

The evaluation of Lesser Poland's appeal in the eyes of foreign tourists

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Abstract. Cracow and Małopolska are the most popular tourist regions in Poland. The Małopolskie voivodship is being visited by 14,5% of tourists spending their holiday in Poland. In 2011 Cracow has been visited by 8,6 million of guests. Lesser Poland – the most often visited region in Poland.

Keywords: Poland, tourism, foreigners.

Introduction

The Lesser Poland province is one of the 16 provinces in Poland. It covers the land of 5 182 km² and is one of the smallest in Poland (the 12th in the country). In terms of number of inhabitants, (3,298,000 people) it is the 4th among all Polish provinces. The density of population is one of the highest in the country (Lesser Poland – 217 people per km², the country average – 122 people per km²). The aim of this article is to show the arrivals of foreigners and tourists to Poland in 2013 and their opinion about the most attractive places in Lesser Poland.

The arrivals of foreigners and tourists to Poland in 2013

Approximately 15.8 million tourists have visited Poland in 2013 – it's almost 7% more than last year. The income from tourism reached PLN 39.8 billion. The Department of Tourism in the Ministry of Sports and Tourism evaluates on the basis of data from 2013 that the increase in the number of tourist arrivals to Poland has increased by 7% and reached about 15.8 million (in 2012 – 14.8 million), and the increase of the overall number of foreigners coming to Poland reached 9% in 2013 and reached 72.3 million. Among others, 28.9 Germans have come, 5.3 million of whom came as tourists. From the Czech republic, 13.4 million people came, 245 thousand tourists among them, from Ukraine – 7.3 million (2.1 million tourists), Slovakia – 6.7 million (125 thousand tourists), Belarus – 4 million (1.5 million tourists) and Russia – 3.6 million people (765 thousand tourists).

The total increase from foreign tourism in 2013 reached about PLN 39.8 billion (52% expenses born by foreigners were ones left by tourists). The total increase from foreign tourism increased by 11.5% in comparison to the ones from 2012.

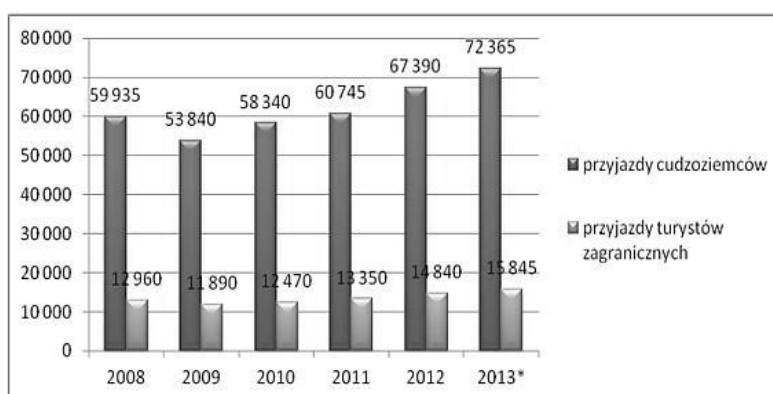


Fig. 1. The arrivals of foreigners and tourists to Poland in the years 2008-2013 (Source: On the basis of the data from the Institute of Tourism and the Activ Group)

Lesser Poland – the most often visited region in Poland

The Polish province that is most often visited by foreign tourists is Lesser Poland. No doubt this decision is influenced by the capital of the province – Krakow, as well as Wadowice, which are connected to the Pole John Paul II. The gathered knowledge shows that in 2013 Lesser Poland was visited by 12.6 million people (9.9 million of whom were local tourists and 2.7 million were foreign tourists). The number of people visiting the region increased as compared to 2012 by 4.2%. This trend of continuous increase is in play since 2009.

National guests and tourists, when asked about the most attractive places in the province, most often pointed to Krakow. The fact that almost 9 out of 10 taking the survey showed Krakow as the greatest

attraction in Lesser Poland shows the safe position that Krakow has as the 'pearl of the region'. Next in line were Zakopane (almost 30% of taking the survey), and next the salt mine in Wieliczka (17,4%) as well as the mountains (13,6%).

