

- **Museums (4)**

- » **Archaeological Museum**

Mariacka 25

Jerzy Kamrowski The exhibition at the Archaeological Museum in Gdańsk entitled Amber Through the Millennia shows not only the resin's (succinite's) biological structure, which was characteristic of the old Gdańsk collections, but also its presence in archaeological cultures. In the part of the exhibition dedicated to nature, we can see a reconstruction of the amber forest, from which amber originated, the diversity of natural forms in which it set and its multiple varieties. All this is complemented with samples of other fossil resins such as Romanian rumenite, Sicilian simetite, Burman burmite, Dominican amber and copal. The inclusion collection is on display as well: fragments of plants and small animals (ants, arachnids and dipterans from the Tertiary Period) trapped in amber.

The presentation of amber's role in culture begins with a fragment of an amber decorative piece from the time of the Hamburg Culture (ca. 11 - 10 thousand years BCE). The Mesolithic figurines, decorations and amulets exhibited nearby are only slightly younger (7 - 4.5 thousand years BCE). Neolithic artefacts (4500 - 2300/1800 BCE) are accompanied by the tools used to make them/. Of course, there are plenty of cinerary face-urns, decorated with amber bead earrings, so characteristic of early Iron Age Pomeranian culture. Perhaps the most beautiful amber necklaces, sometimes complemented with glass beads, come from the period of Roman influence (ca. 25 - ca. 375 CE). The early Middle Ages are represented by an entire range of amber rings, necklaces, pendants, amulets (iThor's hammers) and crosses. There is also a well-preserved fragment of a Medieval gimlet, used to drill holes in the beads. A special display case shows the importance of amber in medicine. Amber artefacts made by contemporary artists, sometimes inspired by the centuries of Gdańsk amber craft, are an integral part of the exhibition.

- » **History Museum**

Długa 47

Artus Court is a complex of buildings forming a branch of the Gdańsk History Museum, located within the Main City boundaries and forming a part of the representative city route called the Royal Route. Długi Targ located near the historical harbour on the Motława river forms part of the route. The Artus Court complex consists of the following parts: the ground floor of two connected town houses called The Old Bench House, Artus Court and the New Bench House. The Old and New Bench House are the town houses with narrow facades typical of Gdańsk architecture.

The origins of Artus Court go back to the Middle Ages and its name stems from the European culture of knighthood. The common name of the courts originates from the name of the legendary leader of the Celts, Arthur, who lived in Britannia in the 5th and 6th century. For the people of those times he was a model of knightly virtues, and the Round Table, at which he sat with his courageous knights, was a symbol of equality and partnership. This very idea inspired the Baltic town communities to build Artus Courts. The Round Tables were organised according to a determined structure, and the tournament, feasts at the round table and dancing. Their genesis should be sought in the meetings of bards, troubadours and feasts, which took place first in Britannia and then in Wales. Already at the end of the 12th century similar ceremonies were held in northern Italy and in the 13th century in the Middle East, England and other countries of Europe. The populations of rich cities competed with the knights in showing sophisticated Arthurian manners to improve both their own the entire community's prestige.

The name of the building: "Curia Regis Artus" (The Royal Court of Artus), which was constructed in Gdańsk between 1348 and 1350, appeared for the first time in city documents in 1357 in relation to land rent. Another document dated 1358 defines it as "curia sancti Georgii" (Saint George Court) mentioning at this occasion similar courts in the Baltic region in Toruń, Chełmno, Elbląg, Braniewo, Królewiec, Rewal (Tallin), Riga and Stralsund.

The first court was erected on a plot of land belonging to the city since 1344, by the Saint George Brotherhood at its own expense and effort. The Brotherhood associated the knights from rich German families. We do not know a lot about the functioning of this elite brotherhood in the first century of its existence. We only know that it was of a knight-religious nature and probably organised military exercises for Gdańsk citizens and tournaments, similar to comparable brotherhoods in Braniewo and Riga. The members of corporations were required to participate in the jousting tournament according to the Round Table customs. The Saint George Brotherhood attempted from the very beginning to maintain its elite nature, requiring noble origin from its members, and set the same requirements for guests of Artus Court.

Over time, Artus Court began to accept not just merchant customs, but also started to take on the role of an official merchant house. Information always played a key role in the merchant profession. And the Court was an excellent place to exchange such information. This was a place where regulations for the authorities were announced. The Court served trading purposes in two ways: legally - supporting personal contacts and social relationships between local merchants, and illegally - when trade transactions were concluded which were not allowed in this place.

