytery there is a window glazed with crown glass with a smith's grating.



Monuments Town halls

Town halls are inseparable elements of old towns. Situated in central points of towns, in market places, they used to be centres of economic life, and – as seats of local governments – centres of social life. They were evidence of towns' autonomy and importance. The architectural shapes of town halls in Opole Silesia reflect the stylistic transformations that took place in particular historical epochs.



Opole

The Opole town hall is a layout with a two-winged frame with arcades and a quadrilateral tower in the style of Palazzo Vecchio from Florence. It is situated in the place of a 13th century wooden merchant's house, which was transformed into a brick house in the middle of the 14th century. Its present form is a result of reconstructions in the 19th and 20th centuries. In the mid 1990s its elevation and interior were renovated.



Brzeg

The town hall in Brzeg is the best preserved Renaissance town building in Silesia. Erected in the years 1570–1572 by J. Parr, rebuilt in the 18th and 19th century. Three-winged, built on the projection of the letter U, with an internal courtyard and a quadrilateral tower, brightened up with ornamental gables. Inside, there is a beautiful Ceiling Chamber and Councillors' Chamber with a baroque design from 1746.



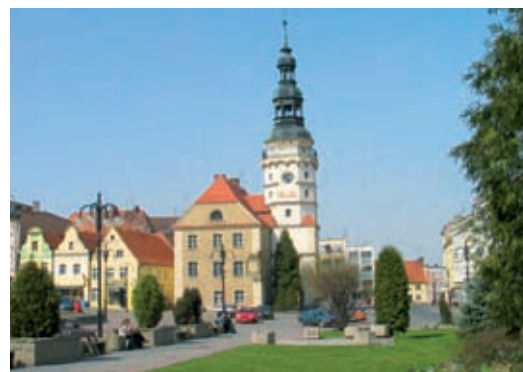
Namysłów

A town hall built at the end of the 14th century, extended in the late Renaissance, at the beginning of the 17th century, and later. It was renovated many times, and thoroughly rebuilt in 1839. It is a Gothic-Renaissance building erected on the projection of the letter L, with a square Gothic tower topped with a little gallery and a spherical late-Renaissance cupola from 1625. The outside elevations and the interior have been considerably changed.

Otmuchów

A Renaissance town hall with a square tower, built in 1538; in 1605 another tower was added. It was frequently renovated after successive wars. There is scratch-work from 1933 on the elevation (it is modelled on the Renaissance decoration of the tower).

In the town hall's corner there is an interesting sundial – the "Paracelsus Sundial" from 1575.



Paczków

Built in the years 1550–1552, later rebuilt and extended in the classicistic style. It consists of a late classicistic frame and an original Renaissance square tower decorated with a Renaissance architectural ornament with clock faces, topped with an attic. The rooms inside the town hall have barrel vaults.



Prudnik

A town hall adjoining a block of buildings in the middle of the market place, some of which have been taken to pieces after 1945. The original, probably medieval town hall, transformed in the 17th century, was burnt down in the 18th century.

It was reconstructed in 1782, and further rebuilt (raised) in the years 1840–1842 and 1894–1896. Built in the baroque classicist style with a classicistic square tower, and with rich architectural decorations.



Grodzów

A town hall erected in the 15th century, rebuilt in Renaissance, and further extended in the classicistic style in 1840, renovated several times. It consists of a late classicistic frame with an original Gothic-Renaissance square tower, which becomes an octahedron at the top. A two-storey frame built on the projection of a rectangle. Inside, there are fragments of Gothic cellars with barrel vaults.





Głogówek

A late Renaissance mannerist town hall with baroque elements and an octagonal tower added above the gable at the northern side. Erected in 1608 on the framework of a Gothic town hall from the 14th century. Renovated in 1653, in 1774 decorated with a painting by A. Sebastini and sculptural and stucco decorations by J. J. Schubert – both masters of that epoch. It was damaged in 1945 and rebuilt in the years 1955–1957.



Byczyna

A town hall built at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, destroyed by fires and rebuilt many times. A baroque-classicist complex consisting of a rectangular frame, a square tower and adjoining houses. In the entrance there is a Renaissance stone portal from the first half of the 16th century. Gable houses adjoin the town hall.



Strzelce Opolskie

A neo-Gothic town hall; the 16th century town hall was burnt down in 1827, and only a tower survived; it was reconstructed in the years 1844–1846. It consists of a two-storey frame built on the projection of a rectangle and a square tower crowned with a classicist-neo-Gothic cupola partly built into the frame.



Głubczyce

A town hall mentioned for the first time in 1383, built in the place of a former merchant's house, rebuilt in 1570 in Renaissance style, with the addition of a tower decorated with scratch-work. Destroyed during WWII, recently rebuilt.

Monuments Places of remembrance



There are two memorials of special importance in the recent history of the Opole region: Łambinowice, with the Monument of Prisoners of War Martyrdom, and Góra Św. Anny, with the Monument of the Uprising. Evidence of the region's past can also be found in Jewish cemeteries with their characteristic matzevas, in Biała and Opole. Many chapels-belfries and roadside crosses, as well as mysterious stone penitential crosses called "the relics of medieval law", add variety to the region's landscape. The oldest ones date back to the 14th century and are quite numerous in the districts of Nysa and Prudnik.



Góra Św. Anny (St. Anne's Mountain)

The Monument of the Uprising



Łambinowice

The Monument of Prisoners of War Martyrdom



Biała

A Jewish graveyard



Głogówek

A penitential cross

Monuments

Town walls and fortifications

Medieval town fortification complexes consist of the remains of stone and brick town walls with gate towers, towers and moats. They were extended in the course of the centuries and transformed into modern fortifications, and in the 19th century, as a consequence of the towns' development they were taken to pieces and demolished. Despite that, large fragments of such walls have been preserved in many towns. Paczków and Byczyna have the best-preserved medieval fortification complexes in Poland.



Paczków

Town walls built together with fortifications in about 1350, rebuilt in Renaissance at the end of the 16th century. Renovated many times. In the middle of the 19th century they were partly destroyed and simultaneously the moats were eliminated. Originally they consisted of two circumferences of walls separated with a moat, with 24 towers and 4 gates. The internal circumference of the walls, about 1,200 meters long, which almost completely surrounded the oval town centre, has been well preserved. The walls have been preserved incompletely, with 19 towers and 3 gate towers: Kłodzka, Wrocławska and Ząbkowicka. Outside, they are surrounded with a belt of greenery established in the 19th century in the place of the former moats.



Byczyna

Gothic town walls built in the 15th and 16th century of stone and brick. They comprise: town walls almost completely preserved around the old town and partly buttressed, two square gate towers: the "Polish" tower at the eastern side and the "German" tower at the western side, with ogival passages and additions in the upper parts, the "Sand" wall tower in the southern part of the walls, square with embrasures, and a fragment of a moat with water, over 100 meters long. Nearby Byczyna, a tourist attraction was created – a replica of a medieval town, which serves as a Polish-Czech training centre for medieval re-enactors.

Namysłów

Brick walls erected around the town in the years 1350–1359, originally with 45 towers and gate towers, in the 15th century partly surrounded with moats. In the 17th and 18th century they were extended into a modern bastion system. Partly taken to pieces and encased with houses in the second half of the 19th century, when the moat was also regulated and a park with a promenade was established along the walls. They are fragmentarily preserved. Of the 14th century Gothic walls, some remains of the town walls have survived, as well as 14 towers, 2 culverts of the Widawa River, the tower of the Krakowska Gate.



Głubczyce

Town walls erected in the years 1253–1282, originally with 22 towers and 3 gate towers and a moat. Fortified at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries, and in the 16th century. They were made of stone and brick, they have been partly preserved together with 9 semicircular octagonal towers. From the end of the 18th century they were gradually reduced. In 1837 Josef Lauffer, a town councillor, put forward a proposal to establish a town park in their place.



Nysa

Town walls extended into earth and brick bastion fortifications in the 17th century by the Austrians; in the 18th century transformed into a stronghold by the Prussian army. They consist of the lower right-bank part and the upper left-bank part. Reconstructed and repaired in the 19th century. From 1877 gradually eliminated, especially after the destruction of the stronghold in 1903. From 1924 the elimination and dismantling of the gates continued.



Kędzierzyn-Koźle

A fort consisting of earth and brick bastion-type left-bank fortifications (comprising the town) and right-bank fortifications. Established at the beginning of the 18th century in the place of former town walls. Reconstructed in the years 1744–1745 by the Prussian army, completed by the Austrian army. In the 19th and 20th century fragments of the fortification were partly encased, partly transformed into a park and gardens, and the stronghold was adapted for various utility purposes.