Factors influencing the development of tourism in Cracow

Cracow is a tourist centre both on a regional and national scale, it welcomes several million tourists annually, and the numbers increase each year. In 2010 the number of visitors to Cracow has reached over 8 million. The city is very well prepared to welcome a vast number of tourists, both national and foreign, from the perspective of the development of tourist infrastructure. The gastronomy, accommodation and entertainment base as well as the ever growing conference and congress base make Cracow a city that satisfies the needs of tourists of varied preferences and motivations. A vital question is also the price diversity when it comes to tourist services, which makes the city available also to tourists with lower income. Cracow is a city rich in the anthropological sense, as well as the natural one. The city is a big museum centre. Numerous monuments, especially valuable from a historic and architectural point of view, attract thousands of tourists, and the marked out routes facilitate visiting them. The city has much to offer also for visitors who especially cherish nature. The zoo, botanical garden, the Planty Park, the Błonia Park and other green areas and numerous protected objects and regions allow one to relax or spend one's time actively in natural surroundings. The entertainment base of the city is also well-developed, there are many entertainment joints offering dancing parties, concerts and cabarets. Furthermore, cultural events of diverse themes are being organized, and they are popular among locals and tourists alike.

In the past few years Cracow has entered the market of European tourist metropolises as the only city in Poland. It is perceived by tourists as one of the most attractive places in Europe. The annual ranking held by the *Travel + Leisure* magazine speaks for itself as, by gathering the votes of its readers, it has dubbed Krakow the fifth most attractive European city in 2006, leaving Paris, Prague and Barcelona behind (www.bip.krakow.pl). In 2010 Cracow's position in the above ranking has not changed, it still has the fifth position, still surpassing Paris, but also Venice and Vienna.

Krakow's popularity was also confirmed by the fact that it won in the ranking of the prestigious Dutch tourist portal Zoover for the best place to visit in 2014. The capital of Lesser Poland won with, among others, Sevilla, Venice, Rome and Barcelona.

The portal analyzed over 30 thousand opinions left by Zoover's European readers. The following were taken into consideration – the atmosphere, culture, night life, the quality of hotels and popularity of the city. With the final score of 8.6 Krakow surpassed other popular tourist destinations.

According to the European Internet users, there is also much to see outside of the city center. The suburbs are worth seeing with the Jewish district of Kazimierz, Nowa Huta and the view point on the Kosciuszko Mound.

Table 1.
Popular places in Lesser Poland in 2012 (Source: On the basis of the data from the Institute of Tourism and the Activ Group)

Lp.	Location	Number	Percent
1.	Kraków	4373	88,1%
	Kraków-Rynek	758	15,3%
	Kraków-Sukiennice	676	13,6%
	Kraków-Wawel	568	11,4%
2.	Zakopane	1486	29,9%
3.	Kopalnia Soli w Wieliczce	866	17,4%
4.	Góry (Tatry, Pieniny, Beskidy)	676	13,6%
5.	Wadowice	402	8,1%
6.	Rytro, Mszana Dolna	321	6,5%
7.	Oświęcim/Muzeum Auschwitz	292	5,9%
8.	Krynica	284	5,7%
9.	Rabka	233	4,7%

The development of tourism in Cracow is dependent on many factors. Local sources, i.e. its merits and resources, have a remarkable influence on the scale and tempo of this development. These can be presented in the below manner:

- Cracow's favourable situation in the tourist and transit trails of Europe
- a convenient connection to Southern Poland, Germany and the West European countries which is enabled by the A-4 highway
- a well-developed, modern accommodation and gastronomy base of a varied standard
- a complex communication network, both railway (enabling connection to every large city in Poland as well as Berlin, Budapest, Bucharest, Hamburg, Kiev, Prague, Lviv and Vienna) and bus, providing trips on a national and foreign scale
- the modern John Paul II International Airport Cracow-Balice, recently realizing over 30 thousand air travels annually, serving over 2 million passengers a year. Seventeen carriers are providing journeys to 53 airports in the world.