The influence of the Brotherhood of Saint George was almost completely eliminated. It lost its right of ownership to the Court and held only an honorary place at ceremonies. From that time onwards the Brotherhood sat together with the judges and other users in the Great Hall. The most important changes concerned the establishment of succeeding associations from among individual members, as co-hosts of this institution. These friendly participants of meetings sat on the same bench, which became a place of community for those people, who in time created a new brotherhood. The new brotherhoods created in this manner adopted the joint name – Artus Court bench. Initially the members were grouped according to their geographical-cultural origin, profession, interests etc. The family traditions of the home Rhine region linked the members of the Saint Reinhold Brotherhood established in 1481. The Lubeck Bench created in 1482 brought together Gdańsk citizens trading with Lubeck. Personal friendship lay behind the establishment in 1483 of the Three Kings Brotherhood. The origins of the Malbork Bench created in 1487 can be found in the tradition of the veterans of The Thirteen Year War, who participated in the siege of Malbork in 1457 and 1460. The Dutch Bench, whose origin goes back to 1492, was formed by the Gdańsk and Dutch merchants trading with the Netherlands. Professional ties were behind the establishment of the Shipmasters and Judges Brotherhoods.

War and disease reduced the population of the city at the beginning of 17th century, changing the way of life of its inhabitants. The times of prosperity of Artus Court were gone along with the turmoil of war. It was closed and reopened many times. However the good old customs, sometimes frivolous, though standing up to the standards, were a sign of the past. In the end, on 31st of October 1742 the Council made the decision to transform the Court into a stock exchange, and from that time the Great Hall ceased to play host to the feasts of the brotherhoods. The decision of the Council transformed the Court into the seat of the Gdańsk stock exchange. The merchants obtained an outstanding building, while the Court gained a new function becoming once again the centre of merchant life. However, apart from regular exchange sessions, the Great Hall was also occasionally used to host official royal visits, significant cultural events and international meetings. At the end of the 17th century the Great Hall was used on a regular basis to hold concerts.

Gdańsk Vestibule, the representative patrician drawing-room in the New Bench House. From the east it adjoins the Great Hall of Artus Court. Gdańsk patrician families lived there from the middle ages to the 18th century. From 1709 it was the seat of the bench courts. Following general refurbishment in 1900 – 1901 (for the needs of the exchange premises), the New Bench House attained the look of the old Gdańsk style vestibule. The interior was decorated with 17th and 18th century works of Gdansk and Dutch art from the collection of the merchant-collector, Lesser Gieldziński.

The Gdańsk Vestibule was restored after war damage – its Baroque staircase from the beginning of the 18th century was transferred from Kłanin palace along with the decorative ceiling painting and two 18th century cupboards. Its furnishings also include the reconstructed fireplace, 18th century sculptures, 18th century Dutch ceramics from Delft, brass candle holders, original Dutch flag-stones on the walls with pastoral themes and a model of a 1775 Gdańsk ship. In addition two paintings were hung above the wooden panel line: "Three Kings Greetings" by Andreas Stech and "Portrait of an Amsterdam counsellor" by Jacob van Loo. The paintings are separated by a pair of large ornamental candle holders. The western wall of the great Gdańsk Vestibule has the entrance passage connecting it to the Great Hall of Artus Court. The museum continues to supplement the furnishings of Gdańsk Vestibule in order to restore the baroque character of a Gdańsk merchant house drawing-room.

» [Maritime Museum](#)

Szeroka 67

The Maritime Museum in Gdansk is the largest of its kind in Poland, documenting and popularizing Poland's maritime traditions as well as the evolution of her present-day maritime policies, economics, technology and culture.

The idea of creating a maritime museum in Gdansk began to take shape in 1958. The exhibition "From the oar to atomic power" organized in the famous Artus Court in Gdansk in September of that same year was the beginning. The Museum formally came into existence on 1 October 1960, but it had to start right from scratch, having neither a collection nor a building to house it.

Now, the main buildings of the Museum are in the heart of the old port of Gdansk on the river Motława. They include a number of typical port buildings situated on both sides of the river. On the right bank the Museum's organizers have reconstructed a group of granaries from the 15th-17th centuries, as well as about 200 metres of the adjacent quayside, where the museum ship "Soldek", the first steamship built in Poland after the Second World War, is now moored. On the left bank the Museum complex includes a medieval port crane and the adjacent burghers' houses adapted to the Museum's purposes. For the convenience of visitors, the Museum buildings on either side of the river are linked by the Museum's ferry, the "Motława".

The museum has three branches outside Gdansk: the Vistula River Museum at Tczew, the Fisheries Museum at Hel and the Museum-ship "Dar Pomorza" in Gdynia. The Museum's collections contain artifacts, documents and a library. The displays illustrate the history of port construction, boatyards and ship-building, the history of shipping and maritime trade, fisheries, the history of Polish yachting, marine art etc.

