



This walking tour of Cathedral Island and its environs was prepared by the 2009 participants of the international summer school Experiencing the New Europe. (See back inside cover for more information!).

To explore other neighborhoods in this fascinating city, look for the following companion self-guided tours also prepared by students from the United States and Poland:

The Path to Mutual Respect: A Path through the Quarter of Mutual Respect Showing the Journey from Tragedy through Reconciliation to Acceptance

Centennial Hall: A Path through Centennial Hall & the Heart of European Modernism

The International Institute for the Study of Culture and Education (IISCE) at the University of Lower Silesia (DSW).

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University of Lower Silesia



City on the Islands: A Walking Tour Through Ostrów Tumski and the Origins of Wrocław



City on the Islands: A Walking Tour through
Ostrów Tumski and the Origins of Wrocław

Starting Point Market Hall Piaskowa St. 16



The Market Hall is within walking distance from the Market Square. It can also be easily reached by public transportation. Consult the Tourist Information Office in the city center ("The Meeting Point" at Rynek 14) for updated information on the tram and bus lines serving this location.

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“City on the Islands: A Walking Tour through Ostrów Tumski and the Origins of Wrocław” is the third in a series of self-guided tours produced by students of an international summer school on European urban transformation, Experiencing the New Europe, organized by the International Institute for the Study of Culture and Education of the University of Lower Silesia in Wrocław in partnership with the State University of New York at Brockport. The objective of the summer school was to enable students to understand the underlying cultural, historic and social forces at play in the making of Central Europe by using the urban space of the city of Wrocław as a laboratory in which we investigated the past and its impact on the present dynamics of a 21st century Central European metropolis in transition. In 2009, students spent more than three weeks (July 3–July 29) researching Cathedral Island, the historic and spiritual heart of the city, and an area that offers a window into the complex and multi-layered identity of Wrocław. Methodologically, the project grows from the tradition of action research, which aims at transforming knowledge into practical social action. Therefore, the students, based on their interviews, site visits, observations, and exchange with academic experts, city officials, practitioners and regular inhabitants, all of whom are involved in the life of Cathedral Island, produced this self-guided tour that will introduce this unique city space and its message to future visitors to Wrocław.

This guide is a part of the ongoing project of action research in urban spaces conducted by the International Institute for the Study of Culture and Education at the University of Lower Silesia (Międzynarodowy Instytut Studiów nad Kulturą i Edukacją Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej www.iisce.org).



Intro to City on the Islands

Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island) and the nearby Bleach, Malt, Mill and Sand islands provide a living record of over 1,000 years of Wrocław's history from its beginnings through subsequent cycles of ruin and rebirth. First settled in the Middle Ages near the intersection of important north-south, east-west trade routes, the growth and development of the complex of islands – now located in the heart of today's bustling metropolis – reflect the turbulent political, economic and spiritual transformations of not only Wrocław, but also Central Europe as a whole.

The origins of Wrocław began on Ostrów Tumski. In Old Polish, *ostrów* means *island*, while *tum* comes from the German for *church house*. Around 1,000 AD, a ducal castle of the Silesian Piast dynasty and later a cathedral were both established on the island. The fortified settlement situated at a fordable point along the Odra River provided security for local princes, while offering haven for travelers moving along the ancient Amber Road. By the 13th century, the growing city's population could no longer be contained in the fortified confines of the island. In the first half of the 14th century, Duke Henry IV moved to a new residence on the south banks of the Odra (near today's university) turning the island into an almost exclusive enclave administered by the Catholic Church. This physical and spiritual independence came to an end in the Napoleonic Era. The occupation of Breslau by French troops in 1806-1808 led to the dismantling of the city walls, including those on Cathedral Island. The remains of the massive star-shaped fortifications on the island were used to fill in a branch of the river running behind the Cathedral, forever attaching Ostrów Tumski to the surrounding city. Subsequent reforms led to the seizure of church property through the secularization laws of 1810. While physically no longer an island under the exclusive jurisdiction of the church, Ostrów Tumski managed to retain its historic character of being a place apart.

Intro

Following the political and economic transformations in the post-1989 era, Cathedral Island has once again reassumed its primarily ecclesiastical nature tied to the Catholic Church. But beyond its religious role, as a living community Ostrów Tumski and the surrounding islands provide vital social, educational and tourist services for the inhabitants of Wrocław as well as visitors from around the world.

