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Kraków**

## **Tourism has its say! A recap of the Krakow Tourism Forum**

2024-04-26

**At the initiative of the Department of Tourism of the Krakow City Office, on 11 April the Bunkier Sztuki Gallery of Contemporary Art held one of the most important recurring events of the Krakow tourism industry - the Tourism Forum. The meeting served as a platform to recognize persons and institutions that have contributed to tourism in Krakow, and to hold discussions on the condition and prospects for the development of tourism in Poland and worldwide, including an issue that is now of utmost importance - sustainable development.**

The event concluded with a debate attended by no less than thirteen representatives of the Krakow tourism industry. The participants within this numerous and diverse group had an opportunity to present their own declarations, demands and expectations in the context of the current state of tourism in Krakow and the rest of Poland. The purpose of the discussion was to establish a common standpoint within the industry, recapped in the Krakow Manifesto - a document which presents the declarations, demands and expectations formulated by Krakow's tourism market stakeholders, including the Municipality of Krakow, tourism enterprises, industry associations, cultural institutions, and Krakow Airport.

The Tourism Forum was officially opened by the **Mayor of the City of Krakow**, Jacek Majchrowski. His speech emphasized that tourism traffic in Krakow is now being restored after it was curtailed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. He reiterated that efforts are being made to expand what the city has to offer tourists when it comes to culture, sports and business. The Mayor underlined that tourism is one of the most important sectors of Krakow's economy, and plays a significant part in the development of the city, which for several years now has enjoyed the reputation of a European metropolis. The impact of tourism can be seen in budget revenues, the number of jobs, the percentage share of GDP, and the process of creating Krakow's brand. This is why the local government should support tourism in such a way that it benefits the city and local communities, without being detrimental to its cultural heritage and natural environment. Further restoration of tourism traffic should occur in the spirit of dialogue and partnership, at the same time supporting all groups of stakeholders. The Mayor of Krakow underlined that the municipal tourism policy is aimed at improving the quality of services provided and accommodating tourists who are well informed and interested in the heritage of our city. Sustainable development of tourism also means development of the city and improved wellbeing of its residents.

Being mindful of all of the above, the Mayor of Krakow thanked the tourism industry for the work done it has so far, and awarded the **Honoris Gratia** to persons who have made a substantial contribution to the development of tourism in Krakow. Those recognized include Józef Lassota - the President of the Krakow Chamber of Tourism and former Mayor of Krakow (1992-98), and professor Tadeusz Grabiński - a prominent economist, who has long been

involved in the creation of the Tourist Traffic Research for Krakow and Lesser Poland, whose contribution to the research pertains to both the scientific and the practical aspects, thus allowing better understanding and monitoring of the dynamics of tourism traffic in the region. The award was also given to Dr Robert Pawlusiński – a geographer who co-authored the [“Sustainable Tourism Policy for Krakow in the Years 2021-2028”](#), and also researched the functioning of Krakow's nightlife economy. At the meeting, the Mayor of Krakow also gave the **“Krakow Tourism Creator”** award to the Association of Tourist Guides in Krakow – the oldest association of guides in operation in Poland, and to Targi w Krakowie Sp. z o.o. – the largest organizer of fairs and conventions in the south of Poland.

The “Krakow Tourism Creator” award was established in 2022 by the Mayor of Krakow. It is awarded to persons or entities that have made a special contribution to tourism in Krakow. It acknowledges their initiative and projects that significantly fortify the partnership and integration within the tourism community. Moreover, the Mayor of Krakow handed a **letter of recognition** to Dr Bartłomiej Walas – an expert in tourism policy and territorial marketing, responsible for the conception and development of the “Sustainable Tourism Policy for Krakow in the Years 2021-2028.”

## **Tourism in Poland – current situation and challenges**

**Dr Małgorzata Bonikowska** also took the floor at the meeting. The President of the Center for International Relations and THINKTANK Leaders Hub spoke about issues such as the impact that the geopolitical situation is having on the world economy, and how to deal with a world full of challenges. It may come as a surprise that despite the adverse effect on tourism traffic, the situation to the east of Poland's border has influenced the number of international investment projects in Poland. Dr Bonikowska emphasized that conflicts remain unescapable and we should get used to the fact they will keep happening; however, they will most probably come in the form of unconventional wars. She indicated that the world is taking a keen interest in Poland, which should be used to our benefit. This is apparent in numerous rankings – tourists are eager to visit Polish cities and monuments, and taste local cuisine – Krakow tops many rankings, including the TOP 25 world cities to visit.