The core of the collections consists of artifacts recovered during underwater explorations which the Museum began in 1965. To this end, the Museum set up a special department which has its own research vessel, conservation laboratory and team of diver-archaeologists. The Museum publishes several series of publications: "Proceedings..." which prints papers on maritime history, and "Publications..." which include guidebooks, information brochures and folders, as well as catalogues of the collections.

The Friends of the Maritime Museum and Friends of the "Dar Pomorza" Societies are based at the Museum.
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» [National Art Museum](#)

Torunska 1

The National Museum in Gdansk is the heir of the City Museum (Stadtmuseum) and of the Museum of Decorative Arts (Kunstgewerbemuseum). Established in 1872 through the efforts of Rudolf Freitag, the lecturer at the Royal School of Fine Arts, it reopened after World War II as the City Museum, it was called the Pomeranian Museum until 1950 and was elevated to the rank of a National Museum in 1972. Over time its archaeological, maritime and historical departments developed into stand-alone museum establishments: the Maritime Museum in 1960, the Archaeological Museum in 1962 and the Historical Museum of the City of Gdansk in 1971. The present-day administrative structure of the Gdansk National Museum includes the Division of Modern Art, the Division of Ethnography, the Gdansk Gallery of Photography and the Museum of the National Anthem, with the main building housing the department of Old Art.

The main building is a post-Franciscan monastery constructed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Destroyed by Prussian and Napoleon's troops in 1807-14, it was partly restored and enlarged in 1867-72. The war activities of 1945 left the monastery damaged in 65 per cent. Luckily, the Gothic ground floor with arcades, refectories and halls survived. The restoration, which lasted from 1946 to 1956, removed the nineteenth century, bringing the building back to its original appearance.

The holdings of Old Art have mostly been acquired through bequests and donations by the burghers and craft guilds of Gdansk. Many of the exhibits are church deposits. Pre-eminent in the holdings is a collection of paintings, prints and drawings presented by the Gdansk-based Scottish merchant, Jacob Kobrun (Cocburn), b. 1759 – d. 1814. Originally numbering some 10,000 works by European artists from the fifteenth century onwards, the collection lost two-thirds of its exhibits during World War II, but still remains one of Poland's most valuable collections of its kind. Another strength of the Museum are its holdings of the thirteenth to sixteenth century textiles and embroideries from Europe's leading decorative textile making centres. A property of the church of Blessed Virgin Mary, the collection was presented to the Museum by the Gdansk protestant community in 1937 and, depleted during and after World War II, now numbers only half of the initial 541 exhibits. Other holdings of decorative arts and crafts were badly depleted, too. Nowadays the Museum's holdings are facing another major threat, that of claims made by the church authorities. The church has demanded the return of not only the works of art which were brought to the Museum from the destroyed churches after 1945, but also of those which were successively presented by the Protestant communities and municipal authorities from 1872 onwards.

The Gdansk Museum boasts a collection of the twelfth to sixteenth century Pomeranian and West European sculpture, with two valuable altars, the Mourning of Christ and Assumption, both dating from ca. 1410, and a Romanesque sculpture of Mary enthroned from ca. 1170-1200; sixteenth and seventeenth century Dutch and Flemish paintings; sixteenth and seventeenth century Gdansk paintings; drawings and prints from Dutch and German schools of the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries; works by Gdansk smiths and goldsmiths of the Baroque period; late medieval pewter exhibits made in Gdansk as well as in Pomeranian and European workshops; Gdansk, Pomeranian and North European furniture ranging in date from the late Middle Ages to Baroque and Rococo; ceramics, especially tiles, Gdansk stoves, Dutch, French, Swedish and Polish faience, Silesian stoneware, Dresden china, etc. While the Museum specialises in old art, mostly from the areas of Gdansk and Pomerania, it also possesses Polish paintings representative of romantic to inter-war movements by painters of such renown as Piotr Michalowski, Stanislaw Wyspianski, Jacek Malczewski and Olga Boznanska.

Permanent exhibitions: "Medieval Fine Arts in Pomerania"; "Gdansk Painting of the 16th to 18th Century"; "Gallery of 19th Century Gdansk Artists"; "Polish Painting of the 19th and Early 20th Centuries"; "Gallery of Prints and Drawings"; "Works by 15th to 19th Century Goldsmiths"; "Pewter in the 15th to 19th Centuries"; "Works by Smiths and Goldsmiths of the 16th to 18th Centuries"; "18th Century Furniture Making in Gdansk and Eastern Pomerania"; "Old Ceramics: 15th to 20th Centuries".

National Museum in Gdansk
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• **Ports (3)**

» **Gdynia Port**

Gdynia Port

Anchorage

Three anchorages are available to the east of the breakwater and south of the leading line to the main entrance in depths from 10.0 to 20.0 metres. Anchorage No 3 is for tankers only. The seabed is fine sand and the Hel Peninsula protects the roadstead.