For many, Ostrów Tumski remains synonymous with the complex of islands in the Odra River, such as the Sand Island (which offers a beautiful view of both Wrocław and Cathedral Island), Bleach Island (a place where textiles were once whitened), Mill Island (where you can see one of the former water-powered mills on the Odra) and Malt Island (a green space used today for concerts and other social events).

The cobbled streets of Ostrów Tumski and the surrounding islands offer ample opportunities for quiet, romantic walks that lead through a millennium of architectural styles, world-class sculptures, and places for worship and quiet reflection. Walking paths and bridges link these islands – where locals increasingly choose to spend their free time year round. While you take in all this beauty and history, you will be able to get in touch with the heart and soul of the city of Wrocław, also known as “the meeting place.”



Source: Courtesy of the Wrocław University Library
– sygn. 11030-A

Intro

Key Dates in the History of the City:

1000 City part of territory annexed by Bolesław I (the Courageous) of the Piast Dynasty; the same year, a Bishopric at Vratislav was established, under the jurisdiction of the Polish episcopate at Gniezno.

Following the death of Prince Henryk VI, the city came under the rule of the Bohemian crown. Four years later, following the Treaty of Kraków, Bohemia gained control of all of Silesia.

1335

1526 The death of heirless Louis Jagiellon, King of Hungary and Bohemia at the Battle of Mohacs, brought the entire province of Silesia under the rule of Ferdinand I of Habsburg and his court in Vienna.

The victory of Frederick II in the First Silesian War – enshrined in the Treaty of Breslau – brought the city, known then as Breslau, under the Prussian Crown.

1742

1945 The fall of the city on May 6, followed by the signing of the Potsdam Agreement in August, set Poland's western border along the Oder-Neisse line, thereby assigning Wrocław to the Polish state.

Market Hall



Market Hall

Built in 1906-1908, the **Market Hall's** original design was by Richard Plüddemann. As the Municipal Architect at the time, Plüddemann planned a total of five market halls to be built at key points on the outskirts of the historic center of the city. This development program would allow inhabitants from all parts of the city to reach an indoor market hall within roughly 10 minutes. In the end, due to financial constraints, only two identical halls were built. The second market hall, located to the south of the old town, was demolished in the 1970's to make way for a public swimming pool, a project that was never realized. Plüddemann's original design called for a metal structure. After completing the foundations, city officials began considering a switch to reinforced concrete, a new construction material at the time. The metal construction was deemed more costly, in particular due to the necessity of repeated conservation work.

The constructor, Heinrich Küster, ended up designing the interior parabolic arches. Once completed, the reinforced concrete arches had the largest span in the world (19 meters). The inside curves and lower outer edges of the arches were originally decorated with multi-colored ornamentation. The railings on the upper level, made of wrought iron filled with chain link, were painted blue. Originally, the majority of the stalls were allotted on an as-needed basis to farmers bringing goods to the city. Today, the stalls are leased out to permanent vendors. Meat is still sold along the north wall, as in pre-war times.

To make way for the hall, the city had to demolish a 16th-century arsenal and other renaissance row houses. Granite cannonballs from the old arsenal can still be seen on the northern facade of the building.

Opening hours:

Monday-Friday: 8–19; Saturday: 9–15

Tumski Bridge



Tumski Bridge

To reach the next stop on our tour, cross the Sand Bridge (painted in red). Turn right on the Bulwar Włostowica, which runs along the riverfront on the east side of Sand Island. At the end of the walking path, turn right to reach **Tumski Bridge**, the main entrance onto Cathedral Island.

Originally made of wood in the 14th century, the present steel structure was built from 1888-1892. In the Middle Ages the bridge connected the city to the Catholic enclave leading to its heart, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Before crossing the bridge, please note the two statues at the entrance. On the left, the statue of St. Hedwig honors the patron saint of Lower Silesia, while the statue on the right commemorates St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of Wrocław.

In more recent times Tumski has been dubbed the “*Lover’s Bridge*”. A new custom has emerged whereby a couple inscribes a date and their names on a pad lock, which they fasten to the bridge and then throw the key into the Odra River. This act symbolizes an everlasting bond that should not be broken.