Monuments

Fountains, wells, and figures

Since the second half of the 17th century, baroque Marian columns and figures of St. John Nepomucen have been popular elements of towns in the Opole region. Well preserved, despite the passage of time, they are a testimony to religiousness, and serve to commemorate and give thanks. They can be most frequently found in the Silesian border region, as a consequence of the spreading of Czech influence. Since the 18th century representations of the Czech saint, John Nepomucen, a patron who protected against floods, have been particularly popular; they have been situated near bridges. There are also baroque decorative wells and fountains in the towns' architectural design.



Opole

Ceres Opolska – a stone fountain in the form of a richly carved monumental well with allegorical figures symbolising the professions of Opole inhabitants.



Nysa

The marble fountain of Triton from 1701, with two pools, and Triton playing a conch, supported by dolphins.



Prudnik

A stone well with a fountain dating from 1696 in the Market Place, with a sculpture of a two-headed eagle in a crown placed on a conch carried by two atlantes.



Nysa

A baroque "Beautiful Well" from 1686, decorated with a forged iron grate with rich ornaments – a well-known work of blacksmith art in Silesia.



Prudnik

A figure of St. John Nepomucen in the Market Place, erected in 1733, a baroque stone figure with a statue of the saint on a pedestal and two statues of angels at his side (1734).



Prudnik

A Marian column dating from 1694 in the Market Place, made from sandstone and marble, erected to commemorate the victims of the plague (1624).



Opole

A late baroque figure of St. John Nepomucen dating from 1711–1712, situated near the main portal of the Franciscan monastery.



Głubczyce

A baroque figure of the Virgin Mary on a globe, from 1738, made by A. Jörg.



Opole

The University Hill exhibits historical sculptures and modern monuments. They are, among others, the following: "The four seasons" by H. Hartmann (17th century), the monument of St. Christopher by C. Kern (1867), a Marian column, and a monument of an Apostle. Modern monuments of A. Osiecka, Cz. Niemen, and J. Grotowski by M. Molenda.

Nature Caves

Karst formations are most common in the region of the Chelm Massif, especially in its central part – near St. Anne's Mountain where the accumulation of sedimentary calcareous rocks is the greatest. The karst formations found here are caves and rock shelters.

The Otmicka Cave

This cave is situated in the inactive limestone and dolomite quarry in Otmice near Strzelce Opolskie. A 5-meter long hole in one of the steep quarry walls leads to a little hall with a karstic crevasse at the end. The cave's bottom is a clayey alluvium covered with calcareous rubble. There are also other kinds of holes and rock shelters in the quarry in Otmice.



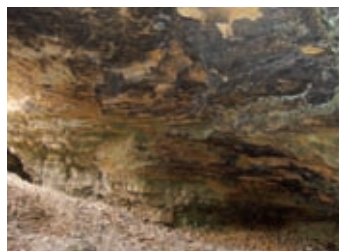
The Chelmska Cave

This cave is the biggest and geologically most interesting. It is situated on the northern slopes of Chelm, several hundred meters to the south of Ligota Górna. Its corridors are about 23 meters long (it is possible that they are even longer, as the cave has not been entirely explored), and it is 7 meters deep. It has the form of a crevice. There is a narrow well, several meters long, right beyond the entrance. There is no travertine formation in the cave, which is usually the best ornament of such places. Many animal species winter there, mainly invertebrates (molluscs and insects), as well as individual bats whose presence is proof of the temperature being stable and above 0° C in winter. In the old limestone and basalt quarry in St. Anne's Mountain (which is now a geological reserve), there is the so-called Cave in a Reserve, 5 meters long (picture).



Szczepanek near Strzelce Opolskie

There were many small natural caves and unusually large rock shelters formed during the exploitation of the now inactive quarry.



The cave near Żyrowa at Zdzeszowice

This cave is about 8 meters long and it was accessible until the 1950s. Calcite crystals covering the cave's walls used to be excavated by local inhabitants for decorative purposes. After an accident that happened during excavation works, the cave's hole was filled in. Only its entrance well, about 2.5 meters deep, is accessible. A large cave between Wysoka and Ligota Górna suffered a similar fate – its entrance was bricked up and filled with earth.

Nature Springs

Silver Spring

Situated close to Dębska Kuźnia near Opole, it is one of the biggest and most interesting springs in the region. Nowadays, as a nature reserve, it is the only protected spring in this region. Countless little springs, out of which a rapid stream – the tributary of the Jemielnica River – flows, gush out in a small mid-forest valley, among old trees. As early as in the 18th century the local inhabitants used to meet here for dancing parties. They greatly appreciated charms the spring and forests held.



A spring near Rudziczka

This spring is interesting due to its landscape and historical significance. It gushes out on the bottom of a ravine, among old trees, and as a rapid stream it flows into one of the tributaries of Ścinawa Niemodlińska. In 1846 picturesque Stations of the Cross were built around the spring in the form of little chapels. The largest chapel with the figure of St. Mary of the Rosary is placed at the spring. It was founded by Emanuel Sauer from Rudziczka, who wanted to give thanks for his wife's recovery of a serious illness.



The Proсна spring

Found in Wołęcin near Radłów, this spring is very interesting because of a watercress complex – extremely rare in Poland, threatened with extinction – and because of the presence of a small fresh-water crustacean, the *gammarus pulex*.



Stoczek in Staniszcze Małe near Kolonowskie

This picturesque spring is surrounded with dunes covered with a mixed forest, meadows and peat bogs. It has been developed and it is a great place for relaxation. One can drink very tasty cold water here.



A spring close to Leśna near Olesno

This spring is the source of the Budkowiczanka River. The surrounding area is covered with vast sand dunes covered with pine forests in which one might expect a lack of water. Hence, the presence of such an abundant spring, the source of a river so wide it cannot easily be jumped over, is rather amazing.





A spring close to Wilczy Staw near Glubczyce

This spring flows out of one of Poland's most beautiful areas – the Protected Landscape Territory of the Glubczyce Forest – and is the source of a stream that is a tributary of the Stradunia River. Cuckoo pints, rare in Poland, grow at the spring's banks.



A spring close to Kamieniec near Szumirad

A spring close to Kamieniec near Szumirad. Since it flows out from three directions, people have perceived this spring's shape as a crucifix, and it is considered sacred. The spring and miraculous healings taking place near it have been known since the mid 19th century.

Healing properties used to be attributed to some of the springs; hence chapels were built at several of them.

A spring in Dąbrówka Łubniańska

In the 18th century it was called a healing spring, when an ill peasant, Simon Soppa, recovered after having drunk its water. People started coming to the spring in hope of recovering from ailments. Soppa decided to build a little chapel in this place, but the local forester did not agree to. He changed his mind when he started going blind, and recovered having drunk the water from the spring. A chapel called Studzionka was erected over the spring; it is still there today.

A spring in Gogolin

At this spring there is a chapel built in 1801 by the von Gaschin family from Żyrowa. They built it after their daughter's eyesight had been restored in this place. According to oral tradition, her mother had a dream about this very spring having miraculous power. She went there with her ill daughter, whose eyesight was restored after she washed her eyes with the spring water. In token of gratitude the Gaschins built a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary at the spring. For the local people it is a place of worship, since the spring water has helped them in their illnesses, as well.

A spring in Ujazd

This is called Mary's Spring, Studzionka or Wodiczka. As early as in 1794 a local vicar together with his parishioners built the first wooden chapel over it. Nowadays, there is a 19th century chapel connected with the pilgrimage church, being the extension of its northern wing.



Other interesting buildings of this type: a spring called Seven Springs in Poręba near St. Anne's Mountain, springs in Gąsiorowice and Centawa near Jemielnica, in Czarnocin, big springs in Rożniatów near Strzelce Opolskie, in Glucholazy-Zdrój, Odrowąż near Krapkowice (picture) and a beautifully developed spring in Krośnica near Izbicko.

Nature Erratic boulders

There are many different erratic boulders in the region. Some of them are in places where glaciers left them; others have been moved as a result of man's activities. At present, 9 of them are protected as monuments of inanimate nature for the sake of their landscape and cultural values, and many are expected to soon receive protection.



The monumental boulder between Middle and Big Turawskie Lake

This boulder is a precious monument of the Ice Age. It has a perimeter of 520 cm. It was discovered in 1936 during the reservoir's construction and transported beyond the lake's precincts on the basis of a decision of the management of the construction site.



A boulder close to Ligota Oleska near Radiów

This slightly sloping big boulder is called "the pagan stone" as, according to tales, ritual offerings were made here.



Boulders near Pokój

These boulders were found in the local forests and transported to the park in Pokój. Near Matilda's pond are, among others, the boulders called "Faith", "Hope" and "Love". In the first one, the sentence "Faith can move mountains" has been carved, in the second one – "Hope is with the living", and in the last one – "Love conquers all".



