

Krakow and Malopolska - the best travel destination! Summary of the season

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On 2 October, representatives of the city, the region, Krakow Airport and the Malopolska Tourist Organization summed up the holiday season and passenger traffic at Krakow Airport. The event was held as part of the "Cooperation - Innovation - Sustainable Tourism" conference. This year's tourism data confirms that tourism is one of the strategic branches of development in this part of Poland.

The meeting, held at the Hilton Garden Inn Krakow Airport Hotel, was attended by Andrzej Gut-Mostowy – secretary of state at the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, Rafał Szmytke – president of the Polish Tourist Organization, Iwona Gibas – member of the board of directors of the Malopolska Region, Anna Korfel-Jasińska – deputy mayor of Krakow, Grzegorz Biedroń – president of the Malopolska Tourist Organization, and Radosław Włoszek – president of Krakow Airport.

Malopolska is the most attractive tourist region in Poland. It is among the leaders in the number of hotel facilities and qualified tourist guides, and ranks second in Poland in terms of tour operators doing business in the region. All this generates revenue for the regional economy and makes tourism one of the strategic branches of regional development. Last year – in 2022 – Malopolska's tourism revenue amounted to just over PLN 11 billion, while according to the current estimates this year's revenue will break the 2019 record of 15 billion. This will generate more than four billion zlotys to be added to the budgets of Malopolska's companies, local government authorities and residents this year. Many factors influence the development of tourism, predominantly the natural and cultural attributes and extensive tourist and transportation infrastructure, but social progress and development of a given region or tourist destination are also becoming increasingly important. Sustainable tourism, in which locals and tourists interact by mutual agreement, and respect for regional culture and nature conservation, is becoming the overarching idea of the modern tourism economy.

Summary of the season

Summing up the summer tourist season in Krakow and Malopolska, it is important to note spectacular increases in tourist traffic, especially from abroad. The holiday season saw a 174% increase in foreign tourists compared to the 2022 holiday season – from 128,000 to 352,000. In August alone, the number of foreign tourists (not including Ukrainians) increased by 198% compared to August 2022 – from nearly 63,000 to 187,000. The total number of visitors increased by 7% in August 2023 compared to August of last year. The number of domestic tourists (not including residents of the Malopolska voivodeship) increased by 3% in August 2023 compared to August 2022 – from 1.63 million to 1.68 million. Domestic tourism, meanwhile, recorded stable tourist traffic at 3.4 million compared to a similar period last year. Comparing the holiday months in 2023, in August 2023 the number of visitors to the region increased by 24% compared to July 2023. The number of foreign tourists (not including Ukrainians) increased by 13% in August 2023 compared to July 2023 – from 166,000 to nearly 187,000. An even greater increase, at 36%, was recorded among domestic tourists (not including residents of the Malopolska voivodeship) compared to July 2023 – from nearly 1.23 million to 1.68 million. As in July, tourists from Germany, the USA, the United Kingdom, Slovakia and Israel were the most frequent visitors to Malopolska in August, while domestic travel was dominated by tourists from

the Mazowieckie, Slaskie, Malopolskie, Podkarpackie and Dolnoslaskie voivodeships. Compared to July this year, the length of stay of foreign tourists changed in August, with a definite prevalence of one-day and 5-8-day visits, at the expense of 3-4-day visits. [Source: Selectiv's ICT data warehouse, the *big data set*]. These significant increases and the following recovery in foreign tourism each month are confirmed by data from the Local Database of the Central Statistical Office. In April 2023 there was a 55% increase in foreign tourists (including Ukrainians) compared to April 2019. This high growth is also confirmed by data for July 2023, when foreign tourist traffic (including Ukrainians) reached 98% of July 2019 levels. Malopolska is consolidating its position as a national leader, as evidenced by the fact that it played host to 22% of the total number of tourists who visited Poland in July this year. Data from Selectiv and the Central Statistical Office show that more records will be set in the coming months as compared to 2019 data.