A real happening occurs every night with the lighting of the gas lamps that illuminate the cobble stone streets of Cathedral Island. One can admire these lamps as they mark the way from the hectic secular city life of Wrocław to the peaceful spiritual center of the island. This lighting ceremony has been preserved since their original installation at the end of the 19th century. Even though the lamps and gas lines were destroyed in 1945 during the Siege of Breslau, care has been taken to restore them to their original form.

There is no set time for the evening lighting of the lamps since darkness falls at different times throughout the year. Future visitors to the city will be able to enjoy seeing a lamplighter perform this ritual decked out in historic costume.

Church Square



Church Square

You will find **Church Square** (Plac Kościelny) about 50 meters after crossing the Tumski Bridge. The monument to St. John Nepomuk, located in the center of the Church Square, was erected to reinforce the cult of this martyred saint, who, according to legend, died for protecting the secret of private confession. According to the legend, St. John Nepomuk was sentenced to death on the orders of King Wenceslas IV of Bohemia in 1393. While the sovereign suspected his wife of being unfaithful, as her confessor, Nepomuk refused to reveal the content of her confessions. Tortured, Nepomuk was then thrown into the Vltava River in Prague. At the site of his death, a circle of five stars appeared in the waters of the river, which is why the halo of stars became an inseparable part of the monumental portrayals of this saint. Erected in 1730-1732, the memory of Nepomuk was evoked at that time to reinforce the Catholic character of the island, which had to define itself against the backdrop of the predominately Protestant city; while Catholicism adhered to the sanctity of private confession, the Protestants rejected this practice.

The Church of the Holy Cross stands behind the monument of St. John Nepomuk. It was founded in the 13th century by the Duke Henry IV the Righteous to mark the end of a conflict between him and the then-reigning bishop, Thomas II. The construction of the church started in 1288 and was completed in 1295. A unique feature of the building is that it is actually two churches in one: the lower part is dedicated to St. Bartholomew, the patron saint of the Silesian Piast dynasty; the upper level is the actual Holy Cross Church. The Holy Cross was to serve as the burial church for the Silesian Piasts. Today, the richly decorated sarcophagus of Duke Henry IV can be seen at the National Museum. Between 1503-1538, Polish astronomer Nicolas Copernicus was a secular canon of the Collegiate Church of the Holy Cross. For a particularly beautiful view, be sure to admire the church's architecture from the neighboring botanical gardens.

Social Services on Cathedral Island



Photo by Kamil Iosiek

Social Services on Cathedral Island

Cathedral Island is home to a number of **institutions serving the larger community**. The Baroque building on Katedralna St. 4 on the western side of Church Square – known as the Orphanotropheum – historically functioned as a Catholic orphanage for children of noble birth. From 1954-1995, the building served as a religious center for students. Today the building continues to provide a number of outreach services. Since 1993, the building has also been the home for the Catholic radio station, Radio Family (marked with the letter **A** on the map). Founded by a group of lay Catholics, the mission of the station is to offer an inclusive platform to discuss a range of issues tied to faith in the modern world, and, at the same time, provide assistance to those in need. As a Catholic station, the radio's daily transmissions include Church masses, prayers, pilgrimages and discussions about moral and religious dilemmas. However, the radio would like to see itself playing an ecumenical role in the community by facilitating dialogues with other religions.



Photo by Kamil Iosiek

The Elizabethan Nuns run a rehabilitation clinic for the chronically ill on Św. Józefa St. 1/3 (marked with the letter **B** on the map), on the east side of Cathedral Island. Originally built in 1902 to house novices entering the order, in the post-war years the building was converted into a hospital (the original hospital located across the street, suffered major damage during the Siege of Breslau in the last months of the World War II; the old hospital building has recently been rebuilt along with the enclosed bridge that spans Św. Józefa St.) After the war, the hospital was nationalized. Efforts in 1963 to completely secularize the hospital by removing the Elizabethans were stopped thanks to the intervention of Professor Wiktor Bross, a world-renowned surgeon, who threatened to resign from the hospital if the sisters were forced to leave the facility. The hospital was returned to the order in 1993.