A boulder in Kamień Śląski

It has a perimeter of 830 cm, and it is one of the biggest boulders in the region. It used to lie in a forest at the old road from Kamień to Tarnów Opolski, but in 1980, when there was fear that it might be destroyed during enlargement works at the limestone quarry, it was transported to the centre of the village and it now lies near the church.

Nature Flora and fauna

Flora

Opole Silesia is a region of Poland replete with natural wonders. There are about 1,700 species of higher plants, including almost 150 protected plants, more than 300 kinds of plant communities, countless amounts of fungi and lower plants. In order to protect these treasures, 34 nature reserves have been established, 4 landscape parks, as well as protected landscape territories, many ecological grasslands, natural and landscape complexes, natural monuments and a documental stand of inanimate nature. Altogether, about 30% of the region is under protection.



Water caltrop

A water plant with fruit – a nut with sharp harpoons enabling it to anchor at the bottom; it can be found in several localities in the region and all over Europe. It is under protection.



Flax (*linum austriacum*)

It can be found in dry sunny places; it is most often found near Ligota Górna on slopes formed as a result of highway construction and in Oleszka, on the outskirts of a quarry.



Early marsh-orchid

Growing in wet meadows and limestone peat bogs, it is an exceptionally variable species as far as its habitat, size and leaf shapes are concerned.



Helleborine

An orchid, 5–15 cm high, growing in deciduous forests, especially beech forests, near Kamiień Śląski and Góra Szpica near Gogolin.



Lady's slipper

The most splendid orchid species in Poland, growing in stenothermal thickets and xerothermic swards, found only close to Jasiona near Gogolin.



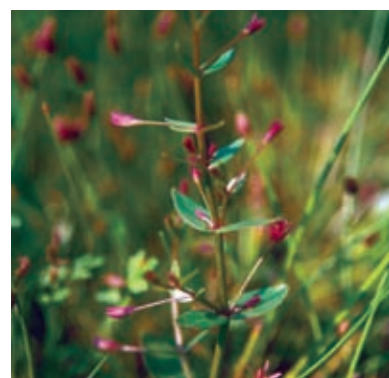
Marsh cinquefoil

A perennial or sub-shrub, growing up to 90 cm high in peat bogs, water banks and alder forests, a melliferous plant with medicinal properties.



Grape hyacinth

A rare plant, growing in dry and sunny places, found near Gogolin and Kamiień Śląski.



Lindernia procumbens

Found growing on river banks, old river beds, lately found on the bottom of ponds in Siedlice and Winna Góra near Pokój; it is threatened with extinction in Europe.



Dianthus gratianopolitanus (firewitch)

Found growing most often in xerothermic or sand swards, now only close to Pustków near Ozimek and Brynica near Opole.



Royal fern

One of the tallest-growing ferns in Poland, found near Kuźnica Katowska, Suchy Bór, Ozimek, Krasiejów, Unieszów and Pokój.



Round-leaf sundew

A small plant growing in habitats poor in nitrogen (peat bogs); it is an insectivorous plant of medicinal (analgesic) properties; under species protection.



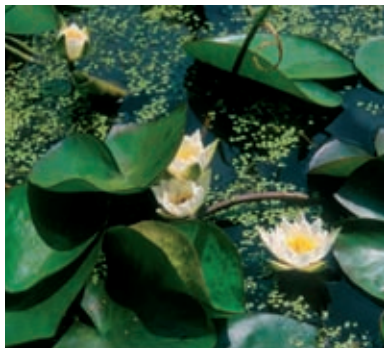
Coral root

A rare orchid species without leaves and roots, green and yellow, growing in various beech forests, found near Ligota Górna and Góraźdże.



Batrachium fluitans

Called water crowfoot, it grows on the bottom of shallow water reservoirs; it is a vastly spreading plant community.



Nymphaeaceae

Nenuphar, water lily – a water plant often found in communities with other water plants, especially the yellow water lily.



Lady's mantle

A rare fungus, found near Opole, Lipno, Turawa and Krasiejów; it is under strict protection.



Sarcoscypha coccinea

A rare species with cup-shaped fruitification, appearing at the end of winter and in early spring on musty wood of deciduous trees.

Fauna

The fauna of Opole Silesia is as rich as its flora. Many thousands of species, of which 400 are under legal protection, have been registered here. There are bats, all Polish species of amphibia and reptiles, as well as birds among them. For many species, the natural habitats are rivers and their valleys, vast forests, water reservoirs, as well as meadows and fields making up the agricultural landscape.



Osmoderma eremita

A very rare beetle living in old trees, mainly oaks; found in the Mała Panew valley and the Stobrawski Landscape Park.



Wasp spider

A species of a stenothermal spider, found in wet but sunny places; in Opole Silesia it can be found in about 100 localities.



Natterjack toad

Found in sandy and clayey places, and in Opole Silesia only in a few localities, e.g. Krasiejów, Myślina.



Common spadefoot

Commonly found in the agricultural landscape of the region, it spends the day underground; its huge tadpoles are the size of a grown-up specimen



Rhinoceros beetle

A beetle that lays its larvae in rotting trees and bark piles. The male has a characteristic horn.



Six-spot burnet

A day-flying moth that likes sunny places; its colouration warns everyone that it is inedible.



Fire salamander

The most beautiful Polish hygrophilous amphibian, active at night; rarely found in the Opawskie Mountains.



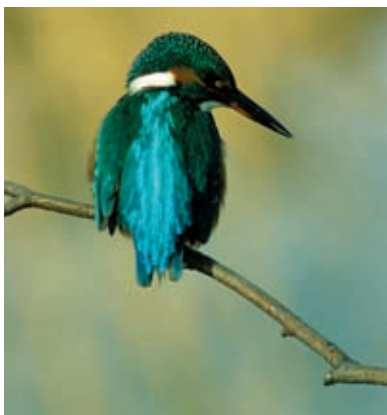
Great crested newt

A species found in a few locations in the entire territory of Opole Silesia, and somewhat more commonly found in the valley of the Mała Panew River.



Golden eagle

This eagle nests in large forest complexes, e.g. in the Stobrawski Landscape Park; it is under strict species protection.



Kingfisher

A small bird that feeds on tiny fish, which it catches diving in clean rivers; it is under strict species protection.



Black stork

A timid bird, avoiding the neighbourhood of human abodes, it lives in wet forest stands and builds its nest in high trees, close to water broads; it is under strict species protection.



Grey heron

A big wading bird living in wet areas, it usually nests in colonies creating so-called heronries; it is under partial species protection.



Lesser horseshoe bat

A bat species almost extinct in Poland, living in rock and cave areas; in Opole Silesia found in the Opawskie Mountains and near Sławniowice.



Smooth snake

A species belonging to the constrictor snakes group, very rarely found in the Opolskie Province; most frequently found near St. Anne's Mountain, Strzelce Opolskie and in the valley of Mała Panew.



European ground squirrel

Until recently, this species was extinct in Poland. In 2005 it was reintroduced successfully near Kamień Śląski, where its last natural population had been recorded.



European otter

A small predator from the weasel family, living in water habitats, found infrequently all over Poland; a legally protected species.



Beaver

Already extinct in Opole Silesia as a result of man's destructive activity, in 1996 reintroduced in the Widawa valley near Namysłów, nowadays found in most rivers in the region.



Roe-deer

The smallest representative of fallow deer in Poland (15–25 kg), it lives in forest complexes and fields.

Nature Fossil fauna

In Opole Silesia there are many sedimentary rocks in which fossils can be found, especially fossil animal remains. They can be searched for in numerous quarries and excavations.



Discoverers and discoveries

One of the first explorers of Silesian fossils was Hermann Kunisch, who in 1885 discovered and in 1890 described the Triassic remains of amphibia of the *capitosaurus* group found in quarries in Gogolin and Zakrzów. Later, a new species of crinoids belonging to the phylum Echinodermata was discovered there. Its shape resembles a starfish. The most interesting discovery near Gogolin was the fossil remains of an unknown fish species, *Dactyolepis gogolinensis*, and in Pawłowiczki near Kędzierzyn-Koźle – a complete skull of a woolly rhinoceros, *Coelodonta antiquitatis*. After 1945 paleontological research was not carried out in such an intensive way in the region. One of the greater discoveries came in 1954, when in Nowa Wieś Królewska Miocene mammals' remains were found.

The paleontological stand in Faustianka near Rudniki

This is one of the most fascinating paleontological stands in the region. A magnet attracting scientists and amateurs of fossil fauna from all of Europe is the specific geological structure of this area. Dark-grey fat clays contain numerous sphaerosiderites, such as pieces of hard siderite rock. The complex of clay drifts with sphaerosiderites was formed about 170 to 180 million years ago. In numerous ammonites with a diameter of several dozens centimetres, belemnites and mollusc conches can be found, as well as snail conches of various sizes, shapes and colours, not bigger than 5 cm, however. The stand in Faustianka is one of the most important Jurassic stands in Poland. Many invertebrate fossils, e.g. ammonites, molluscs, brachiopods can also be found in limestone and marl quarries near Opole and Strzelce Opolskie.



