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How did Kraków become the Host of WordCamp Europe?

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Months of preparations, an international team of organisers, and thousands of participants from around the world. How did Kraków succeed in bringing WordCamp Europe—the largest European conference for the WordPress community—to the city? Sebastian Miśniakiewicz, co-organiser of the event, shares the behind-the-scenes story of the preparations, the challenges, and the benefits the event brought to Kraków.

Kraków hosted WordCamp Europe—the largest WordPress community conference in Europe. How did the city succeed in bringing this event to Kraków?

Preparations lasted several months. Usually, at the beginning of the year, the host city for the next edition is already announced, leaving relatively little time to refine every aspect of the event.

WordCamp Europe takes place once a year and is the largest event of its kind on the continent. Until this year, when the conference returns to Spain, there had been an unofficial tradition of selecting cities that had never hosted the event before. For various reasons, Poland had long remained absent from that list. Finally, in 2024, we submitted Kraków's bid to host the 2025 edition. We had only ten days to prepare the application. Although we did not win, we reached the final stage of the selection process.

Afterwards, we carefully analysed what had determined the outcome. The most important factor turned out to be the choice of venue. In our first bid, we proposed EXPO Kraków. While it is an excellent venue, it would have required significantly greater investment to adapt it to an event of this scale. For our next bid, we selected the ICE Kraków Congress Centre instead, and that decision—in the opinion of the Polish WordPress community—was one of the key factors behind our success.

Which of Kraków's strengths played the greatest role in being selected as the host city for WordCamp Europe?

Two factors proved decisive. The first was the venue itself—the ICE Kraków Congress Centre—which perfectly met the requirements for organising an event of this size and complexity. The second was the strength of the local WordPress community. An event of this magnitude simply cannot be organised in a country without an active community of people willing to dedicate their time and expertise to its preparation.

The attractiveness of the city itself and its accessibility also play an important role in the selection process. Kraków offers well-developed transport infrastructure, including Kraków Airport in Balice, proximity to other international airports, convenient rail and coach connections, and a modern road network. All of these factors contributed to the final decision.

WordCamp Europe is the largest European conference bringing together the WordPress community. It attracts not only professionals who build websites, but also users, enthusiasts, and anyone who uses WordPress in their daily work. Although the conference programme includes presentations and



**Magiczny
Kraków**

workshops, networking is equally important. WordCamps are where new business ideas, partnerships, and lasting friendships are born. Some stories even end in marriage—one of the organisers met his future wife from another country during a WordCamp event.

Photo: WordCamp Europe archive

What Made the Kraków Edition of WordCamp Europe Stand Out from Previous Ones?

To answer that question, it is worth first explaining how **WordCamp Europe** is organised. At the top is a three-person leadership team responsible for the entire event (the **Global Leads**), supported by two mentors who act as a liaison with the WordPress Foundation. Below them are more than a dozen team leads responsible for individual areas of the conference. I served as the **Local Team Lead**.

Traditionally, each team is responsible for its own area. From the very beginning, however, we wanted the Polish WordPress community to take a broader view of the event. Our goal was to ensure that every aspect was coherent and carefully coordinated. During the preparation phase, we made sure that each organisational team included at least one representative from Poland. This allowed us to actively participate in decision-making throughout the entire planning process.

One of the long-standing WordCamp Europe traditions is the **Social Dinner**—an event bringing together organisers, volunteers, sponsors, and invited guests to officially open the conference. In Kraków, it was held at the **Food & Wine** complex next to the ICE Kraków Congress Centre, where participants enjoyed networking in a relaxed atmosphere with billiards, bowling, and other attractions. It was the first Social Dinner organised in this format—and it proved to be a great success.

Throughout the conference at the ICE Kraków Congress Centre, we also made sure that participants could experience local flavours and regional products. Guests were able to enjoy traditional **obwarzanki** (Kraków bagels), **oscypek** cheese, fresh strawberries, cheesecake, and even artisan ice cream. We wanted everyone to experience genuine Polish hospitality. Following the event, we received a great deal of positive feedback, and we were especially pleased to hear comments that—according to many participants—the Kraków edition was the best in the history of WordCamp Europe.

The **After Party** was equally memorable. Traditionally, these events last around four hours, but in Kraków we extended it to eight hours—a decision that proved to be an excellent one. The celebration took place at **Fort Kleparz** and attracted around **1,200 participants**. Several hundred guests stayed until dawn, confirming that we had created an event that participants will remember for many years to come.

What was the greatest challenge in organising the event?

