



KRAKÓW, The City of Kings, Art & Jazz

From the timeworn cobblestones of the Old Town to the avant-garde cafés of Kazimierz, **Kraków's** storied past and artistic verve make it one of Europe's most spellbinding cities, finds **Punita Malhotra**.

9 A.M.

For an indulgent stay, check into Relais & Châteaux Hotel Copernicus, an opulent five-star property on Kanonicza Street, Kraków's most aristocratic thoroughfare. Housed in a meticulously restored Renaissance townhouse, this grand hotel has played host to monarchs and luminaries, including Nicolaus Copernicus, since the 1500s. Expect ornate wooden ceilings and original 16th-century frescoes as well as contemporary creature comforts, including an ethereal L'Occitane spa in a vaulted Gothic cellar.

Wake up to a decadent breakfast at Copernicus Restaurant, a Michelin-recommended haven where Polish gastronomy meets avant-garde artistry – be sure to try the golden-crust *Obwarzanek* (Kraków's signature bagel), hand-churned butter, smoked Oscypek cheese, Lisiecka sausage and velvety artisanal honey. hotelcopernicus.com



10 A.M.

Start your day at Wawel Castle, the stronghold of Polish kings, which crowns a hill overlooking the Vistula River. Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque influences come together in the opulent state rooms and private royal apartments, transporting you through the ages into Poland’s regal legacy. Climb a tower for sweeping vistas of the river and castle grounds before venturing into the legendary Dragon’s Lair. Be sure to stop by the fire-breathing dragon sculpture outside, a fierce guardian of Kraków’s fabled past.

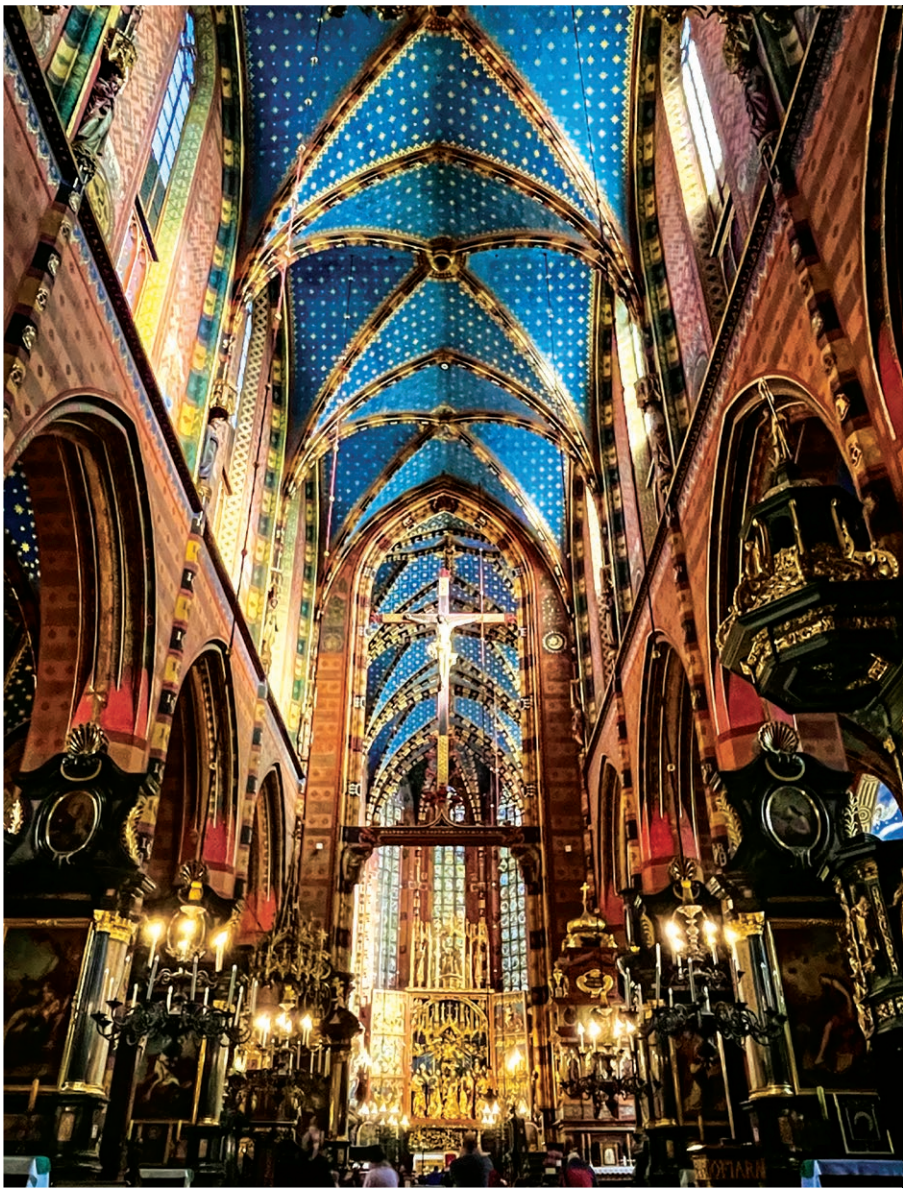
12 P.M.