Prehistory of nature in the Opolskie Province

About 230 million years ago the territory of today's Krasiejów was covered with the lakeside swamps of a big lake stretching to Olsztyn in the north and to France in the west; there must have also been a river estuary here. The territory was probably covered with huge horsetails, tree and seed ferns, coniferous plants of the *woltzia* kind and fresh-water algae – stonewort.

The paleontological stand in Krasiejów

This undoubtedly most interesting paleontological stand was discovered in the 1980s in a clay mine in Krasiejów near Ozimek. Two layers of Triassic fossil bone remains were discovered there. In one of them are mainly the remains of aquatic animals (phytosaurus, cyclotosaurus, metoposaurus), while the other contains terrestrial animal bones. In this layer a dinosaur's bone remains have been found; it has been called *Silesaurus opolensis* ("the Silesian saurian from Opole"). It is the oldest representative of the genealogical dinosaur line. Many bones of Triassic terrestrial reptiles (aetosaurus and teratosaurus) have also been found. The bone remains of the aetosaurus from Krasiejów belong to the oldest bones ever discovered in the world. Thanks to the discoveries in Krasiejów, Opole Silesia and Poland have their place on the paleontological map of the world. The Krasiejów Society Dinopark, created by the provincial government and the Ozimek and Kolonowskie communes, aims at a complex developing of the land belonging to the former clay mine (the place of the paleontological discoveries) for scientific, educational and tourist purposes. A landscape and technological park – Dinopark – is being built here. It is already possible to find out more about the discoveries in Krasiejów in a modern exhibition building. A permanent exhibition called "Wanderings with a Dinosaur" can be found in the primary school building in Krasiejów.

Nature Nature conservation



Landscape parks

In the Opolskie Province 3 landscape parks have been created: the Landscape Park of the Opawskie Mountains (1988), the Landscape Park of St. Anne's Mountain (1988), and the Stobrawski Landscape Park (1999).

At present, preparations are being made to create the Landscape Park of the Mała Panew Valley. There are also 7 areas of protected landscape.



The Landscape Park of St. Anne's Mountain

This park comprises Chelm with its highest mountain, St. Anne's Mountain (400 metres above sea level), at the top. On its slopes rests St. Anne's sanctuary, with a monastic complex and a picturesque Calvary. The core of this volcanic hill is a basalt rock column, which is the magma outlet into the volcano's crater. In one of the many inactive quarries a geological reserve "St. Anne's Mountain" has been created, which is an illustration of the geological structure of this area. Specific soil conditions and climatic distinctions have influenced the formation of the flora. Forests, which used to be common, now cover only 21% of the park's area; they are diversified and transected with fields under cultivation. As far as nature is concerned, however, they are diverse and very interesting. There are beech, coniferous and mixed forest stands there. The most precious natural forest areas are nature reserves. There are the beech reserves of Lesisko, Boże Oko, Grafik and Biesiec, and a geological reserve, or a strict floristic reserve in Ligota Dolna. In 2004 St. Anne's Mountain – a composed cultural and natural landscape, charmingly beautiful and unique, was declared a historical monument. Attempts have also been made to enter it on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites.



The Landscape Park of the Opawskie Mountains

This park comprises the northern slopes and the piedmont of the Opawskie Mountains in the south-western part of the Opolskie Province, near the border with the Czech Republic. The highest peak, Biskupia Kopa (889 meters above sea level) has an interesting geological structure and it abounds in many natural peculiarities. Many kinds of rocks and geological forms can be found here. The Biskupia Kopa massif is built of Devonian sedimentary rocks – sandstone and slate. Many picturesque excavations have remained after their exploitation, such as Gwarkowa Perć, Piekiełko, Morskie Oczko. The best-preserved slate outcrops can be admired in the Karliki rocks, Gwarkowa Perć and in the inactive Dewon quarry near Jarosławów. There are more than 500 species of vascular plants, including 35 protected ones, and 163 species of protected animals in the park. The following forest reserves have been created here: Cicha Dolina (Quiet Valley) with the pure beech stand in the Bystry Potok Valley, Las Bukowy (Beech Forest) on the northern slope of Góra Parkowa on the Biała Głuchowska River, and the geological – landscape reserve Nad Białką (At the Białka) with relics of old gold mining, such as the shafts remaining after the opencast exploitation of pebbles and gold-bearing sands in the 12th and 13th century.



Stobrawski Landscape Park

Comprising a part of the Odra valley and the Stobrawsko-Turawskie Forests, this park's main natural treasure is its forests (78% of the territory). They cover the picturesque valleys of the Odra River and the river's right tributary – the Stobrawa, as well as the Brynica, Budkowiczanka, Bogacica, and Żydówka. Almost 40 species of protected plants and as many very rare plants make this complex a unique one. About 170 species of terrestrial and aquatic-swamp birds, including several rare ones threatened with extinction, live here. There are many fishponds and old riverbeds in the park. Most of the fishponds near Krogulna, Pokój or Krzywa Góra used to be typical marginal lakes. They were, however, stocked with fry for a few centuries, and now fish breeding is well developed. Carp, pike, pikeperch, white amur, and even eel are bred here. The stocked water regions, especially those in forests, situated far from communication routes and human dwellings, are attractive fishing grounds for rare birds, such as the bittern, little bittern, osprey, golden eagle, and common redshank. All of the reserves of the Stobrawski Landscape Park are situated in its western part. These are the following: Leśna Woda (Forest Water) with fragments of a natural mixed forest, Śmiechowiec with 200-year-old European larch trees, and Lubusza – the most beautiful and most accessible one, with old specimens of huge beeches. Some parts of the forest are remains of the old Silesian Primeval Forest belonging to the Piast princes of Brzeg. Rare bird species, such as the stock dove, green woodpecker and fly catcher live here.



The Planned Landscape Park of the Mała Panew Valley

This park is situated in the valley of the Mała Panew River, a tributary of the Odra River, stretching from the province's eastern border to the river's estuary in Turawskie Lake. Forest stands, especially pine forests, are dominant here. Deciduous forests, mainly riparian and broadleaved forests with monumental specimens of petiolar oaks, can also be found. (The biggest accumulation of petiolar oaks is located between Kolonowskie and Zawadzkie in the Natural and Landscape Complex Pod Dębami). The park's flora abounds in interesting plant communities. There are protected and rare plant species here, such as the royal fern, floating moss, common sundew and round-leaf sundew, marsh gentian, gladiolus imbricatus, and helleborine. The fauna is also very rich. Very rare beetles, namely the osmoderma eremita and stag beetle, can be found on old oaks. The most interesting amphibians are the natterjack toad, great crested newt, and Alpine newt. Among the reptiles is the smooth snake, very rare in Poland. There are many breeding bird species, for instance the osprey, crane, black stork, common kestrel, long-eared owl, wagtail, and corncrake. The interesting mammal species are, among others, the dormouse, otter, shrew, polecat, and ermine.



Nature reserves

35 nature reserves have been created in the Opolskie Province so far, including two strictly floristic reserves: Ligota Dolna and Góra Gipsowa, and two geological reserves: Nad Białką and St. Anne's Mountain. The majority of reserves are forest reserves. The most interesting ones are, among others, Staw Nowokuznicki and Smolnik, in which the water caltrop stand is protected, Kamieniec, which protects the rich peat plants in the Budkowiczanka valley, Srebrne Źródła (Silver Springs) – a picturesque spring surrounded by deciduous forests, and Biesiec and Cicha Dolina, which protect precious deciduous forests.



Territories of protected landscape

These are created in order to preserve the territories of distinctive landscape. Economic activity in such territories is significantly limited, and should be conducted in a way that does not disturb the relative ecological balance, simultaneously enabling the development of ecotourism and ecological food production. 7 territories of protected landscape have been created in the Opole region: Mokre-Lewice, Wronin-Maciowakrze, Las Głubczycki, Otmuchowsko-Nyski, Łęg Zdzieszowski, Bory Niemodlińskie, and Las Stobrawsko-Turawskie.

Las Stobrawsko-Turawskie is one of the most interesting territories. It is 179,305 ha in area. Countless groundwater flows, fishponds, springs, glacier moraines and dunes dot the landscape. It includes Turawskie Lake – a nesting place of many bird species, and an important resting and feeding place of many migrating birds. The predominance of pine forests with their biotherapeutic values makes the Stobrawsko-Turawskie Forests an important tourist and recreational destination.