The Cathedral



The Cathedral

The Spires

Before entering the **Cathedral of St. John the Baptist**, take note of the two spires that reach high into the sky. Long before city skyscrapers, large apartment buildings and billboards, the cathedral spires were the only human-made structures reaching to the heavens. The spires of the Wrocław Cathedral have taken on many forms and they reflect the ever changing landscape of the island, the city and the country in general. Several fires ravaged the Cathedral in 1540, 1632-35, 1759 and 1945, not only severely damaging the interior and exterior of the building, but also burning the spires to the ground. The most recent damage occurred during the Siege of Breslau of 1945. Close your eyes and imagine the rumble of artillery. The extreme heat of the fire causes the cathedral bells to sway. Melting, their contorted bronze bodies sing out a final tune as they fall to the ground. Today's Gothic spires were completed in the 1990's, but the song of the original bells has been replaced by electronic recordings. We encourage you to take the elevator to the top of the northern tower and contemplate from here the origins and the dramatic history of the city. Think about its multicultural past, its wartime tragedies followed by communist rule and its ongoing reconstruction. The city you are viewing is a city born from ashes and turmoil.



Source: Courtesy of the Wrocław University Library



Photo by: Agnieszka Kaczmarek



The Cathedral



The Cathedral

The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

With its extraordinary architectural details, the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist is one of the most beautiful buildings on Ostrów Tumski; it gains additional magnificence at night when the lights and shadows fall on its Gothic towers. The very first Cathedral on Ostrów Tumski was most likely a small Romanesque stone structure built in 1000. In the 12th century it was replaced by a similar structure from which a statue of St. John the Baptist, patron saint of Wrocław, remains preserved in the Museum of the Archdiocese.

Construction of a Gothic structure began after the Cathedral suffered destruction from Mongol invasions in the 13th century. The Gothic Cathedral was completed in about 1341, but some Romanesque relics survived reconstruction and have been integrated into the Gothic architecture. Take, for example, the Romanesque lion to the left of the main entrance. Throughout the centuries visitors have continued to caress the lion's head, leaving it today barely recognizable.

Since the 16th century, the Cathedral has suffered a sequence of disastrous fires and catastrophes, the most tragic being the Siege of Breslau in 1945, which resulted in 70% damage of the structure.

After WWII, reconstruction projects have resulted in the Cathedral regaining its former beauty. Ceremonial burials for bishops, which began in the 12th century, have continued until the present day. The cathedral also remains the center of the second-largest archdiocese in Poland.

**You can visit the Cathedral daily from
10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Sun from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.**

The Cathedral



The Cathedral

The Baroque Chapels

Hidden in the back of the cathedral are **two Baroque chapels** of extraordinary beauty as well as artistic and historical value: the St. Elizabeth's Chapel and the Electoral Chapel.

The St. Elizabeth's Chapel was built by the Cardinal of Breslau, Frederick von Hessen-Darmstadt. Born to an influential Protestant family, he later converted to Catholicism after visiting the courts of Pope Urban VIII and Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Intent on not being buried in a gloomy, dark chapel, the Cardinal sought to transport the beauty and light found in Italian architecture to the Cathedral in Breslau. The Chapel was designed by Giacomo Scianzi, while Ercole Ferrata and Domenico Guidi, collaborators of the pre-eminent Baroque sculptor and architect Giovanni Bernini, were commissioned to do the sculptures in the chapel. The sculptures were carved out of Carrara marble in 1686, but did not arrive until 1698. The scenes are rich in allegory, such as the two female figures portrayed on both sides of the cardinal's tomb, which symbolize truth trampling on heresy.

Also visit the equally lavish Electoral Chapel, commissioned by Cardinal von Hessen's successor, Franz Ludwig von Neuburg. In contrast to the St. Elizabeth Chapel, the Electoral Chapel is influenced by Austrian-Bohemian Baroque.

Previous arrangements must be made to access both of the chapels, so plan ahead by trying to gain access through the local tourist information office on the Market Square. Once in, you will be captivated by hidden gems like those found in Rome or Vienna.

The Cathedral



The Cathedral

Legend of the Stone Head

Facing the front of the Cathedral, walk just around the corner to the right (south) side and look for a stone head wearing a pained expression peering out of a window.