- A rich cultural and historical heritage (among others Wawel with the royal castle and the cathedral, the Main Market Square, recognized as the best city square in the world in 2006, listed cemeteries, residential objects and groups, parks and the listed green regions, sacral objects and groups, numerous museums, galleries and many more objects that require attention,
- a well-developed cultural and occasional events programme (among others the Jewish Culture Festival, the Dragons Parade, *Wianki (Wreaths)*, the Film Music Festival, the Night of the Museums, the Folk Art Fair or the International Festival of Street Theatre.
- The ability to cultivate all types of city tourism, including business and culture tourism, which is provided by a rich conference background of hotels and university colleges which have the largest conference halls, seating 1500 persons. In 2013 the construction of a congress centre near the Grunwaldzkie roundabout is to be completed; this centre will have a hall able to accommodate even two thousand people.
- Religious tourism connected to the figure of John Paul II, focusing mainly in the Divine Mercy Sanctuary in Łagiewniki.

Anthropogenic merits of Cracow in the aspect of tourism

The products of man's work as a component of tourist merits are an important tourist motivation. In literature they are called tourist merits of the anthropological environment. They can be divided into historic and modern. Among the historic merits there are places related to significant events or distinguished persons. In the group of current merits there are, among others, outstanding economic works, interesting industrial objects, the works of communications technology, large shopping centres and other entertainment centres (Gaworecki, 2003).

Cracow is one of the most visited cities in Poland. It is chosen not only by national tourists but also by those from abroad. One of the reasons for this phenomenon are the monuments, which are abundant in Cracow. There are also many cultural and entertainment events held here, which is another factor attracting tourists.

Cracow is a city with a very long and rich history. For many years it has belonged to the most eagerly visited cities in Poland. Every year its architectural merits are admired by several million tourists. One can see many monuments here, from the Old Town to the Royal Castle on the Wawel Hill. Poland's oldest university, the Jagiellonian University, is also here.

Cracow is surely one of the largest centres of cultural life in Poland and Central Europe. It is a great centre of museums; there are archaeological, historical, ethnographic, art, military history, biographical, martyrological, natural, religion as well as specialist museums. Among the leading entities of this kind are undoubtedly the National Museum and the Historical Museum of Cracow, with its 13 branches. An important role in the promotion of the museums' collections is played by recurrent events such as the 'Night of Museums' organized in May or the 'Open Doors of Cracow's museums' falling in November. The 'Night of Museums' has been organized in Cracow since 2004 and the idea itself was borrowed from a similar event in Berlin. The museum offer is growing every year. In 2010, 23 museums took part in the event and in the following year two more joined: MOCAK and Schindler's Factory. The 'Night of Museums' is organized annually in Cracow later than in other Polish cities, thanks to this the capital of Małopolska does not partake in the museum competition in the country, which surely helps increase the number of tourists.

The cultural life of Cracow is largely based on the activity of numerous institutions, whose task is, among others, to present artistic and cultural achievements on both the national and international level. Musical institutions (most importantly Karol Szymanowski's Philharmonic), theatres, cabarets, cinemas and galleries belong to this group. Furthermore, institutions promoting the culture of other countries, such as Germany, Austria, Italy, Spain Hungary and China, are active in the city (Kurek, Mika, 2008).

There are also abundant cultural and entertainment recurring events organized in the city. These are events of a local, national or even international character and their themes are diverse (film, music, theatre, fine arts). The annual International Jewish Culture Festival in Cracow organized in the Kazimierz district, attracts both citizens and tourists. The city also organizes numerous outdoor events of an entertainment character, which draw in numerous spectators. Among the largest are for sure 'Wianki' and New Year's Eve in the Main Market Square. The Big Dragons Parade, the Lajkonik, the Rękawka holiday or the traditional Emaus Religious Fair in Salwator are also tremendously popular.