Natural and landscape complexes

This form of individual nature protection is used in order to protect exceptionally precious fragments of the natural and cultural landscape, and preserve their aesthetic values. In the Opolskie Province 7 natural and landscape complexes have been created so far, the most precious of which is the natural and landscape complex Pod Dębami (Under the Oaks). The forest complex in the Mała Panew valley is also under protection. The protection aims at the preservation of unique landscapes, rich flora, and many of the rare animal species living here. One landscape attraction is a meandering river with many bends and diverse banks.



Natural monuments

This form of nature protection usually refers to individual trees, valleys and erratic boulders. In the Opolskie Province more than 300 such places have been given protection as natural monuments, including the oldest and biggest trees in Poland and several erratic boulders.

Ecological grasslands

These grasslands are the remains of ecosystems that are important for the preservation of unique natural resources and types of habitats, such as natural water reservoirs, mid-field and forest "small ponds", tree and bush clusters, swamps, peat bogs, dunes, areas of wasteland flora, old riverbeds, rock outcrops, slopes, and quarries. At present, in the Opolskie Province there are about 100 ecological grasslands.



The Opole zoo

Nature protection is also the most important task for modern zoological gardens, which have evolved from menageries (in the 19th century), to zoological parks (in the 20th century), and eventually protection centres (the 21st century). The Opole zoo is a green oasis of peace and relaxation, situated in the town's centre, in the ancient forest of the Bolko Island. It was created in 1930, and in 1937 the town bought it and new animal species were introduced.

It had to be rebuilt twice: after the war – in 1953 and after the great flood, which hit Opole and the region in 1997.

The second time the zoo was not only rebuilt, but its area was also extended and the number of animals was increased.

The animals are exhibited in a natural environment, with a lot of care given to the zoo's hygienic, botanical and educational aspects. The Opole zoo is 20 ha in area, and there are more than 1,000 animals living there. They belong to about 130 species, including lowland gorillas and Californian sea lions – the only specimens in Poland. The zoo's greatest success is the breeding of species such as the scimitar oryx, pigmy hippopotamus, capybara, several kangaroos, and lemurs.



Tourism Active tourism

Active tourism is an ideal form of recreation for those who want to spend their free time in an interesting way. Mountain tourism, hiking, cycling, horse riding or sailing, as well as hunting and parachute jumping have the much desired element of risk, especially for young people. They give thrills and are good for regeneration. Opole Silesia has a dense network of tourist routes and trails, well developed tourist accommodations and restaurants, and it offers high quality tourist services, which ensures appropriate conditions for active recreation.



Hiking and cycling

The diverse land configuration of Opole Silesia encourages people to hike and cycle. The most interesting tourist routes and trails leading through the diverse territories of the region are, among others: the wooden sacral buildings trail leading from Opole to Olesno, the Brzeg trail of medieval polychromies presenting Gothic paintings, routes leading through the picturesque Mała Panew Valley, the historical trails in the Nysa region, introducing the monuments of Nysa, Głucholazy, Otmuchów, Paczków (fortifications, palaces, castles), and routes in the Opawskie Mountains leading to Złote Hory and Jeseník in the Czech Republic.



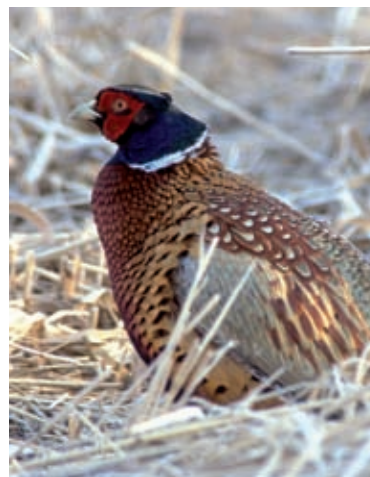
Horse riding

Many stud farms and horse riding centres offer high-quality conditions for horse riding and many recreation and sporting events for riding enthusiasts, such as so-called holidays in a saddle, and riding courses. These are, for example: the stud farm and horse riding club "Ostroga" (Spur) in Bierkowie, the Sport Horses Stable in Skorogoszcz, the stud farm in Moszna and Prudnik, the horse riding clubs "Lewada" in Zakrzów and "Korys" in Przygorzela, clubs in Zawada, Szydłowiec, Niemodlin, Chocim and Strzelce Opolskie, and some other smaller centres. The owners of farm tourist cottages who have horses run summer and winter camps and horse riding schools for children and teenagers.



Farm tourism

Farm tourist cottages all over the Opole region offer the possibility of relaxation in places where the natural environment has remained untouched, and are found among meadows, forests and waters. Modern specialist cottages (of the same standard as those in Western Europe) and small cottages that have retained traditional methods of cultivation invite tourists into their hospitable abodes. Relaxation in the bosom of nature, together with other people and their animals, can be a great experience for the entire family. The relaxation programme offered by farmers of the Opole region is enriched with regional tourist attractions. Opole Silesia offers its precious monuments of architecture, diversified trip routes, recreation areas, as well as events cultivating local customs and ceremonies. Hospitality and traditional Silesian cuisine are also great assets of this region.



Hunting

Favourable natural conditions, a mild climate and proper farming and foresting create good living conditions for animals in the Opole region, and hunting is well developed here. There are deer, fallow deer, roe deer, wild boars, pheasants, and partridges in the biggest forest complexes – the Bory Niemodlińskie and Łasy Stobrawsko-Turawskie, as well as near Kędzierzyn. The regions of Otmuchów and Paczków are famous for autumn geese migration routes. Hunting is organised by three shooting clubs: Kup, Kluczbork and Brzeg, and two breeding centres in Moszna and Lisieście. Permits are issued by ŁOWEX in Opole. The Path of Natural and Hunting Education in Grudziec and the Centre of Animal Breeding in Lisieście explain the forest secrets to tourists. Forest inspectorates offer good accommodation and meals, and they organize hunting. These are, among others: "Agrodąb" (Brynica-Suwina, Forest Inspectorate Kup), "Kurznie" (Karłowice, Forest Inspectorate Brzeg), "Dąbrówka Dolna" (Domaradzka Kuźnia, Forest Inspectorate Kup), "Zagwizdzie" (Zagwizdzie, Forest Inspectorate Turawa), "Zieleniec" (Pokój, Forest Inspectorate Kup), and "Krystyna" (Wierzch, Forest Inspectorate Kluczbork).



Tourism Relaxation by the water

The Opolskie Province is rich in water resources, which creates first-rate conditions for the development of various relaxing water activities. Storage reservoirs in Turawa (about 2200 ha) and in Otmuchów and Nysa (4000 ha), near the Polish-Czech border, attract many tourists in the summer season. There are many leisure centres and camping sites around the lakes. There are good conditions for angling and water sports, and enthusiasts of these activities can rent the necessary equipment in rental establishments. Neighbouring towns rich in historical monuments (Opole, Nysa, Otmuchów, Paczków) make the lake district even more attractive. The rivers of the Opole region encourage tourists to practice canoeing (the Odra, Nysa Kłodzka and Biała Glucholaska in their upper parts, and the Mała Panew, Osobłoga, Stobrawa).



Turawskie Lakes

Situated only 16 km from Opole, they are the favourite leisure places both for the inhabitants of Opole and people living in the neighbouring provinces. Surrounded with a vast forest, they create an undeniably beautiful landscape. Forest walls protecting sandy beaches from wind, picturesque bends giving the lakes a natural character, and large water surfaces – all these create first-rate conditions for recreation, water sports and angling. All-year-round and seasonal holiday centres, sailing centres, riverside hostels, camping sites and camp fields ensure good living conditions for tourists. There are excellent pikeperch fishing grounds in the lakes. Pike, eel and carp can also be angled here. In the forests there are many berries and mushrooms. The Turawa water reservoir is well known to ornithologists, too, as it has been designated an aquatic bird sanctuary (a resting place for migrating birds) of a European rank.



The region of Otmuchowskie and Nyskie Lakes

This region comprises the territory of the Nysa Kłodzka Valley (the eastern part of the Sudetes Foreland) together with two neighbouring artificial water reservoirs of a total area of 4000 ha. There are excellent leisure conditions there: tourists can practice sailing, angling and water sports. The lake district is not richly wooded but it is attractive because of its landscape, favourable climate, and the fact it is in the vicinity of Nysa and Paczków – towns with interesting history and many historical monuments. Many leisure centres at the lakes provide good accommodations and services. Water sports' enthusiasts can rent equipment in rental establishments (yachts, boats, windsurfing boards).



The region of Otmuchowskie Lake – well developed for tourism purposes, it is a favourite place of anglers who fish for bream, pikeperch (often weighing 10–15 kg), pike, perch, eel, carp and crucian carp here.