One of the legends associated with this unusual scene goes as follows:

Long ago when the Cathedral was still being built, a carpenter's apprentice fell in love with his master's daughter. Because the apprentice had no money, the master carpenter refused to grant permission for the young apprentice to take his daughter's hand in marriage. In despair, the apprentice ran away and joined a gang of thieves. After some time, the apprentice managed to steal all of the riches accrued by his fellow thieves. Now a man of wealth, the apprentice returned with his riches to the carpenter's house, and asked for permission to marry the carpenter's daughter. While marveling at the young man's treasures, the carpenter suddenly recognized a ring that had belonged to a close friend who recently had been robbed and, in the process, murdered. The carpenter was furious, as he now understood how the apprentice had gained his wealth. He ordered the apprentice to leave and never come back. In an act of revenge, the apprentice waited until nightfall and then set fire to the master carpenter's house. To get a good view of the house engulfed in flames, the apprentice ran into the cathedral and peered out a high window. As he watched, the young apprentice suddenly felt the window closing tighter and tighter around his neck. Horrified, he attempted to pull his head out of the window, but it was too late; stuck, the young apprentice's head turned to stone, where it remains today locked in a pained expression as he looks out the window toward the old carpenter's house.

Archdiocese Museum



Photo by Adam Marek



Photo by Marcin Dzwonka



Photo by Christina Lejko



Photo by Christina Lejko

Archdiocese Museum

Archdiocese Museum

The Museum of the Archdiocese is located behind the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Established in 1898, the museum is one of the oldest of its kind in Poland. The museum's function is divided into three parts: library, archive, and museum.

The idea of the museum emerged in 19th century when church authorities became concerned about the survival of valuable sacral items, old manuscripts and church records.

The museum's collection contains outstanding examples of ecclesiastical art spanning Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque periods. Not all items in the museum are related to the church history and liturgy. The large collection also includes a mummified Egyptian boy from the 4th century B.C., an ancient clay tablet with wedge letterings from the 5th century B.C. as well as an extraordinary collection of Etruscan art.

The first library in the cathedral dates back to the year 1009. The museum contains a custom-designed 15th century wooden cabinet built later to store the library's valuable collections. Today's library contains more than 250,000 volumes, including an impressive collection of one thousand hand-written manuscripts.

Today, the museum's archives attract both serious researchers as well as individuals looking to uncover family histories, especially family fates following the population transfers after World War II.

Archdiocese Museum

Katedralna St. 16

Tuesday through Sunday, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Dumpling Gate

Just before reaching St. Giles Church, stop and take a look at the **Dumpling Gate** that connects the Archdiocese Museum with the Romanesque sanctuary next door. Sitting on top of this archway is an artichoke-like figure carved in stone. This is a “kluska” or dumpling (similar to the Italian gnocchi) that serves as a staple in the Central European cuisine. And with this figure comes a legend, one version of which goes as follows:

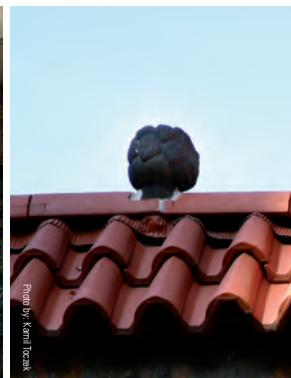
There was once a woman living in a village near Wrocław who cooked the most delicious dumplings in all the land. Her husband was quite proud of his wife's dumpling-making skills and ate the dish often. Unfortunately, the woman became very ill and eventually died. Mourning his wife and the thought of never eating another perfectly prepared bowl of dumplings, the man stopped eating altogether.

One day, while passing through Wrocław to sell his produce at the market, the man decided to take a nap under the gate. During the nap his wife came to him in a dream promising him a self-replenishing supply of dumplings for the rest of his life on condition that he always leave one dumpling remaining the bottom of the pot, which she would bestow upon him.

The man woke up to find a pot overflowing with his favorite dish – perfectly prepared dumplings! Incredulous, the man began indulging in the tasty meal right down to the last dumpling. Determined to consume it on the spot, he lifted it to his mouth, but the fork was knocked out of his hand! Once again he lifted the dumpling to his mouth – and again it was knocked away. After a third attempt the dumpling flew from his fork and floated to the top of the brick gate and turned to stone! The dumpling still sits on the archway today reminding us of the man's gluttonous ways.

St. Giles Church

To the left of the archway is **Saint Giles Church**. Founded in the beginning of the 13th century, it remains the oldest preserved church in Wrocław. Typical of the late Romanesque style, the simple, single-nave church appears as a sturdy, compact fortress with rounded arches and small, high windows. Saint Giles's is still in use today.