It is also important to note the rapid growth of tourist traffic in Krakow, which has been clearly noticeable since the beginning of this year's holidays. Data from Selectiv's ICT data warehouse shows that in **June alone, the number of foreign tourists visiting Krakow increased by 25% compared to last year, in July the increase was as high as 150%, and in the following month 145%**. Statistics for domestic tourists are also optimistic. June, July and August recorded increases of 37%, 28% and 42%, respectively. This makes the historic center of Krakow once again bustle almost around the clock. Summing up the latest statistics on tourism in Malopolska and Krakow, it is worth mentioning that the uniqueness of the city and the region is beginning to be recognized by tourists from the Arabian Peninsula. Krakow and Malopolska stand out due to the high quality of tourist services as well as hospitality and friendly atmosphere. These were factors highly valued by visitors from the Arabian Peninsula. Visitors note the attention to nurturing traditions and culture and the things that are local and unique. A sense of safety is also an important factor encouraging people to come, plus they prefer longer stays of more than a week.

More than 7 million passengers at Krakow Airport

The summer season of 2023 at Krakow Airport now coming to an end shows the scale and dynamics of the recovering route network. **On 28 September Krakow Airport served 7 million passengers.** This is the third time in the history of Krakow Airport that such a result has been achieved, and this means that **in 2023 there is a real chance that as the first regional port in Poland - it will serve 9 million travelers this year. This season, Krakow Airport provided more than 150 scheduled flights, including seven domestic ones**, mostly offered by PLL LOT. Today, Bydgoszcz, Gdansk, Olsztyn, Poznan, Szczecin, Warsaw, and Zielona Gora have a convenient and fast connection to Krakow and Malopolska. The summer of 2023 marks a major achievement for the airport in compiling the range of flights on offer. The adopted strategy for the development of Krakow Airport's route network, taking into account the ever-changing environment and customer expectations, has made it possible to enter previously unserved markets. The 23 airlines operating from Krakow Airport during the holidays included the new carriers Turkish Airlines, Sun Express, Air Dolomiti, Air Serbia, and Pegasus Airlines. Flights to the US via PLL LOT to New York and Chicago were highly popular among passengers, who could go on holiday to sunny Turkey, Italy, Spain or Montenegro. Among the most popular holiday destinations were Antalya, Rhodes, Malaga, Varna, Zadar, Dubai, Nice, Malta, and Catania. Passengers expect a wide range of connections

and efficient service, but also amenities and services to make the trip more pleasant. New retail outlets were opened for the holiday season: you can shop at Victoria's Secret, taste the cuisine at the new Sky Lounge restaurant, and sample Italian food while observing takeoffs and landings at the new Tratorri Boccone space. The Krakow-Balice Airport Master Plan lays down plans for the airport's development over the next two decades. Krakow Airport plans to invest about PLN 1.5 billion in infrastructure development. The basis for further modernization of the airport remains the construction of a new runway, which is a key component of the airport's infrastructure. The development of the airport will create more than 10,000 new direct and indirect jobs and mean development of the economy of Malopolska and Krakow.

Measures initiated in 2021 as part of the "Malopolska – Travel destination" project have helped to strengthen tourism in Malopolska. Responding to the need to support the Malopolska tourism industry, the Malopolska Tourist Organization, in cooperation with its partners – the Malopolska Voivodeship and the City of Krakow – have implemented an intensive promotional campaign on foreign markets and the Polish market, which will last until the end of this year. As part of the project, an image and product promotional campaign has been prepared and implemented on international markets, strategic for tourist travel to Malopolska and Krakow. Activities primarily covered the German, British, Scandinavian and American markets, as well as the domestic market. They focused primarily on an online and trade press campaign. Among other things, the project included 13 ambient marketing events and 8 economic missions, where 77 Malopolska entrepreneurs met with 175 foreign industry representatives.

From 1 May to the end of November, an intensive national campaign is being conducted on Poland's largest television stations: TVP, POLSAT and TVN, which involves more than 6,200 broadcasts of spots depicting the tourist assets of Malopolska and Krakow. The campaign is also bolstered by marketing efforts on the Internet, social media and vod/player, where a minimum of one million spot broadcasts are planned. Malopolska, along with its capital city, can be seen in the top TV show "Pytanie na Śniadanie" which airs on TVP, where 17 broadcasts of the program are scheduled by the end of October. We will be featured in large formats of TVN programs: "MasterChef – Wielkie Grillowanie" and "MasterChef," as well as in the tourist program "Polska na weekend". In addition, two weekend studios were produced for "Dzień dobry Wakacje" and weather broadcasts for "Dzień dobry TVN."