Nyskie Lake (also called Głębinowskie Lake) is picturesquely situated, with a view of the Opawskie Mountains. It has a diversified shoreline, clean waters and well-developed tourist infrastructure. Anglers can fish for bream, pikeperch, pike, perch, roach, carp, eel, ruff, amur, tench, crucian carp, chub, as well as stream trout and brown trout. At both lakes, there are hostels for anglers, where fishing permits can be bought and food and accommodation can be obtained.

The region of Otmuchowskie and Nyskie Lakes is under legal protection. Birds are the most important genus in this area. The reservoirs are resting places for migrating aquatic and swamp birds.



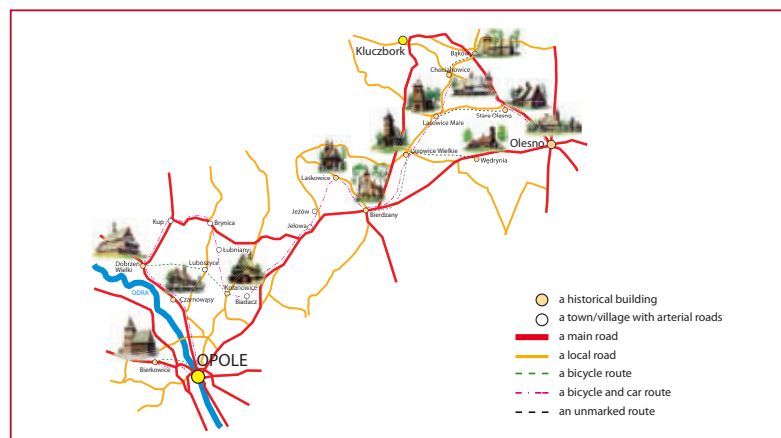
Tourism Tourist trails

The trail of wooden sacral buildings

Old wooden little churches are particularly beautiful elements of the Opole region's contemporary landscape. There are more than 70 of them. They can be most frequently found in the districts of Kluczbork, Namysłów and Olesno. As monuments of significant artistic value they are a real tourist attraction of the region. The well-marked trail from Opole to Olesno makes it possible to visit 12 little churches dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries.

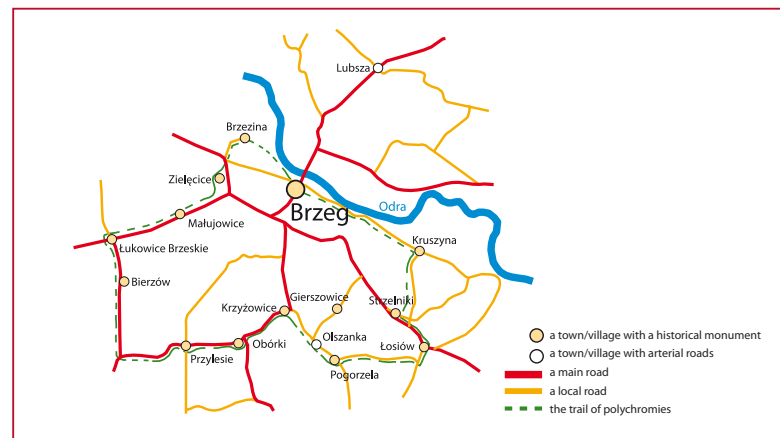


OPOLE – BIERKOWICE
The Church of St. Catherine of 1613
CZARNOWĄSY
The pilgrimage church of St. Anne of 1687
DOBŹEN WIELKI
The pilgrimage church of St. Roch of 1658
KOLANOWICE
The Church of St. Barbara of 1678
LASKOWICE
The graveyard church of St. Lawrence of 1686
BIERDZANY
The Church of St. Hedwig of 1711
LASOWICE WIELKIE
The church of All Saints of 1599
LASOWICE MAŁE
The church of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Assumption of 1688
CHOCIANOWICE
The funeral church of the Blessed Virgin Mary's Birth of 1662
STARE OLESNO
The Church of Mary Magdalene of 1680
OLESNO
The pilgrimage church of St. Anne of 1518
WĘDRZYŃA
The Church of St. John the Baptist of the turn of the 17th and 18th century

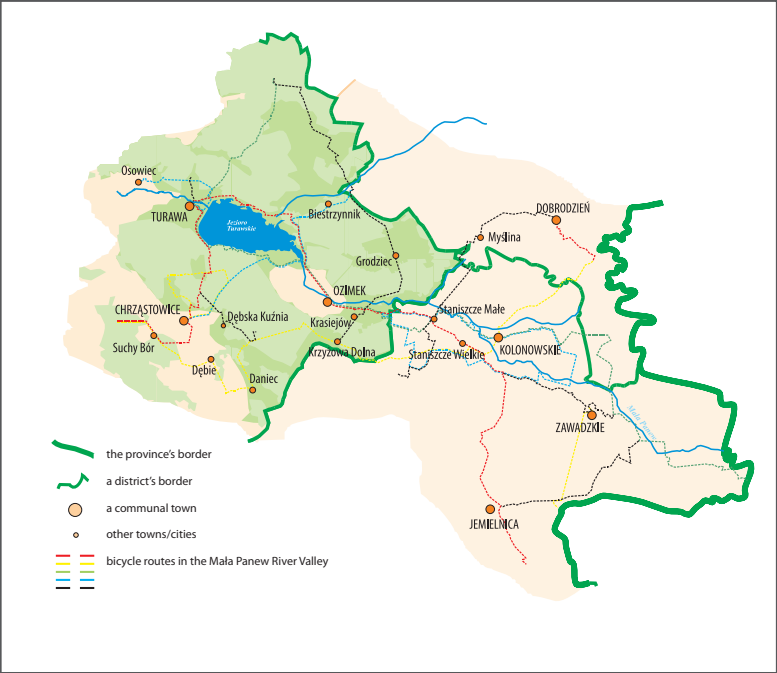


The trail of medieval polychromies of Brzeg

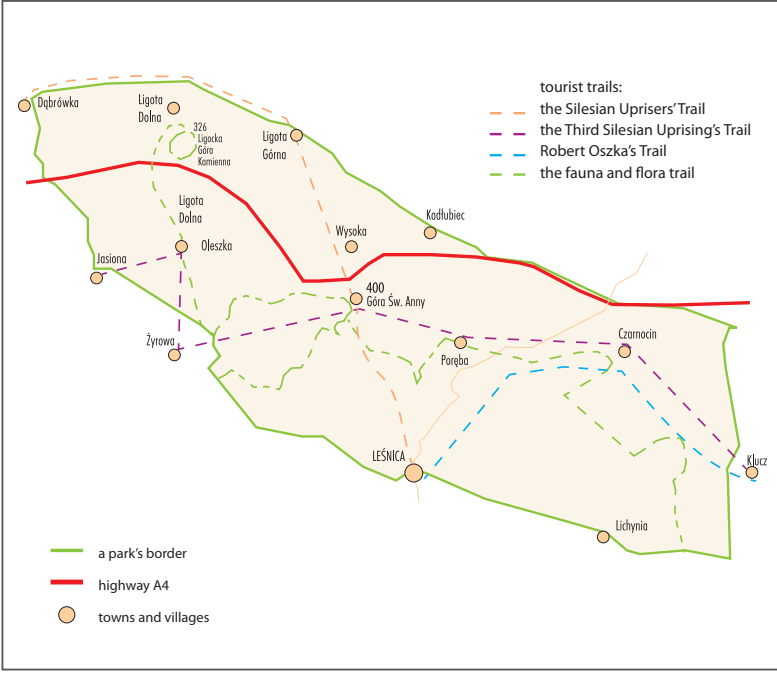
The polychromies of Brzeg are exceptionally valuable monuments of Gothic wall painting, found near Brzeg in 18 village churches of the 14th and 15th centuries. The trail of medieval polychromies of Brzeg comprises the most numerous grouping of paintings in Poland made by the unknown Master of the Brzeg Adoration of the Magi and his followers. The biggest complex of polychromies on interior walls can be found in the church in Małujowice – it is the so-called “Silesian Avignon”. The trail leads, among others, through Brzeg, Małujowice, Łukowice Brzeskie, Przylesie, Krzyżowice, Pogorzela, Strzelniki, Kruszyna. It deserves special attention because of its unique character and exceptional value.