The biggest challenge for the Local Team Lead is being responsible for many aspects of the event while not having full control over every decision. The role requires balancing the expectations of the local community with the standards and guidelines that apply across the entire WordCamp Europe organisation.

Organising an event of this scale also demonstrated how important it is to collaborate effectively with people representing different countries, cultures, and ways of thinking. Success depends on finding a balance between local ideas and the global vision of the event, while ensuring that everyone works towards the same goal.

Photo: WordCamp Europe archive

Were sustainability and environmental responsibility incorporated into the organisation of the conference?

Yes. We wanted as many elements of the conference as possible to be sourced locally while also creating a positive social impact. A good example was the gifts prepared for organisers and speakers. Instead of ordering ready-made promotional items from overseas, we partnered with a local **Occupational Therapy Workshop** on Basztowa Street in Kraków. The participants created handcrafted Kraków dragons and **Waputki**—friendly characters inspired by the WordPress community. We also made a conscious effort to minimise waste throughout the conference, particularly in the catering arrangements, to ensure the event was as environmentally responsible as possible.

How would you assess Kraków's conference infrastructure?

From an organisational perspective, everything worked very smoothly. One particularly valuable solution was the free access to public transport for conference participants. Thanks to cooperation with the Kraków Convention Bureau, attendees simply had to show their conference badge to travel around the city at no additional cost. This initiative was very well received.

Kraków itself also made a tremendous impression on visitors. Many participants arrived several days before the conference or extended their stay to explore the city and the surrounding region. They visited attractions such as **Wieliczka Salt Mine** and **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, while others combined the conference with a broader trip around Poland, travelling on to destinations including **Gdańsk** and **Wrocław**. The city's excellent transport connections and easy accessibility certainly encouraged such travel plans.

Photo: WordCamp Europe archive

What significance did this event have for Kraków?

The conference welcomed **2,584 participants**, around **500 of whom were from Poland**. In total, nearly **3,000 people** were involved in the event over its duration. This translated into tangible benefits for the local economy. Participants used hotels, restaurants, public transport, and many other local services. Simply multiplying the number of visitors by their average spending on accommodation, dining, and sightseeing illustrates the significant economic impact such an event has on the city. It generates additional revenue for local businesses, increases tax income, and promotes Kraków among thousands of visitors from across Europe.

Conferences are increasingly seen not only as prestigious events but also as powerful



**Magiczny
Kraków**

tools for urban development.

I completely agree. The impact of WordCamp Europe extends far beyond the conference itself. One of the most significant outcomes has been the establishment of cooperation between the **WordPress Foundation** and the **Kraków University of Technology**. As a result, students will now be able to learn WordPress as part of their university curriculum and earn academic credits. This also creates an opportunity to engage international students studying in Kraków.

We were also committed to opening the event to the local community. That is why we organised the **WordPress Academy**—a series of free workshops for anyone interested in learning how to build their first website using WordPress. Thanks to strong advocacy from the Polish WordPress community, these workshops were held in Polish for the first time, making them fully accessible to local participants.

Equally important was our cooperation with Kraków's schools and universities. Students from the **Kraków University of Technology**, the **Cracow University of Economics**, and **VIII High School in Kraków** had the opportunity to present their projects during the conference. Our community supported them throughout the preparation process, and the initiative was so well received that it will continue during next year's edition of WordCamp Europe in **Málaga**.

Photo: WordCamp Europe archive

Does Kraków have the potential to host more events of this calibre in the future?

Absolutely. Of course, there are always areas that can be further developed. In my opinion, Kraków would benefit from a conference centre larger than the ICE Kraków Congress Centre—one capable of comfortably accommodating several thousand participants under one roof without the need to rely on exhibition halls.

One of the city's greatest strengths is its continuously developing infrastructure, including the ongoing expansion of the airport. It is also important to challenge outdated stereotypes about Poland. In some Western countries, Poland is still perceived through the lens of old misconceptions. However, those who visit Kraków quickly change their opinion and are pleasantly surprised not only by the high standard of event organisation but also by the city itself.

How would you encourage organisers of international conferences to choose Kraków?

I would encourage them to set ambitious goals and not be afraid to bid for the largest international events. Close cooperation with the city is equally important. Kraków has extensive experience in supporting organisers of international conferences and offers a wide range of tools and services that can assist throughout the bidding and planning process. Most importantly, organisers simply need to take the first step and try. Without commitment and determination, even the best destination will never become the host of a major international event.

Photo: WordCamp Europe archive



**Magiczny
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Interview by Jolanta Tęcza-Ćwierz