



## **Kraków 2026: a city that charms Poles and seeks to attract through opportunity**

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**The latest image report prepared by the Institute for Internet and Social Media Research shows that Kraków is the most eagerly visited city in Poland and maintains its position as the most well-liked among Poles. At the same time, the study indicates that, alongside culture, history, tourism, and its unique atmosphere, the city should now more broadly communicate its opportunities, development, new technologies, innovation, smart city projects, and growing business potential.**

The study was conducted in April and May 2026 using the CAWI method on a representative sample of 1,024 respondents from across Poland. Importantly, Kraków residents were excluded from the sample to obtain a more objective external perception of the city.

*“Today’s Kraków is not only a city of history and tourism—as clearly reflected in the study—but also a developing academic, technological, and business hub. Within the Polish Investment Zone alone, the city has attracted projects worth over PLN 1.5 billion in recent years. Kraków combines the prestige of its heritage and cultural brand with the ambitions of a modern European metropolis and a great place to live. The report shows that what matters now is the consistent implementation and communication of projects related to development, new technologies, smart city solutions, innovation, and business,”* emphasizes Daniel Wiśniowski, Director of the Kraków Brand Department.

### **Kraków Gains with Closer Experience**

Kraków enjoys very strong affection among visitors, and its tourism image remains unrivaled. As many as 47.4% of respondents indicated it as the best destination to visit—a result significantly higher than that of other Polish metropolitan areas. The report also highlights a clear “wow effect” tied to direct experience. Overall, 73% of respondents declare a positive attitude toward Kraków, but among those who have visited in the last three years, the figure rises to 81%.

The report shows that personal contact with the city effectively breaks the stereotype of Kraków as merely a “museum of history.” Visitors are more likely to notice its modernity, dynamism, and development. This is reflected in satisfaction ratings, with the average visit score reaching 8.80/10. According to the report’s authors, this demonstrates that Kraków raises standards and can positively surprise even those familiar with the city.

### **Uniqueness, Academic Capital, and Improving Quality of Life**

The city’s strengths remain its landmarks, culture, aesthetics, and unique atmosphere. Spontaneous associations are dominated by Wawel Castle, the Wawel Dragon, the Old Town, and the historical heritage of Poland’s former capital. As many as 70% of visitors point to the city’s “unique character” as its greatest asset. Kraków is also the leader among cities recommended to friends (52%) and is perceived as the most hospitable city in Poland (53%). The report indicates that hospitality and atmosphere are key foundations of tourist loyalty and the city’s brand strength.



The study also confirms Kraków's strong position as an academic center. It is the most frequently chosen city for studying in Poland, selected by 33% of respondents. Its advantage is driven by the reputation of its universities, academic traditions, and a broad educational offer.

It is worth noting that Kraków has significantly improved its rating as a good place to live (+12 percentage points)—one of the highest increases compared to data from 2021. At the same time, it is increasingly perceived as a European city.

## **Strong Cultural-Historical Brand vs. Contemporary Development**

The report's authors point out that Kraków remains an "iconic" city associated with very positive imagery, but themes related to quality of life (with air quality noted as a concern), development, and new technologies are less visible in the overall narrative. In these areas, Warsaw (associated with jobs and career opportunities) and Wrocław (seen as more modern) received higher ratings. Respondents also identified challenges for Kraków, including housing availability, green spaces, transport, and infrastructure.

Although modernity, innovation, and business are still less prominent in public perception, the report shows initial signs of change. The perception of Kraków as a modern city has increased by 9 percentage points compared to 2021, and as an attractive investment destination by 8 percentage points. The challenge, therefore, is not a lack of development activities but their effective communication nationwide. Currently, despite numerous projects related to technology, science, and infrastructure, 23% of respondents perceive Kraków as a smart city.

## **A Smart City Already in Progress**

Kraków is developing initiatives related to the high-tech sector and new technologies, such as the Space City project, activities supporting innovation, the growth of the startup ecosystem (including the relocation of the Start-up Poland Foundation's center to the city), and the