Accommodation

The Port Gdynia is protected by a 2.5 km breakwater and has a total of 17,700 metres of quays of which over 11,000 metres are for commercial use. The port covers a total of 755.4 hectares including 492.6 hectares of land area.

Approach

The Port of Gdynia can be entered from one of three main routes: from the sea to the east, from Gdańsk to the south and from Puck Bay to the north. All entrances are hazard free. The main entrance is 150 metres wide with a depth of 14.0 metres. The outer breakwater is 2.5 km long.

Tides

Gdynia is a non-tidal port.

Pilotage

The service is provided by Unipil, a private company, and is compulsory for all vessels over 40 metres LOA. Pilots board at Gdynia roads.

Towage

Towage is compulsory for ships over 90 metres LOA and for ships over 70 metres LOA carrying dangerous goods. Towage is provided by WUZ Port & Shipping Services Company Ltd.

Hazardous cargo

The Port Gdynia is able to handle and store hazardous cargo.

Arrival information

Pre-arrival information to harbour master.

Radio information

Pilot station can be contacted on VHF Channel 12.

Fresh water

Supplied from berthside hydrants.

Waste

Reception facilities available.

Veterinary inspection

There is a Border Veterinary Control Station in warehouse No 25A of the Baltic Container Terminal.

Working hours

The port operates 24 hours a day on a threeshift system.

» **Gdynia**

Gdynia

With a population of over 250,000 and one of the most buoyant economies in the whole of Poland, Gdynia is certainly going places, and it can no longer be dismissed as the grey counterpart of neighbouring Gdansk and Sopot. Certainly, it has none of the flamboyant sweep of its neighbours, (although fans of Bauhaus won't be disappointed by much of the architecture). Gdynia has plenty of tricks up its sleeve. And belying its reputation as a business hub, Gdynia is certainly no pauper when it comes to cultural attractions. The city can boast one of the country's top film festivals (often dubbed the 'Polish Cannes') as well as a lively Summer Jazz festival. Aficionados of both film and jazz will need no introduction to Poland's marvellous legacy in these arts.

Gdynia's rise, or indeed catapult to fame is certainly unusual. For centuries it was little more than a humble Kashubian fishing village. However, with Poland's rebirth after the First World War, the newly resurrected country was in need of a port on its northern seaboard. The decision by the Allies to make nearby Danzig (Gdansk) a free city, had complicated matters, and the Poles were obliged to build afresh. Gdynia was ear-marked for development, and progress was rapid.

Two ports within such close proximity of each other led to predictable rivalry, with business in Danzig - a predominantly German city - suffering an unavoidable blow. It was the 'Danzig Corridor', a major bone of contention for the Germans, that eventually sparked the war, following Hitler's appropriation of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Although the ports themselves were destroyed (they were carefully rebuilt afterwards), Gdynia survived the war, and like Gdansk, many new settlers came here from the lost eastern cities of Vilnius and Lwow.

Gdynia today is poised at an interesting stage in its development, riding on the crest of Poland's economic reforms. The harbour area remains a diverting part of town to start your exploration, with a good smattering of museums, restaurants and other attractions, not least the popular Teatr Muzyczny (Musical Theatre) which has one of the liveliest repertoires in the north of the country.

[Website](#)

» [Sopot](#)

Sopot

Sopot, a small seaside city and spa resort, is a tourist destination, which together with the neighbouring Gdansk and Gdynia, forms the Tri-City conurbation with a population of over one million. Along the coast, the town is flanked by wooded hills, while the Bay of Gdansk is sheltered from the open sea by the Hel Peninsula, thanks to which the sea off the beaches of Sopot are warmer than at other locations on the Baltic coast. The town's unique character stems from the Art Nouveau townhouses and villas, surrounded by trees, historic parks and beautifully cultivated gardens, with greenery covering 60% of the town area. The enchanting scenery of the town, with the natural beauty of its landscape and attractive tourist facilities, as well as many cultural and entertainment events and convenient access by many modes of transport, make Sopot a tourist destination visited each year by over two million tourists and holidaymakers.

The longest wooden pier in Europe (511.5 m), stretching into the sea from the middle of Sopot beach is a popular venue for recreational and health walks (the concentration of iodine in the air at the sea end is twice as high as on land) or public entertainment events, and it also serves as a mooring point for cruise boats and water taxis. Tickets for cruises to Gdansk, Gdynia and Hel can be purchased at ticket desks located at the pier entrance. From the pier head one can view the town's panorama through binoculars. The pier also provides an ideal spot to watch sporting events taking place in the Bay, such as the World Sailing Championship, the Wind-surfing Baltic Cup or the Sopot Triathlon. Also, from October through March there is a skating rink set up at the pier entrance. The pier is managed under lease by the Sopot Beach Resort. Numerous life guards with state of the art equipment are always on standby in case of emergency.