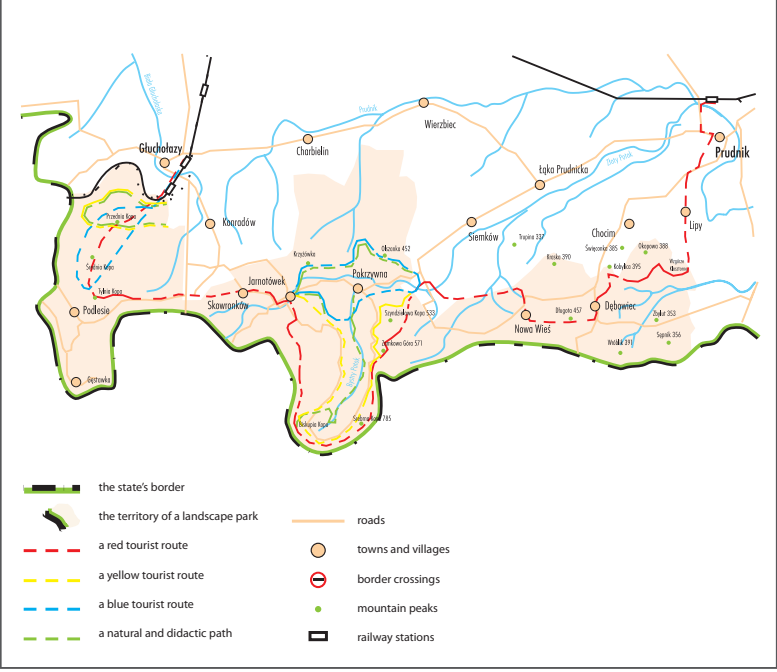
The Valley of Mała Panew



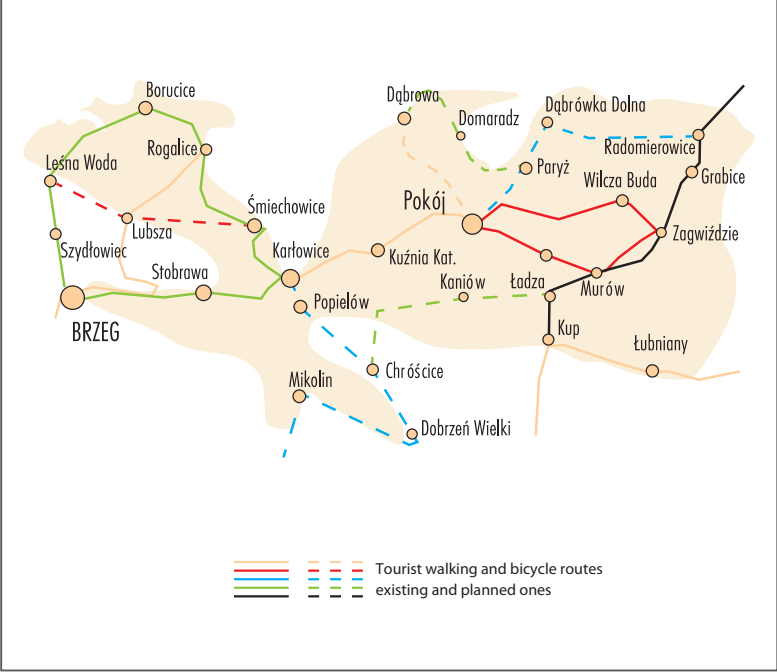
The Landscape Park of St. Anne's Mountain



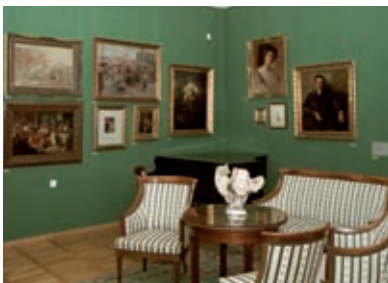
The Landscape Park of the Opawskie Mountains



The Stobrowski Landscape Park



Museums



The Museum of Opole Silesia in Opole

This museum has archaeological, ethnographic, historical, natural and artistic exhibits. The collection of Silesian Gothic sculptures, artistic handicraft and the gallery of Polish painting of the 19th and 20th century are especially valuable. The gallery presents a collection of works by the outstanding Polish colourist, Jan Cybis. Permanent exhibitions: **The Prehistory of the Opole region, Opole – a fortified town, a town, and the region's capital.**



The Diocesan Museum in Opole

This museum presents the most interesting works of sacral art of the Opole Diocese territory from the 14th to the 20th century, including a unique collection of Gothic sculptures, precious manuscripts, old prints, books, sacramental vestments and vessels. The works of art are presented during preservation works. Exhibitions of modern sacral art of Polish and foreign artists are held in the museum. Permanent exhibitions: **Silesian Artistic Handicraft, and Gothic Sculptures in Opole Silesia.**



The Museum of the Opole Village in Opole-Bierkowice

This museum protects and popularises folk culture of the Opole region, especially village architecture. In an area of 10 ha there are 60 buildings dating back to the 17th–19th century, including cottages, barns, granaries, a church, a blacksmith's shop, a water mill, and windmills. The buildings are furnished with authentic furniture, and household equipment and tools, thanks to which the exhibition gives us a complete image of the Silesian village of the past.



The Town Museum in Nysa

The Town museum is situated in the former Wrocław bishops' palace. It has archaeological and artistic handicraft collections, a collection of European painting of the 15th–19th century, and a collection of graphic art of the 16th–20th century. Permanent exhibitions: **The history of Nysa from the 16th to the 18th century, Nysa in the light of archaeological research, Art and artistic handicraft from the 16th to the 19th century, and a gallery of foreign painting from the 16th to the 19th century.**



The Museum of the Silesian Piasts in Brzeg

The castle of the Silesian Piasts has rich archaeological and historical collections, including a numismatic collection, a collection of archival materials, cartography, seals, and military accessories. The most precious collections are the collection of Gothic and baroque sacral sculptures of the 15th–18th century, and Silesian portraits of the 16th–19th century. Permanent exhibitions: **Silesian art of the 15th–18th century, Brzeg – 750 years, and The past and tradition of the Silesian Piasts.**



The Museum of the Prudnik Region in Prudnik

Located in the old arsenal building, adjoining the town walls, this museum has, among other things, archaeological monuments of Lusatian culture, documents of the 14th–19th century, handicraft products, folk garments, weavers' tools, and military accessories from the Napoleonic wars period. Permanent exhibitions: **A Silesian house, and How it was with flax.**



The Museum of the Silesian Uprisings on St. Anne's Mountain

The Museum's rich collections (documents, photographs, banners) present the national liberation of Silesia which started in the late 19th century: the plebiscite, the Silesian uprisings, the Poles' Association in Germany, the Polish Scouts' Union in Germany, the defence of Silesia in 1939. Permanent exhibitions: **At the border of Upper Silesia; The Geological structure of St. Anne's Mountain.**



The Central Museum of Prisoners of War in Łambinowice

Situated in the building of the headquarters of the former prisoners-of-war camp, Stalag Łamsdorf, this museum comprises a camp area, an area of mass graves and graveyards (one for the prisoners-of-war of WWI, and another of the camp victims of 1945–1946). Permanent exhibitions: **In German captivity, Polish soldiers in Soviet captivity, and The history of the prisoners-of-war camps in Łambinowice.**



The Museum of the Gas Industry in Paczków

Established in 1991, this museum is situated in the old town gasworks. It has the largest European collection of gas installations and gas metres, and altogether there are more than 3,000 exhibits in show rooms and outdoor exhibitions. Permanent exhibitions: **Gas production and purification, and In an old gas container (gas-producing and gas-heating installations).**



The Museum of Rev. J. Dzierżon in Kluczbork

This museum has archaeological, historical and ethnographic collections, with special emphasis on apiculture. A separate collection is the Dzierżon collection – remembrances of Rev. Dzierżon, the father of modern apiculture. In the pavilion in front of the museum there is a collection of modern figural beehives made by folk artists and amateur sculptors.

Traditions Customs and ceremonies



Opole Silesia can be proud of its rich and multi-ethnic culture. In the course of history, Polish, Czech and German influences have intermingled in this area, which has resulted in the formation of an original culture with its own dialect, folk costumes, and cuisine. Local dialect, dancing, songs and literature in the Opole folk culture are still very valuable and colourful phenomena. The best known of the still-cultivated annual customs and ceremonies are the following: walking the bear, female chocolate sponge cake, the burial of the bass, and the drowning of marzanna (a straw figure representing winter). Nowadays, they provide joyful entertainment.



“Herody” in Lewin Brzeski

The Provincial Review of Carol Singer Groups “Herody” in Lewin Brzeski has taken place since 1984, in late January and early February. It aims to preserve carol singing traditions, both Silesian and borderland.



The Festival of Folk Songs in Gogolin

This festival is a cyclical competition presenting the achievements of amateur folk groups of the Opole region, and has been held every two years since 1979.



The walking of the bear

This is an old carnival custom still cultivated in Silesian villages. The bear figure symbolizes evil, which has to be annihilated so as to make it possible for good to prevail.



The drowning of marzanna

The drowning is the most popular spring custom, symbolising the farewell to winter, illnesses and evil. It is usually connected with the carrying of a decorated tree or branch – the symbol of spring.



