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From Data to Decisions: The Kraków Model of Tourism Management

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Kraków is being visited by a growing number of people, but today, for the city, the number of visitors is just as important as their needs, travel behavior, and the impact of tourism on residents' quality of life. That is why the development of tourism is increasingly based not on intuition, but on data analysis. This allows for a better understanding of who visits Kraków, how they use its offerings, and what benefits this brings to the local economy. The latest research results show that the city is consistently moving toward a tourism model based on quality, balance, and long-term benefits.

We Know More and More About How Tourists Use Kraków

For years, Kraków has remained one of the most important travel destinations in Poland and Central Europe. However, modern tourism management no longer relies solely on monitoring visitor numbers. Increasing importance is attached to understanding who the visitors are, how long they stay, what services they use, and what impact they have on the local economy and the city's daily functioning.

That is why Kraków is consistently developing a data-driven tourism management model based on the principles of sustainable development. In practice, this means making decisions based on reliable analyses rather than solely on intuition or current trends.

In 2025, the scope of research was expanded to include analyses using data from mobile applications and payment cards. This makes it possible not only to more accurately determine visitor numbers but also to analyze how people use the city's offerings, their spending levels, and the seasonality of tourism.

The expanding system of analyses also helps better understand changing tourist needs and quickly identify new trends. As a result, the city can more effectively plan promotional activities, develop its offer, and invest in solutions benefiting both residents and visitors.

Not Just the Number of Tourists: Quality of Stay Matters More

In 2025, Kraków was visited by 16.25 million people—about 10% more than the year before. Even more interesting, however, are the data on tourism's impact on the city's economy.

It is estimated that visitors left around PLN 15.4 billion in Kraków—an increase of more than 70% compared to the previous year. While this value is influenced by changes in tourism service prices, research also shows a clear rise in interest in higher-standard offerings.

More visitors are choosing better hotels and more often using restaurants, cultural events, and paid attractions. As a result, not only the number of visitors is growing, but above all the economic value generated by their stays.

This direction of development is one of the key principles of sustainable tourism. The goal is not to maximize the number of tourists at all costs, but to increase benefits for the city and the local



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economy while maintaining a high quality of life for residents.

This is confirmed by data from the hotel market. In 2025, over 60% of hotel guests chose four-star accommodations, and the share of the premium segment continues to grow. As a result, economic benefits can increase faster than tourism volume itself.

Who Visits Kraków? The Structure Matters, Not Just Numbers

Analyses show that the structure of tourism is also of great importance.

Among foreign visitors, the largest group were British tourists, accounting for more than 26%. At the same time, the importance of the Spanish market increased, while tourists from Germany maintained a stable presence.

Slight changes were observed in the shares of visitors from France, Italy, and the United States. However, this does not mean a loss of importance—both Italy and the U.S. remain among the most important source markets for Kraków.

The American market is particularly significant. Visitors from the United States belong to the group with the highest purchasing power. In 2025, the average American tourist spent about PLN 2,958 during their stay—one of the highest figures among all analyzed markets.

These data show that an effective tourism policy cannot rely solely on the number of visitors. Equally important are their structure, length of stay, and economic impact.

Domestic tourism also plays an important role. Visitors from the Małopolska, Silesian, and Masovian regions are particularly significant. The domestic market provides strong stability to tourist traffic and reduces dependence on fluctuations in international markets.

Data Helps Look Beyond a Single Season

Research allows not only monitoring of the current situation but also observation of long-term trends.

Initial data from 2026 indicate, among other things, a gradual reduction in the seasonality of tourist traffic. More and more visitors are coming outside the traditional peak season.

This benefits both businesses and residents. A more even distribution of tourist traffic means better use of urban infrastructure, greater business stability, and less congestion during peak periods.

Kraków is also developing analyses related to the meetings and events sector (MICE), the short-term rental market, the night-time economy, and the relationship between residents and tourism.

New EU regulations on the registration of short-term rental properties will also be important. For the first time, they will make it possible to precisely determine the scale of this phenomenon and its impact on both the tourism and housing markets.

Thanks to these analyses, it is also possible to better identify areas requiring support, pinpoint



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locations with the highest concentration of tourist traffic, and manage the development of the city's tourism offer more effectively.

Tourism That Brings Benefits

Tourism remains one of Kraków's key strengths and an important source of benefits for the local economy. However, its development requires maintaining a balance between the needs of visitors, residents, and businesses.

That is why Kraków consistently develops a management model based on knowledge, research, and data—not to simply count tourists, but to better understand processes, anticipate changes, and make decisions that support the city's long-term development.

Data makes it possible to better plan promotional activities, develop offers tailored to visitors' needs, and minimize the potential negative effects associated with intensive tourism.

In this way, data becomes the starting point for responsible decision-making. And responsible decisions form the foundation of tourism that benefits residents, businesses, and visitors—both today and in the future.

This article is part of a publication series by the Municipality of Kraków on the state of tourism in the city. The series aims to organize key concepts and phenomena and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of Kraków's tourism based on data. It also encourages active participation in public dialogue between residents, businesses, and local government.