The topic of responsible tourism was further discussed by **Anula Galewska** – President of the Travindy Foundation. She addressed the issues of sustainable development and ESG mostly in the context of new business trends and opportunities. She discussed good practices in green tourism and the impact of climate change on tourism. She also presented global criteria and certification programs related to sustainable tourism. Importantly, if met and incorporated into operations, the global criteria and certification programs enable better preparation for environmental and social crises.

**Elżbieta Kantor**, Director of the Department of Tourism of Municipality of Krakow, reminded the participants of the tasks that the Municipality is charged with with regard to tourism, including primarily the Municipality's own tasks pursuant to the Municipal Government Act (Article 7(1)). In particular, she stressed that coordination and implementation of the city's tourism policy are strategic actions. She also mentioned a list of operational tasks that may be

performed through partnership. She also presented the most important projects developed by the City of Krakow in cooperation with partners and stakeholders in the tourism market, focusing particularly on the possibilities for raising funds to implement projects developing the tourism sector.

The Director also showed the implementation indicators of Krakow's sustainable tourism policy in the context of the 2023 tourism data. She concluded by talking about the challenges that the tourism sector is facing. She pointed out that all stakeholders have to come together to be able to meet these challenges.

### **Krakow Manifesto**

This issue was addressed by **Grzegorz Soszyński**, President of the Board of the Association Kraków Tourism Alliance. He encouraged participants to join the discussion in the “Let tourism have its say! Krakow Manifesto” panel. He emphasized that the Forum served as a platform for dialogue, and any meeting participants interested could join the panel. The discussion centered around three keywords – *expect*, *demand* and *declare*. It was held jointly by Grzegorz Soszyński, Michał Zalewski, an expert in information management, public relations and communications, and Izabela Chyłek, a Krakow-based organizer of cultural activities. The grounds for discussion were the proposal for the Krakow Manifesto, a kind of credo of the tourism industry in Krakow. The document is the standpoint adopted by Krakow tourism, expressing the need to strengthen responsible tourism in the city, respectful of the tangible and intangible heritage of Krakow, and mindful of the quality of life of the Krakow agglomeration residents. The importance of this discussion and jointly formulated standpoint was only underlined by the wide variety of tourism enterprises participating in the debate. Speakers in the “expect” section: Przemysław Światowiec – Management Board Member of PMC PARTNERS Sp. z o.o., Jacek Legendziewicz – President of JORDAN GROUP, and Radosław Kociumbas – Vice President of the Krakow Chamber of Tourism. Speakers in the “demand” section: Ewa Woch-Kośmider – Vice Chair of the Board of the Association of Tourist Organisation of the Royal Capital City of Krakow and Vice President of the Management Board of Targi w Krakowie Sp. z o.o., Piotr Laskowski – President of the Lesser Poland Branch of Polish Chamber of Tourism, Sara Lamik – Director of Conference Center Fabryczna CKF\_13, and Marcin Ziobro – Director of H15 Luxury Palace. Speakers in the last section – “declare”: Radosław Włoszek – President of the Management Board of Kraków Airport, Patrycja Curyło – President of the Management Board of Gamescape sp. z o.o., and Anna Jędrocha – President of Symposium Cracoviense and Intercrac and Vice President of the Polish Conference & Congress Association.

The participants in the debate agreed on how important it was to continue the dialogue between stakeholders of the Krakow tourism scene. It was agreed that cooperation was the means of establishing a firm mandate for the tourism industry to have its say, which is of utmost importance today. The value that tourism has for Krakow has to be shown, both in economic and social terms. Bearing in mind its importance for Krakow, tourism should also be represented in local government structures. For years now, Krakow has remained the flagship of Polish tourism, as evident from successive rankings and a growing interest in the city in new markets. This position of the city should be capitalized upon and developed for mutual benefit, and joint communication is needed to do this. The authors of the Krakow Manifesto hope that the presentation of their common standpoint and full commitment of the tourism industry will



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help Krakow to become a paragon of modern and responsible tourism generating truly tangible benefits for the city – its residents, enterprises and cultural institutions.

**The common position formulated as the Krakow Manifesto is an unconventional form of statement for Krakow's tourism industry. On April 18, the declarations, demands and expectations contained in the Manifesto were handed over to the Ministry of Sport and Tourism and candidates for Mayor of Krakow.**