An excavation conducted in Sopot indicates that this region was inhabited during the early Iron Age, around 500 B.C. Amber was mined in this region during this time, which was then transported to south to the Roman Empire. The first document where you can see the name Sopot is dated March 5, 1283 when Polish prince Msciwój II gave Sopot to the Cistercian monastery which was located in Oliwa (today you call this Gdansk Oliwa, which is part of the large city of Gdansk just a few miles south of Sopot). Eventually Sopot became a tourist attraction for neighbouring Gdansk. During the Renaissance Sopot was slowly transformed into a tourist resort.

The turning point in history was when Jean Haffner, a doctor from Napoleon's army settled down in Sopot and opened the first baths and also began construction on the park and pier. In a short time, Sopot was transformed into a very attractive resort, being visited by an increasing number of visitors from all parts of Europe. On 8 October 1901, Sopot was promoted to town status by the Prussian government in Berlin. After the conference at Versailles (1918), Sopot, which many foreign citizens inhabited, went under the jurisdiction of the Free Town Gdansk. After World War II Sopot became a popular place for artists. Sopot Gallery, which is located in old casino building, is one of the most important art centers in Poland. In the Forest Opera, a festival which takes place every year, attracts many stars from around the world. There are many places where you can play tennis, watch horse races and ride a horse of your own. As a matter of fact the track is a unique place where many state heads used to come to watch the races. If you like to gamble you can go to Grand Hotel, which is located near the pier, which is a friendly place where you can meet almost anybody.

[Website](#)

- **Arch. Sites** (3)

- » **Fortress of the Vistula River Mouth**

Stara Twierdza 1

A unique monument of the fortification works, Wisłoujście Fortress, is located in direct proximity to the Westerplatte peninsula. This was an important area from a strategic point of view, as the movement of ships entering and leaving Gdańsk harbour could be controlled from this place. The former Gdańsk harbour was located on the Motława river, a few kilometres from the seashore, which made Wisłoujście a key place protecting Gdańsk from the sea and protecting the city and harbour from a surprise enemy attack. Its strategic importance was appreciated long ago. It is quite possible that a guard post was already located there under the reign of the Pomeranian dukes.

The first written comments on the existence of a guard post in the place of the present fortress are not however found until the mid 14th century. The first permanent fortifications were built just after Gdańsk broke free from the Teutonic Knights' reign (1308-1454). In 1482 a brick cylindrical tower was erected used both for defence purposes and as a lighthouse. The tower itself did not provide sufficient defence, and therefore during the Polish-Teutonic Knights war between 1518-21, wooden fortifications were built around the lighthouse. Subsequent defence structures were added over the following decades. In 1562 the wooden fortifications surrounding the tower were replaced with a three-storey brick ring with casemates.

The 16th century and more specifically its end, was a period of rapid development in guns and their ensuing increased destructive power, which necessitated the modernisation of the fortifications and the establishment of new defence systems. Gdańsk relatively quickly became aware of the need to undertake these expensive works, which however were necessary for the city's security. In the 1580s a four-bastion Carré fort was built around the ring in place of the former wooden fortifications, designed according to the rules of the new Italian art of fortification. It was most likely designed by the Flemish fortifications expert, Antoni van Obberghen. The fort's bastions had casemates and gun stations, which allowed one to fire along the walls. The foreground could be fired upon with guns located in the bastions. The casemates had 1586 and 1587 date inscriptions, indicating the time of completing the construction of individual fortification structures. Fort Carré was surrounded by a moat, through which the way to the inside lead, located in the curtain wall between the bastions.

The entry was protected by a gate and drawbridge. The gate tunnel is built diagonally in relation to the entry axis in order to protect the interior of the fort from potential gun fire. The 1602 date inscription in the entry portal of the fort refers to the date of completing the works on the fort.

The Eastern Entrenchment was erected during 1624-26 to protect the fort against direct attack and was constructed according to the guidelines of the Italian expert, Hieronim Ferrero. It consisted of 5 earth bastions preceded by a moat. The similar Western Entrenchment was located on the other bank of the Vistula river directly opposite the fortress. The fortifications of both entrenchments were constantly developed and supplemented in the 18th century.

The fortress fortifications and city defence system were merged into a unified defence system in

1657-58. The Fortress itself, the New Harbour and Westerplatte were additionally strengthened during the Napoleonic wars. Ultimately, the fortress had lost its military significance after WWI through the demilitarization of Gdańsk. Between the two world wars it was used as a marina by many yacht clubs.

The facility was destroyed during the war in 1945 and was partially rebuilt in the sixties. Further reconstruction of the facility and its planned adaptation to a yacht marina was discontinued as a result of the construction of industrial plants in the direct vicinity and their negative impact on the structure.