In addition, in June and July, there was a high-profile promotional campaign called "Wakacyjne pociągi do Małopolski" ["Malopolska holiday train service"] on RMF FM. During the holidays, four trains travelled to Malopolska from different parts of the country, with Polish music stars, athletes, influencers, cooks, and above all Polish women and men on board, who won tickets for train rides in a nationwide contest held on RMF FM (a total of 1,089 people entered the campaign). As part of the popularization of the Malopolska holiday train service, 59 appearances on the air were made with references to the campaign. The promotional campaign was reinforced by the production of four versions of radio spots broadcast on RMF FM (109 broadcasts were made). In addition, promotional activities were reinforced on RMFon's website, where 160 spots were aired, encouraging people to visit Krakow and discover Malopolska. The event also had priority support in RMF FM's news services; RMF FM News included a total of more than 70 different features on the campaign. Several additional pieces of information appeared on the online RMF24 Radio. In addition, a wide range of listeners were encouraged to take an interest in the tourist attractions of Malopolska on RMF FM's online channels.



Such extensive radio and television promotional activities make it possible to reach every resident of Poland and tourists from abroad with an invitation to come to Krakow and Malopolska. The project entitled “Malopolska – Travel destination” is implemented entirely from European Funds under the Regional Operational Program for the Malopolska Region 2014–2020. The campaign budget is PLN 24 million, including PLN 16 million earmarked for the foreign part, and PLN 8 million for the domestic part.

Tourism is one of the most important treasures of Malopolska. The pace of development of all of the areas of Malopolska's tourism is significant. Therefore, the Local Voivodeship Authority supports and appreciates the undertakings, initiatives, interesting projects, and unique attractions that make Malopolska the most visited Polish region. On 27 September, during the 2nd European Congress of Sport and Tourism in Zakopane, the results of the 5th Tourist Treasures of Malopolska Competition, organized by the Malopolska Region in partnership with the Malopolska Tourist Organization, were announced. The competition was held in several stages. First, nominations were submitted via a contact form – and this was open to anyone, provided that they received permission from the owner of the venue or attraction in question. The next step was an online poll, in which nearly 16,000 votes were cast, with the highest number of votes being cast in the “Place with climate – a tourist destination or municipality” category, with an amazing prize of PLN 100,000, which the municipality can use for any purpose, including further development of its tourist base. Winners and honorable mentions were selected in six categories.

- In the category “Place with climate – tourist destination or municipality”

Winner: Suloszowa Municipality

Honorable mention: Zawoja Municipality, Ryglice Municipality

- In the category “Most Interesting Tourist Route”

Winner: Babia Gora Trails

Honorable mention: Male Pieniny, Velo Przemsza

- In the category “It’s happening! A unique tourist event”

Winner: Babiogórska Jesień

Honorable mention: All-Poland Canoe Rafting by the Valley of the Dlubnia River “Dłubnia wciąga” [“Dlubnia is enthralling”], Malopolska Tour

- In the “Unique Tourist Attraction” category

Winner: Cross in Krzeczow

Honorable mention: People's House Bukowina Tatrzańska, Bledowska Desert



**Magiczny
Kraków**

- In the category “Idyllic climates – leisure close to nature”

Winner: Tarninowe Wzgorze

Honorable mention: PTTK Hostel Kudłacze, Wooden Cottages “Sielska Dolina w Pieninach”

- In the category “Hospitality – culinary offerings”

Winner: Poprad Villa

Honorable mention: Karcma u Borzanka, Chocholowy Dwor Restaurant

This unique range of attractions for tourists attracts crowds to Malopolska and Krakow every year. Recent years have also seen a growing interest in leisure activities linked to physical activity and culinary heritage. Krakow and the range of culinary attractions on offer have been particularly acknowledged, as in this year's edition of the Michelin Guide, no less than 18 of the 49 featured restaurants are located in Krakow, including the first-ever Polish restaurant to receive no less than two Michelin stars. People also come to Krakow and Malopolska for the spectacular sports events; for example, this year's 3rd Krakow-Malopolska European Games showed that promotion through sports brings tangible benefits. The event organized at the end of June and the beginning of July in Krakow and Malopolska – the 3rd European Games 2023 – won the plebiscite Poland Press Giants of Sport 2023, in the Giant Event category. The competition was held in 29 disciplines at 25 venues and was the largest global event held in 2023. The Polish national team won a total of 50 medals.