Trace the footsteps of Polish royalty along the seven-mile-long Coronation Path, a historic route flanked by gloriously adorned churches and grandiose cathedrals, leading to Kraków’s buzzing main square, Rynek Główny. Here, horse-drawn carriages drift past the soaring spires of St. Mary’s Basilica while the 14th-century Cloth Hall beckons with its trove of Polish handicrafts and curios.

Pause for lunch at Szara Gęś, a charming, family-run brasserie where Polish, French and Swedish flavours entwine. Indulge in perfectly grilled salmon or succulent beef sirloin, expertly paired with selections from an elegant French wine list. As you dine alfresco, stay tuned for the haunting Hejnał melody, a centuries-old bugle call that cascades from St. Mary’s tallest tower every hour. *szarages.com*

3 P.M.

Step into a kaleidoscope at muWi Stained Glass Museum, Poland’s oldest and largest stained-glass studio, which has illuminated Kraków’s artistic soul since 1902. Within this historic atelier, history and craftsmanship entwine, casting radiant hues across intricate Art Nouveau masterpieces. Watch seasoned artisans breathe life into the glass, meticulously restoring luminous works of art. For a truly hands-on encounter, join a guided workshop and craft your bespoke stained-glass creation, a shimmering keepsake of Kraków’s enduring artistry. *muzeumwitrazu.pl*



5 P.M.

Make your way to Kazimierz, Kraków’s storied Jewish Quarter, where street murals whisper untold tales while bohemian cafés and indie art galleries breathe life into this cultural enclave. A slow wander down Szeroka Street unveils the 16th-century Old Synagogue, now a museum preserving Kraków’s Jewish heritage.

Across the Vistula River, history takes a solemn turn at Oskar Schindler’s Enamel Factory. This poignant museum unravels the haunting realities of Nazi occupation through immersive exhibits, deeply personal testimonies and evocative recreations of wartime streets, unfolding an essential chapter in Kraków’s tale.

7 P.M.

Pamper yourself with a fine dining experience at Bottiglieria 1881, Poland’s only two Michelin-starred restaurant. Here, chef Przemysław Klima redefines Polish flavours with an elegant tasting menu inspired by seasonal



ingredients. Pair your meal with a glass of Polish wine from the Sandomierz region for a refined culinary finale.*1881.com.pl*

9 P.M.

Wrap up your 24-hour Kraków adventure at Harris Piano Jazz Bar, one of Poland’s premier jazz venues hidden beneath the historic market square. The dimly lit, brick-lined cellar sets the perfect mood for soulful rhythms and improvisational magic every night. Sip on a classic Żubrówka cocktail infused with aromatic bison grass, or opt for a local craft beer as you soak in the sounds of live saxophones and double bass. It is the perfect encore to a day steeped in culture, craft and culinary delights. *harris.krakow.pl* ■

clockwise from top left: Kazimierz hides surprises at every turn Kraków’s oldest commercial centre is a trove of craft souvenirs; St. Mary Basilica’s interiors glow with heavenly beauty; Wawel Castle upholds Poland’s royal legacy; the buzzing Coronation Path leads to the main square; a craftsman turns glass into art at muWi Stained Glass Museum.