Botanical Garden

Botanical Garden



The garden can be visited from March through October, from 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Glasshouse hours are from 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Telephone: +48 71 225 957.

The fast pace of the urban life is left at the gate when visitors enter the **Botanical Garden** at Ostrów Tumski. Making your way along the main tree-lined alley, you are quietly transported into a more genteel time. Many of these trees date back to 1811 when the garden was established for medical students at the local university. Today there are over 11,000 varieties of plants, and the garden cooperates with similar institutions across the world. The shaded paths in the east section of the garden lead to a wooden bridge that spans a large lily pond that is a remnant of a former branch of the Odra River filled in during the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century. The pond's banks trace the path of a section of the old fortifications that once enclosed around Ostrów Tumski.

As you make your way through the garden, you can enjoy learning about plant families, which are grouped together thematically and marked with signs detailing their origins and endangered status. At the far eastern end, you'll find a didactic garden and an inviting open meadow ideal for a picnic on the grass. The nearby gazebo is also used for environmental education programs designed especially for children. Children can also enjoy dedicated play areas.

To the west of the main alley, the Palm House, Cactus House and Aquaria invite visitors to experience various climate zones, and view plants from diverse ecosystems from verdant rainforests to expansive deserts. The Panorama of Nature is a permanent exhibition displaying geological specimens. A cross-section of a 300 year old oak tree marks milestones in biological sciences. The panoramic mural depicts the evolution of life on earth from 600 million years ago to the present.

The garden celebrates a plant of the year. In addition, every week, ten plants are featured for their aesthetic and scientific value. These selections are posted at the entrances and marked throughout the garden.

St. Martin's Church and Monument to Pope John XXIII

St. Martin's Church and Monument to Pope John XXIII



We are now standing on the oldest part of the island where the Ducal castle, most likely dating back to the 10th century, once stood. During the medieval times, this position, completely fortified and surrounded by the Odra River, provided a safe haven for the population. Over the centuries, the fortified walls were demolished and rebuilt many times, with the last dismantling taking place during the Napoleonic Wars. Today, fragments of the walls can be seen on the side of **St. Martin's Church**. Additionally, the red bricks built into the sidewalk mark the original path of the fortifications.

Originally Romanesque in style, St. Martin's church was the heart of the fortified area. Today's form was rebuilt by Duke Henry IV the Righteous. One of the legends associated with this church recalls Saint Czesław, a Dominican monk, who prayed here and as a result halted the Mongolian invasion in 1241.

Through the centuries, the church served several religious orders, including the Dominicans and Benedictines. Later it came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Wrocław. Following World War I, St. Martin's became an important meeting place for Poles, a minority in German Breslau, who used the church to pray and discuss politics. Almost completely destroyed after World War II, the church was rebuilt in 1960. Since 1983, St. Martin's has served artists and the creative community.

To the west, a massive granite monument depicts **Pope John XXIII** reaching out in an act of blessing. Inscribed with the title of his encyclical **PACEM IN TERRIS** (Peace on Earth), this monument was unveiled by the communist authorities in 1968 following the pope's decision to place the Wrocław diocese under the authority of Archdiocese of Gniezno, a ruling through which the Vatican de facto recognized Poland's western border along the Oder-Neisse line.

The Mill Bridge and the Old Mills



The Mill Bridge and the Old Mills

While many associate the islands in the heart of Wrocław with just Ostrów Tumski (Cathedral Island), today there are in fact 5 islands that we have chosen to include in our self-guided tour: Cathedral Island (which is no longer an island), Sand Island, Mill Island, Malt Island and Bleach Island. These islands were first connected in the 12th century by fords (low points in the river suitable for wading.) In the 14th century, these crossings were replaced with bridges. A combination of three bridges (Sand, Corpus Christi, and Fortuna) made up what was known as the Long Bridges. Two watch towers were placed along these bridges to help defend the area.

Later the three bridges were joined into a single wooden structure, called Przedtumski Bridge, which connected St. Jadwiga Street and Bema Square, passing through Mill Island on the way. In 1885, the wooden structure was replaced with a steel bridge that was 78 meters long and 13 meters wide. After World War II, this bridge was renamed Mill Bridge, which was rebuilt in 1956. Today's reconstruction was completed in 1990.