The burial of the bass

This traditional “burial” of musical instruments is the sign of Lenten silencing. It is the symbolical end of the joyful carnival season.



Stripping feathers

This event usually takes place in December, successively in particular households in a village. As in the past, old women and young girls make their work more pleasant by singing songs and telling stories. The work ends with a traditional party.



The field procession of St. Urban in Gogolin

This is held on 25 May, on St. Urban's day – the patron of farmers, fields and crops.



The Opole żniwniak (harvest festival)

This harvest festival has a long lasting tradition. On the day of this festival village inhabitants carry a harvest crown decorated with crops to a church and a thanksgiving mass is held. A host and hostess lead the procession. In the afternoon the pageant walks through the village. Frequently, the culminating point of the harvest festival is a harvest crowns competition. At the end of the day, there are sports events, firemen's shows, and dancing party.



Easter egg painting and the Opole ceramics

Easter egg painting is an old tradition, going back to the 10th century. Eggs are boiled in natural dyes and finely decorated by means of a sharp tool; only unique floral patterns are "carved" on eggs in such a way. The decoration motifs and colouring have also been used on faience and china. Thus the characteristic "Opole china" was created, which is often bought by tourists as a regional souvenir.



The Museum of the Opole Village in Opole-Bierkowice

This museum presents life in a Silesian village from the 18th to the 20th century. The museum's collection comprises 50 objects of village architecture with furnishings: houses and utility buildings, monuments of village technology (a water mill, windmills, a blacksmith's shop), and public utility buildings (a church, an inn, a school). There are almost 7,000 historical exhibits inside the old buildings. The museum popularises the old and modern folk culture and folklore by organising outdoor events, garden parties, exhibitions and competitions.

Traditions The cuisine



The tastes of the Opole region are an element of our culture, a culinary heritage and a regional specificity. Many unusual dishes and products have been created as a result of the mingling of the Silesian, Czech and borderland cuisines. Those that have an original recipe and excellent taste are on the list of the Opole traditional products. These are, among others: żymlok opolski (a kind of sausage with ground bread), buchtły śląskie (a sort of dumpling), śliszki and mołčka (rolls with poppy seed filling and a special Christmas dish), kołacz śląski (a cake with poppy seed or cheese filling), a beef roll, Silesian dumplings, as well as borderland products, such as the beverage "kandybał" or pies – "Pałynyci". In order to experience the real tastes of the Opole region, it is worth looking for these and other specialties in Opole's inns and taverns.



Kołacz śląski

This is a ceremonial cake, consisting of dough and filling. Its name derives from the shape of a circle in which it used to be made ("kolo" – circle). It may be filled with poppy seeds or cheese filling, and covered with crumbs. It is a traditional wedding cake – the bride and groom give it to almost everyone in the village just before their wedding day. It is also the most important kind of cake for all solemn occasions. It simply must be served at family and local celebrations.



Opole beef roll

This is a traditional meat dish, made from a piece of meat rolled and roasted till it becomes light brown, filled with pickled cucumbers, onions and bacon. It is a typical Silesian Sunday dinner, together with Silesian dumplings and red cabbage.

Silesian sour soup with buttermilk

In Silesia, in periods of privation, people used to eat this soup 2 to 3 times a day. There used to be a special pot in every house, called a "żurok", in which there was always some fermented rye flour. Nowadays, it is also eaten frequently, especially during Lent. There is a proverb connected with this soup: "Strong is the one who eats sour soup".



White Opole żymlok

A żymlok is a processed pork and roll product ("żymła" means "roll" in Silesian dialect), to which no animal blood is added, and thus its colour is not dark. It is white and has a cylindrical shape. As a traditional product of Opole Silesia it was awarded the "Culinary Pearl" at the Polagra Farm Fair in Poznań in 2005.



Silesian dumplings

So-called white dumplings are made from boiled and mashed potatoes, potato starch, flour and eggs. They are excellent with roasted meats; especially beef rolls, and cabbage. They are served not only on Sundays, but also at all important family celebrations. The recipe is passed down from generation to generation in Silesian families.

Red cabbage

This is a salad made of red cabbage, of violet-blue colour, with a light spice and bacon flavour. It is frequently served warm with beef rolls and Silesian dumplings.



Silesian heaven

This is a very popular Silesian meat dish, also called "Silesian paradise" or "Silesian delicacy". It consists of smoked and later cooked meat, to which is added a sauce of dried plums. It is served with a sort of dumpling. "Silesian heaven" was presented on the TV programme "Culinary travels with Robert Makłowicz".



Szpajza

Szpajza is one of the most popular Silesian desserts. It is made from jelly, compote juice, egg whites and sugar, and it has the consistency of a homogenous mousse. It is decorated with whipped cream and fruit. The traditional szpajza has a lemon taste, but nowadays there are also sour cherry, gooseberry and chocolate varieties. It is mainly served during ceremonial dinners.

Stuffed cabbage with buckwheat and potatoes

This traditional eastern borderland dish used to be a Christmas Eve staple, and now it is an everyday dish. Scalded cabbage leaves are filled with mass made from boiled buckwheat, onions and raw grated potatoes, rolled tightly. After cooking it is covered with melted back fat.



Kartoffelsalat

This is traditional potato salad with bacon (also called Silesian szalot or potato szalot) served at all family celebrations (on Christmas Eve herring in oil was used instead of bacon). Carrots, onions, pickled cucumbers were also added to it. Nowadays, instead of bacon, eggs and mayonnaise are more frequently added.



Silesian buchty, or steamed leavened dumplings

These are round dumplings of light cream colour, common to Silesia for a long time. They used to be served as a Lenten dish, sometimes sweet – with compote or blackberries picked in local forests, sometimes salty – with pork or beef in its own gravy.



Pańćkraut with ribs

This is a very tasty and nutritious vegetable and meat dish that used to be served in Silesia on weekdays. It is a homogenous potato and cabbage mass with pieces of grated carrot, back fat and bacon cracklings. The dish is served with ribs cooked in vegetable stock.

Mołcka

This is a traditional Silesian Christmas Eve dish, served at the end of the meal. It has the consistency of a sauce, and it is made from gingerbread, vegetables, dried fruit and nuts, which give it a sweet taste. It may be served warm or cold.

Lenten pie

This comes from the eastern borderland. It resembles a pie, its outer layer is light brown and inside it is golden, with darker grains of buckwheat. It has a delicate bread smell, with a light cabbage and potato flavour. It should be soft and have a crispy crust.

Seasonal events



The Easter Fair
OPOLE-BIERKOWICE – March/April



The Opole Theatre Festival
OPOLE – April



The Summer of Flowers
OTMUCHÓW – July



The Days of the Nysa Fortress
NYSZA – July



The International Medieval Fair
BYCZYNA – April



The Piastonia – The Opole Students Festival
OPOLE – May



The Artists Equestrian Championships
ZAKRZÓW – August



The Franciscan Fair
OPOLE – September



The Blooming Azaleas Festival
MOSZNA – May



The National Festival of Polish Songs
OPOLE – June



The European Majorette Championships
OPOLE – September



The Polish Festival of Puppet Shows
OPOLE – October



The International Dressage Championships
ZAKRZÓW – June



The International Lumberjacks Competition
BOBROWA – July



The International Percussion Festival
OPOLE – October



The Poets' Invasion of the Castle
BRZEG – October



**Concerts held as part of the Jazz
at the Odra River Festival**
BRZEG – April

The Days of Opole
OPOLE – April

**Poland's Majorette Group Championships
and the International Meetings of Majorettes,
Drum Majors and Cheerleaders**
OZIMEK – May

The International Festival of Young Pianists
GŁUBCZYCE – May

**The Harvesting Tournament
"The Golden Scythe"**
PIĄTKOWICE – July

**The International Summer Holidays
Big-Band Competition**
NYSA – July

The Jacob's Fair
NYSA – July

The International Jazz Rock Meeting Festival
OPOLE – August

The Piast Fair
BRZEG – August

The Polish Knights Tournament
BRZEG – August

The International Knights Tournament
OPOLE – August/September

**Concerts held as part of the International
Musical Vratislavia Cantans Festival**
BRZEG – September

The Ludwig van Beethoven Festival
GŁOGÓWEK – September

The Street Theatres Review
OPOLE – September

The Autumn Folk Art Fair
OPOLE-BIERKOWICE – October

The International Dance Meetings
OPOLE – October

The International Dance Meetings
OPOLE – November/December

The Christmas Market – Weihnachtsmarkt
OPOLE – December

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© Oficyna Piastowska
Opole 2007

Printing
Dimograf, Bielsko-Biała

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The chapter Silesian Cuisine was
developed on the basis of the materials
of Związek Śląskich Rolników and
Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa
Opolskiego.

The dishes presented on the
photographs were prepared by
"Salomon" Restaurant in Opole.