

## **Kraków on the UNESCO World Heritage List**

The history of the Royal Capital City of Kraków, which is the city's full name, is both extremely fascinating and turbulent. In the Middle Ages, Kraków (incorporated in 1257 after the Tatar invasion) was the most important urban center in the Kingdom of Poland. It was the seat of the ducal court, and then of the royal court, which influenced all aspects of everyday life in the city. Kraków was the perfect spot for the flourishing crafts and transit trade, as well as regional and local trade. It was where the largest market square in Europe was built, currently known as the Main Square. At the foot of Wawel Hill, there was the Academy, i.e. the oldest university in Poland. People of German, Italian and even Scottish origin came to Kraków, creating a colorful, multicultural mosaic.

All those historical phenomena and processes – especially those from the Old Polish period, which had the greatest impact on the shape of the historical area of the city – are now reflected in the appearance of the Old Town, i.e. in its architecture.

Its nature is so unique on a global scale that UNESCO, the international organization dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage of outstanding value to humanity, entered Kraków's Old Town on its prestigious list of such sites. The inclusion was made by the World Heritage Committee at a session in Washington D.C. in September 1978 (when the list itself was created as well). Thus, Kraków was one of the first urban complexes declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site (alongside the city of Quito in Ecuador). This had some beneficial far-reaching consequences, as the level of awareness of historical monuments in the 1970s was very low, and the inclusion on the list drew attention to the need for their restoration and treatment with exceptional care. This was followed by the establishment of the Social Committee for the Restoration of Krakow's Monuments, and then, pursuant to a resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, the National Fund for the Restoration of Historic Monuments in Kraków, which, thanks to funds from the state budget, supports their protection and conservation.