Cultural merits of a great artistic, historic and culture value are surely what attracts tourists to Cracow. Their splendid state and chronological continuity, which is their additional advantage, are remarkable. The fact that all architectonic styles characteristic of Europe can be found in Cracow is also significant.

The city is a place full of monuments and tourist attractions, among so many offered by the city it is hard for tourists who are unfamiliar with it to organize a tour around Cracow. In order to facilitate visiting, the city authorities design and systematically introduce themed tourist routes, which surely are a great amenity for visitors. By doing so they create a clear map of Cracow's monuments and also give everyone a chance to find the group of object most appealing to them.

There are several signed tourist routes in Cracow; in order to enrich its offer, the city introduces new ones, situated not only in the centre but also promoting other regions, a perfect example being the Tourist Route of Nowa Huta.

A very important and significant complement to the above tourist routes is the newly opened route, which has quickly gained both recognition and popularity. What is more, this project won an award of the 4th edition of the „Polska Pięknieje – 7 Cudów Funduszy Europejskich" ('Poland is getting prettier – 7 Wonders of

European Funds') contest organized by the Ministry of Local Development, in the category of active tourism. The route in question is 'Royal Road for a disabled tourist'. It is especially intended for people with sight dysfunctions or physical disabilities. It consists of 12 touch mock-ups enriched by descriptions of presented objects in Latin and the Braille alphabet, in two language versions: Polish and English. They are situated on pedestals or hung in a way that is accessible for people in wheelchairs. The mock-ups are situated in 12 places and the route starts at St. Florian's Gate.

As part of the project, specialist recordings for the visually impaired have also been prepared; they describe places where the mock-ups are situated and also connections between them, also in two language versions: Polish and English. They can be downloaded both via the Internet as well as mobile phones with GPRS or Bluetooth from devices situated near every mock-up. The computer programme that enables one to download the free description of the Royal Road can be found on the pages of the Cracow Magistrate.

In the ranking of popularity among foreign tourists also Wadowice have a very high score. They are the fourth in the general ranking of the most attractive places in Lesser Poland. This is most probably connected with the fact that Wadowice are very closely connected to the Pope John Pope II. The Family House of the Holy Father John Paul II is visited by about 800 thousand tourists a year.

Table 2.

Popular places in Lesser Poland in 2013 (Source: On the basis of the data from the Institute of Tourism and the Activ Group)

Lp.	Location	Number	Percent
1.	Kraków	719	69,1%
	Kraków-Wawel	111	10,7%
	Kraków-Rynek	90	8,6%
2.	Zakopane	192	18,4%
3.	Kopalnia Soli w Wieliczce	113	10,8%
4.	Wadowice	96	9,2%
5.	Oświęcim	83	8,0%
6.	Szczawnica	50	4,8%
7.	Krynica	40	3,8%
8.	Góry	27	2,6%

Summary

In 2006 Cracow has been rated as one of the five most popular cities of Europe, in 2007 it received the title of the 'most fashionable city in the world'.

Cracow and Małopolska are the most popular tourist regions in Poland. The Małopolskie voivodship is being visited by 14,5% of tourists spending their holiday in Poland, which gives it the second place after the West Pomeranian voivodship. At the same time most of the Polish accommodation objects are located in Małopolska (894, 12,8% of all such objects in Poland), 63% of which falls on Cracow. In 2011 Cracow has been visited by 8,6 million of guests, which was an increase in comparison to previous years, in which there were 8,1 million tourists (2010), 7,3 million (2009) and 7,4 million tourists (2008). In the first decade of the 21st century the number of tourists visiting Cracow has grown systematically.

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Аннотация. К. Зельковска-Вэйсс **Оценка привлекательности Малопольского воеводства в глазах иностранных туристов.** Краков и Малопольское воеводство – наиболее популярные туристические регионы в Польше. Малопольское воеводство посещается 14,5 % туристами, отдыхающими в Польше. В 2011 г. Краков посетили 8,6 млн. гостей. Малопольское воеводство – наиболее часто посещаемый регион в Польше.
Ключевые слова: Польша, туризм, иностранцы.

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