Since 1974 Wisłoujście Fortress has been administered by the Gdańsk History Museum.

- » **Neptune's Fountain**

Długi Targ

Neptune's Fountain, in the center of Długi Targ (the Long Market) has grown to be one of Gdansk's most recognizable symbols. The bronze statue of the Roman god of the sea was first erected in 1549, before being aptly made into a fountain in 1633.

Like the city he represents, Neptune has had a storied history, himself - dismantled and hidden during World War II, old Neptune didn't come out of hiding until 1954 when he was restored to his rightful place in the heart of the city, reminding us of Gdansk's relationship to the sea.

Chances are you've already had your photo taken with this mighty trident-wielding behemoth, or will soon. The colourful buildings of Długi Targ make a great backdrop for any photo-op, so flash those gums and say 'cheese!'

» [Town Hall \(Ratusz\)](#)

Długa 47

The Town Hall spire, with a golden replica of King Zygmunt August on its pinnacle, dominates ul. Długa's skyline. Built in the late 14th century as the seat of city authorities, the Town Hall hosted many Polish kings. It was almost completely destroyed during WWII but rebuilt with extraordinary care.

The tower contains a 37-bell carillon which was inaugurated on New Year's Eve 2000. The interior of the building, home to Gdańsk History Museum today, is lushly decorated with painted ceilings, colourful frescoes and elaborate furniture and carvings.

Two solemn lions guard its 18th century portal, from where an elaborate staircase leads to the luxuriant Sala Czerwona, the Red Room. This room was used by the council in summer. Its ornamented ceiling is decorated with 25 paintings surrounding a central piece entitled The Glorification of the Unity of Gdańsk.

Note that the museum is currently subject to a renovation, and as such all of the Town Hall is currently off-limits to Joe Public and is not due to re-open until the spring of 2010.

• [Gardens, Parks \(2\)](#)

» [Oliwa Zoo](#)

Karwiehska 3

Gdańsk Zoo is one of the biggest zoological gardens in Poland. It is an attractive place for both recreation and education and it is visited by hundreds of thousands of tourists and Gdańsk citizens every year.

The idea to establish a zoological garden in Oliwa first appeared in late 1940s, and it was warmly supported by the citizens of Gdańsk. The enthusiasm of people was so great that although the city's authorities were at first reluctant to support the project, the official permission to establish a zoological park was given in 1953. The park and forest complex of 100 ha located near the centre of Oliwa in the Valley of the Forest Mill (Dolina Leśnego Młyna) was chosen for this purpose. This scenic area, with Rynaszewski stream flowing across, is also called the Valley of Bushy Mills (Dolina Krzaczastych Młynów). It is the very heart of the Tri-City Landscape Park, characterised by movie-like landscape. As an aside, numerous Polish nature films have been shot in Oliwa Zoo.

This location was chosen due to its outstanding topographic conditions and the mild microclimate of the valley, where from the end of the 19th century up to 1945 a guest-house for patients with respiratory problems and rheumatism was operating. The main building of the guest-house, farm buildings and the old water-mill with the miller's manor erected in the first half of the 19th century, were adapted to the needs of the zoological garden.

Gdańsk Zoo was formally opened on 1 May 1945. The first inhabitants of the Zoo were small animals donated by citizens of Tri-city: rabbits, guinea pigs, foxes, small deer, pheasants, as well as monkeys and parrots - gifts from sailors. In May 1954 Oliwa Zoo welcomed its first European bison called Puszczan, and in June that year - a gift from Warsaw zoological garden - a couple of wolfs: Misio and Łotka, parents of numerous offspring, which may be found in many animal collections all over the world.

The zoo in Oliwa was enlarged in the 1950s and 1960s mainly thanks to its staff, the Zoo's first director Michał Massalski, and the citizens of Gdańsk, who did a significant part of the job working as volunteers; thanks to them the walking trails and access roads had been built. The natural water reservoirs had been widened and deepened to adjust them to the needs of animals. The boggy areas were drained and turned into paddocks with small ponds. Enclosures for monkeys, predators and birds were refurbished and enlarged. Several new paddocks for hoofed mammals were built, while llamas and mountain sheep got the substitute of mountains in the shape of great boulders. Seals and penguins were given new pools with fresh spring water flowing in and out. The immense work done by the volunteers and enthusiasts of the Gdańsk zoological garden years ago cannot be overestimated.

At the beginning of its expansion, the biggest problem of the Oliwa zoo was to assemble the collection of exotic animals, and most of all to create the best possible conditions for them to live and breed. All the efforts of the Zoo's staff were not in vain; in the mid 1980s the Gdańsk Zoo had about 800 inhabitants representing 176

species, such as the white rhinoceros, polar bears, Asiatic black bear, common marmosets and ring-tailed lemurs. At that time the Zoo had 400 000 visitors per year.