Two mills once dominated the islands: the Maria Mills on Sand Island (still in existence) and the Clara I and II Mills that spanned the islands of Malt and Textil. First built in 1262-1288, the Clara Mills were demolished in 1975, despite protests of the city's heritage preservation office and members of the general public.

We now invite you to stroll through the Mill, Malt and Bleach Islands before making your way to the next stop near the Tumski Bridge on Sand Island.

The Monument to Bishop Kominek

The Monument to Bishop Kominek



On December 2, 2005, Wrocław unveiled a monument dedicated to Bolesław Kominek, the second archbishop of the diocese from 1972-1974. It was built in commemoration of the bishop's 1965 gesture of reconciliation extended to German bishops. After the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, the German city of Breslau (together with former-eastern territories of Germany) was ceded to Poland, which in turn lost much territory to the Soviet Union in the east. This geopolitical remapping of Europe resulted in massive population transfers, and became a source of emotional unrest and animosity. Kominek was responsible for penning and sending a letter to the bishops of Germany wherein he acknowledged that the tragedies of World War II touched both nations and he expressed a desire to begin a process of reconciliation.

The statue depicts the bishop facing outward towards the Odra River, while the base of this monument contains the most famous fragment of the bishop's missive: *"...Przebaczamy i prosimy o przebaczenie,"* translated to *"We forgive and ask to be forgiven"*. Kominek's move infuriated Władysław Gomułka, the Polish communist leader at the time, who viewed this act of reconciliation as a direct attack upon his political propaganda and foreign policy. Despite the anti-German and anti-religious reactions on the part of the communist state, Kominek inspired a new era of involvement of the Polish Church in international and social matters previously considered to be the exclusive domain of the ruling political party.

Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand

Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand, a Gothic church originally built in 1334-1375, shares a wall with the University Library on Sand Island. It was built on grounds where Christians were executed during the early Middle Ages. The architecture is sophisticated: the side naves are on the same height as the main nave, a more challenging structural feat. Be sure to take note of the "jumping vaults" covering the side naves. Rather than a harmonious geometrical design, the irregular, turbulent patterns of the ribs make them seem to "nervously" zig-zag or jump their way toward the back of the church. Another highly unusual feature of this church is the series of sculpted figures at the base of the vault shafts. The figures along the north nave, according to some interpretations, depict sensuous scenes from the Old Testament's Song of Songs, while the south nave figurines show angels from the New Testament's story of the Crucifixion.

The Church was rebuilt after major destruction sustained in the last months of World War II. Two pieces from the original medieval church can be seen when visiting the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand today. The tympanon, located over a side door in the South nave, is a stone carving illustrating the founder of the Church Piotr Włostowicz and his widow and child. The baptismal font, to the left of the main entrance, depicts scenes from the lives of saints important to the region. Memorial plaques on the wall behind the font commemorate Poles' sufferings during World War II, including those exiled to Siberia. A mechanized Nativity scene built into a side chapel is particularly entertaining for children due to the music, lights and movement.

Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand Church illustrates the many facets of local history. It represents the origins of Ostrów Tumski through the tympanon and baptismal artifacts; it also retells more recent history through the memorial plaques on the wall. One can easily understand the church as a reflection of distant

Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sand

events as well as a repository of more recent historical memories and tragedies.

Closed to tourists during Mass, the front of the Church is open in between services and we recommend it as a place worth visiting.



University Library

The University Library building is located in the former cloisters attached to the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary on the Sands. Once a repository of sacral manuscripts in the ecclesiastical archives, when secularized in 1810, the cloisters were converted into a secular library that grew from the original church collections. During the Siege of Breslau in 1945, the library became the battle headquarters of the Nazi forces defending the city. Soviet attacks in the last months of the war destroyed seventy-five percent of the building and much of its contents. Today, the library contains an extensive selection of rare books, original manuscripts, historical illustrations, photographs and music. The manuscript collection is comprised of 13,000 original manuscripts, 3,000 of them from the Middle Ages, making it the largest collection in Poland. Interesting items include fragments of a 5th century text and a 9th century book of herbs.

The Silesian-Lusatian department, established in 1945, gathers materials written about Wrocław and the surrounding region in the Czech, German, and Polish languages. Interesting items include books published in the 1950's, pairing the old German names of city streets with the new Polish names devised after war. These books were meant to help Poles see the former German city Breslau as their own.

