

Kraków The Host City: Stories - Episode 11: Forgotten Excursion Hostels in Kraków

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During World War I, the army requisitioned a majority of the rooms in Kraków's hotels; after the end of the war, the economic crisis led to a market crash in tourism that resulted in a decline of the hotel industry. The Kraków hotel base shrank considerably.

In 1927-1935, 19 hotels and 11 guesthouses went bankrupt, which reduced the number of accommodation places from 1,560 to 585.

It is worth stressing that the higher-class hotels (e.g., Francuski, Grand, Pollera, Polonia, Pod Różą, Polski and Europejski) that addressed their services to the wealthiest visitors of Kraków survived the crisis. A similar declining trend affected guesthouses, of which only three survived until the outbreak of World War II. We can put this down to the fact that they were too expensive for less well-off tourists and their standard was unsatisfactory for wealthy guests.

Only the end of the 1930s saw a recovery of the hotel industry, where the number of accommodation places rose by over 100. The cheap accommodation base serving mainly youth tourism developed most dynamically. The Kraków division of the Polish Sightseeing Association ran a hostel with 300 accommodation places in the Wawel Thief Tower in 1919-1932.

The Municipal Excursion Hostel was put to use in 1935 as the first functionalist building in Kraków. It was designed by Edward Kreisler in 1929. The Municipal Excursion Hostel is a part of a modern complex of cultural & educational facilities located in the area of Oleandry Street, from where the First Cadre Company set off to war in August 1914. It was created as an accommodation facility for young people visiting the Józef Piłsudski House of Physical Education and Military Preparation, with 220 accommodation places.

In the same year when the facility at Oleandry Street was opened, the Silesian Excursion Hostel with 300 accommodation places came into being. The Silesian Hostel was a multifunctional facility containing apartments with entrances from Królewska street as well as the service part with a dormitory for students, a canteen, offices, a library, lecture rooms and a screening room, the entrance to which was located on Pomorska Street. Before the outbreak of World War II, the Christian Guesthouse on the Kleparz Market Square and the House of Mass Lodgings on the Main Market Square (450 accommodation places) were also built. In the middle of the 1930s, facilities with a lower accommodation standard offered over 2,500 accommodation places. Since we already know that Kraków had a sufficient accommodation base for tourists, we will take a look at their favourite dining places in the next episode.

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