Since 1991, as Michał Targowski was appointed the Zoo's director, the collection of animals in Oliwa Zoo is regularly extended, gaining many rare species listed as threatened: pygmy hippopotamuses, orangutans, maned wolves, Arabian oryxes, Somalian asses, anoas, Javan lutungs, colobus monkeys, jackass penguins and mandrills. In return for quarantining 50 Bactrian camels from Kazakhstan, the Zoo received a herd of dromedaries and Bactrian camels, llamas, flamingos and pelicans.

The "Children's Zoo" was opened for the youngest visitors. It is very popular with children and it has about 15 000 young visitors every year. Students from primary, middle and high schools are invited to participate in workshops organized in the multimedia centre, opened for educational purposes. At the moment, about 3 000 pupils take part in such classes within a year. In 2001 the first part of the pavilion for birds and reptiles was opened for visitors. Since 2003, when the second part of the pavilion was opened, the visitors can admire about 30 species of parrots and 16 species of reptiles year round. In summer 2005 walking trails were hardened with brick pavements, which made them more accessible for handicapped people and families with children. In autumn 2005 new enclosures for the monkeys were opened. They are also available for visitors year round. The projects of building two pavilions for giraffes and a 2 ha paddock for lions are under way. All reconstruction works in Oliwa Zoo are conducted according to the latest requirements of the European Association of Zoological Gardens (EAZA), of which Oliwa Zoo is member since 1993.

As the subsidies are granted to the Zoo (Oliwa Zoological Gardens are a municipal budgetary unit) further projects of enlarging the garden towards the centre of Oliwa shall be carried on.

The arrangement of places for relaxation, new restaurants and snack bars, playgrounds for children, as well as new attractive visual setting of Gdańsk Zoo attract more and more visitors, even off season. They all find walking in the Zoo of Gdańsk Oliwa both a relaxing and an educating way of spending one's leisure time.

Zoo is open every day of the year

Opening hours:

Summer season

from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Ticket office 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Winter season

from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Ticket office 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Ticket:

child: 6 zł

adult: 12 zł

» [Westerplatte](#)

Westerplatte

A small peninsula, Westerplatte protrudes out into the Baltic, welcoming incoming ships and ferries. But on September 1, 1939, this wooded strip of land is where the Second World War began, when the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein began shelling a small Polish garrison stationed there. After a valiant stand, the Poles ran out of food and ammunition and surrendered on September 7th. Today, a 25m tall monument marks that fateful spot and its blank, thoughtful face reminds visitors of the tragedy that began on that patch of land. The monument rests upon an equally tall mound and is visible from a good distance. In the surrounding woods there are some ruins from the battle, as well as other artifacts from WW2, such as preserved tanks. Although it is a bit outside the city, the significance of this place has a powerful draw and people come from all over the world to see this infamous spot.

• [Palaces, Castles \(1\)](#)

» [Malbork Castle](#)

Malbork

The drifting, patient river Wisla quietly passes beneath the massive brick walls and towers that form Malbork's western fortifications. From the opposite bank, the castle fills your entire view and without so much as a telephone pole in the picture, you're transported to the fourteenth century. Or, if you've been reading too much C.S. Lewis, perhaps you'll see yourself in Narnia. Maybe Jimi Hendrix has moved you to a 'castle in the sky' but let's not get too carried away here.

From Gdansk's main rail station, Malbork is only 60km, 60 minutes, and 10 zloty away! If you've been in Gdansk for longer than 2 days, set aside a few hours and make the short trip to this splendid edifice. There are many

magnificent historical buildings in Gdansk, but in Malbork you can see history in isolation. It's just you and the castle, particularly if you go in the early fall, after the crush of tourists has passed.

The history of Malbork begins in the Holy Land and by 'Holy Land' we mean Palestine, not the Krispy Kreme Donuts factory. Allow us to introduce you to the fabled Teutonic Knights, a rowdy band of monks with a lust for slayin' and convertin'. After Palestine was lost to Islam, these zealots needed a new base of operations. But the Crusades were partly an excuse to get people like this out of Europe, so no one wanted them back! Finally, a Polish King offered them sanctuary in return for help against some pagan Lithuanians. The Knights were happy to help, but they were also happy to form their own state and control the amber trade. Also, they massacred the citizens of Gdansk in 1308, which they were supposed to be protecting. Whoops.

Obviously, these actions didn't exactly sit well with the Polish King, who promptly allied himself with the Lithuanians who were being constantly raided by the Knights. In 1410, the massive battle of Grunwald saw the defeat of the Teutonic Knights, but the stumbling Polish King stalled out and was unable to rout them from Malbork, where they had been constructing and improving a massive castle since they first established themselves in the region over a hundred years prior. They called the castle Marienburg (St. Mary's Stronghold) in case you hear that name, rather than Malbork.