Thus beyond serving the academic community, the University Library has played important part in forming the identity of the community. It uses the knowledge of Wrocław before, during, and after the German period to contribute to an accurate interpretation of the city's history in textbooks, literature and academic works in Poland and around the world. By providing this material on Wrocław's history, the University Library encourages greater historical awareness, reconciliation and civil participation.

University Library

Thematically focused visits can be arranged by contacting the library.

St. Jadwigi St. 3/4

Telephone: +48 71 375 24 04

www.bu.wroc.pl/en



Sand Lock

The Sand Lock was built in 1791-94 on the south side of Sand Island. It was created to allow ships carrying goods to travel directly through the city, instead of sailing all the way around it.

The lock has gates in the middle, which divide it into two parts. The whole lock is over 47 m (154 feet) long, and permits adjustment of the water level by 1.7 m (5.5 feet). The canal, which leads to the upper side of the lock, is 57 m (187 feet) long and nearly 7 m (22 feet) wide. The Sand Lock is one of the oldest components of Wrocław's Water System that is in use.



The Protestant Seminary



The Protestant Seminary, located on the left after you cross the Sand Bridge and enter Sand Island, was created in Wrocław in 1990 and moved to its present location in 1998. The actual building was first constructed as a church around 1690 to replace a destroyed medieval chapel. It later was home to an Augustinian convent until 1810, when it then became a Catholic teachers' seminary. In the following years, the building was again used as a church, and in 1945 it became a temporary storage place to protect 500,000 books from the University of Wrocław's Library during the Siege of Breslau; unfortunately, the building was burned and the books were destroyed.

Today, the Seminary's main purpose is to connect people from various Christian backgrounds and teach them to work together for the betterment of society, not just through prayer, but through action and dialog, the most important tool of work. Living this very philosophy, the Seminary has developed strong relationships with various other religious communities in Wrocław. Being located in the historically Catholic neighborhood of Cathedral Island, it has gained acceptance and respect from the surrounding churches and even shares its building with the Orthodox church next door.

Jadwigi St. 12 , Telephone: +48 71 346 99 00, www.ewst.pl/en

Map of Wrocław

Map of Wrocław





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Special thanks to: Rafał Dutkiewicz (Mayor of Wrocław), Iwona Bińkowska, Alicja Borys, Joel Burnell, Arkadiusz Cencora, Cezary Chwilkczyński, Ewa Gołąb-Nowakowska, Katarzyna Hawrylak, Jerzy Ilkosz, Jolanta Kalisz, Łukasz Krzywka, Mariola Palusiak-Łoś, Zbigniew Pasieka, Józef Pater, Ewa Pitak, Sister Samuela Sabina Chrostek, Tomasz Sielicki, Alicja Wodzińska, WP Hala Ludowa, the Society for the Beautification of Wrocław, State University of New York at Brockport, University of Lower Silesia (Dolnośląska Szkoła Wyższa), the Citizens of Wrocław.



George Shellenbarger
Dayton, Ohio

Wrocław

info

souvenirs

Tourist and Cultural Information Center

Opening hours (the whole week): 10.00–20.00

Sukiennice St. 12, 50-107 Wrocław,

tel: +48 71 342 01 85, fax: +48 71 342 28 98,

mobile: +48 605 222 227

e-mail: info@itwroclaw.pl, www.wroclaw-info.pl



Wrocław

the meeting point

Tourist Information Center

Opening hours (the whole week):

During the season (April the 1st until October the 31st),

9.00–21.00, outside the season 9.00–19.00

Rynek 14, 50-101 Wrocław,

tel: +48 71 344 31 11, fax: +48 71 344 29 62,

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City on the Islands: A Walking Tour through Ostrów Tumski and the Origins of Wrocław

PUBLISHER: Dolnośląska Szkoła Wyższa (University of Lower Silesia)

Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej

PHOTOS: Michał Azarewicz, Agnieszka Kaczmarek, Stanisław Klimek,

Christina LoTempio, Adam Marecik, Roksana Orfin-Grabowska, Marcin

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ARCHIVAL ILLUSTRATIONS: Collections of the University of Wrocław Library
and Museum of Architecture in Wrocław

COVER DESIGN AND LAYOUT: Orfin Studio | www.orfinstudio.pl

Agnieszka Kaczmarek and Paweł Grabowski

ISBN 978-83-62302-00-0