The Teutonic Order continued to decline and in 1457 the mercenaries working for the Knights decided that it was a good idea to take the castle for themselves and sell it to the Polish King. Gotta get paid somehow, you know? Anyways, the Polish monarchy kept Malbork in decent shape for the next few centuries. Royal persons would rest their weary feet in its awesome rooms and vaulted hallways while travelling to and from Gdansk. Perhaps it was this leisurely attitude that led to the Partition of Poland in 1772, upon which the castle was controlled by the Prussian rulers.

Unfortunately, the Prussians turned the magnificent castle into a barracks and many of the out walls and towers were taken down, many windows were bricked up, and much of the splendor was lost. Of course this gradual decline and industrial transformation was preferred to the bombing, destruction, and looting done to the fortress by the Soviet army, and by the end of the Second World War, Malbork was basically a shadow of its former self.

Today, the castle has been renovated and reconstructed, as faithfully as was possible. In general, reconstruction work throughout Gdansk and its neighbors has been incredible and Malbork is no exception. In 1997, the castle became a World Heritage Site. Bristling with weapons displays, the medieval historian inside all of us will revel in the sheer amount of exhibits and displays. There are also a great many amber exhibits, as well as entire rooms devoted to the Teutonic way of life. Half the fun is actually just running through the hundreds of empty corridors, imagining that there's a battle going on, but for the kids there are some cool wooden weapons available for purchase.

The 'Siege of the Malbork Castle' is the biggest event of the summer, but there are a number of smaller fairs and festivals throughout the year. Tours are available in English, German, and Russian but will run you 150 PLN unless you organize something in advance. It takes a good 4 hours to see most of what's inside, unless your hunting for some ghosts, in which case you'll need more time to set up your equipment. Whatever your aims, you'll be sure to leave the castle with a smile on your face and thoughts of forming a metal band named 'Teutonic Pagan Slayer.' Rock on!

Tours Offices:

http://toursinpoland.com/gdansk_tour_stutthof.html

http://www.staypoland.com/gdansk_tours/malbork.asp

• **Churches (1)**

» **[St. Mary's Church \(Kosciol Mariacki\)](#)**

Glowne Miasto

During a casual stroll down many of Gdansk's streets, St. Mary's church can just be seen over the rooftops. Even when you stand directly in front of the tower, it's difficult to understand the scale of this building. But if you can get to a place where you can view the city as a whole, you can truly appreciate the massiveness of this church! It's not just the tower that rises up above the rest of the city, but the entire building dwarfs everything around it!

The 'Gothic Church of the Most Holy Virgin Mary,' or St. Mary's for short, was built in several stages between 1343 and 1502. Today, it is the largest brick church in the world, with a length of over 100 meters and a tower reaching 76.6 meters into the sky. With enough capacity for 25,000 people, St. Mary's has a gravity all its own! The darkly coloured bricks and dim nighttime lighting only add to the effect and St. Mary's is definitely worthy of a special evening trip, if you've only seen it during the day.

Unfortunately, 'Kosciol Mariacki' was severely damaged during the Second World War during the Soviet liberation of Gdansk. The wooden roof burned, the windows were smashed in, and the heat was so intense that many

bricks simply melted away. The floor was also destroyed, as looters ripped up historic tombs, looking for valuables to steal. In anticipation of the worst, many valuable pieces of art were hidden away during the war and survived the chaos, but many have not been returned to their rightful place.

However, there are still a great many treasures inside this beautifully reconstructed cathedral. A 46 chord organ built by the master Marcin Friese, enchants all those who hear it lovingly played upon. A late-gothic main alter depicts God the Father, Mary, and Christ sitting together on three incredible thrones. Although there is a slight sense of emptiness, a number of other paintings, sculptures and religious artifacts provide an impressive backdrop for time spent worshipping in this house of God.

The church is also home to an incredible timepiece. Built from 1464 to 1470, an astronomical clock stands at a hefty 14 meters! This clock contains 70% of its original elements and tells not only time, but also the day, month, lunar phase, the positions of the sun and moon in relation to the Zodiac, and also tells us that our ancestors were not the backwards people we have a habit of believing them to be! At noon, the clock depicts scenes of the Adoration of the Magi and the Annunciation, while Adam and Eve ring bells from atop this marvel.

Even if you don't mean to visit St. Mary's, the aforementioned gravity of the place is sure to draw you closer. There are services every Sunday for visiting Catholics and travelers can check out the interior during daytime hours. Perhaps you'll even be lucky enough to run into Stolem, a friendly giant who visited the church in years past, who used the Church's Basilica as a place to rest and look out upon the rest of lovely Gdansk!
