

Warsaw

Warsaw,^[a] officially the **Capital City of Warsaw**,^{[4][b]} is the capital and largest city of Poland. The metropolis stands on the River Vistula in east-central Poland and its population is officially estimated at 1.8 million residents within a greater metropolitan area of 3.1 million residents,^[5] which makes Warsaw the 7th most-populous capital city in the European Union. The city area measures 517 km² (200 sq mi) and comprises 18 boroughs, while the metropolitan area covers 6,100 km² (2,355 sq mi).^[6] Warsaw is an alpha-global city,^[7] a major cultural, political and economic hub, and the country's seat of government. Its historical Old Town was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Warsaw traces its origins to a small fishing town in Masovia. The city rose to prominence in the late 16th century, when Sigismund III decided to move the Polish capital and his royal court from Kraków. Warsaw served as the de facto capital of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth until 1795, and subsequently as the seat of Napoleon's Duchy of Warsaw. The 19th century and its Industrial Revolution brought a demographic boom which made it one of the largest and most densely-populated cities in Europe. Known then for its elegant architecture and boulevards, Warsaw was bombed and besieged at the start of World War II in 1939.^{[8][9][10]} Much of the historic city was destroyed and its diverse population decimated by the Ghetto Uprising in 1943, the general Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and systematic razing.

Warsaw is served by two international airports, the busiest being Warsaw Chopin and the smaller Warsaw Modlin intended for low-cost carriers. Major public transport services operating in the city include the Warsaw Metro, buses, urban-light railway and an extensive tram network. In 2012, the Economist Intelligence Unit ranked Warsaw as the 32nd most liveable city in the world.^[11] In 2017, the city came 4th in the "Business-friendly", 8th in "Human capital and life style" and topped the quality of life rankings in the region.^[12] The city is a significant centre of research and development, business process outsourcing, and information technology outsourcing. The Warsaw Stock Exchange is the largest and most important in Central and Eastern Europe.^{[13][14]} Frontex, the European Union agency for external border security as well as ODIHR, one of the principal institutions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe have their headquarters in Warsaw. Jointly with Frankfurt and Paris, Warsaw features one of the highest number of skyscrapers in the European Union.^[15]

The city hosts the Polish Academy of Sciences, National Philharmonic Orchestra, University of Warsaw, the Warsaw University of Technology, the National Museum, Zachęta Art Gallery and the Warsaw Grand Theatre, the largest of its kind in the world.^[16] The reconstructed Old Town, which represents examples of nearly every European architectural style and historical period,^[17] was listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1980. Other main architectural attractions include the Royal Castle and the iconic King Sigismund's Column, the Wilanów Palace, the Palace on the Isle, St. John's Cathedral, Main Market Square, as well as numerous churches and

Warsaw
<i>Warszawa</i> (Polish)
Capital city and county
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<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Flag</div></div></div></div></div>
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Nickname(s): <i>Paris of the North</i> , <i>Phoenix City</i> ^[1]
Motto(s): <i>Semper invicta</i> (Latin "Ever invincible")

During World War I, Warsaw was occupied by Germany from 4 August 1915 until November 1918. The Armistice of 11 November 1918 concluded that defeated Germany is to withdraw from all foreign areas, which included Warsaw.^[49] Germany did so, and underground leader Józef Piłsudski returned to Warsaw on the same day which marked the beginning of the Second Polish Republic, the first truly sovereign Polish state after 1795. In the course of the Polish–Soviet War (1919–1921), the 1920 Battle of Warsaw was fought on the eastern outskirts of the city. Poland successfully defended the capital, stopped the brunt of the Bolshevik Red Army and temporarily halted the "export of the communist revolution" to other parts of Europe.^[50]



Marszałkowska Street as it appeared in 1912

The interwar period (1918–1939) was a time of major development in the city's infrastructure. New modernist housing estates were built in Mokotów to de-clutter the densely populated inner suburbs. In 1921, Warsaw's total area was estimated at only 124.7km² with 1 million inhabitants—over 8,000 people/km² made Warsaw more densely populated than contemporary London.^[51] The Średnicowy Bridge was constructed for railway (1921–1931), connecting both parts of the city across the Vistula. Warszawa Główna railway station (1932–1939) was not completed due to the outbreak of the Second World War.



Warsaw National Philharmonic in 1918

Stefan Starzyński was the Mayor of Warsaw between 1934 and 1939.

Second World War



Sea of rubble^[52] – over 85% of the buildings in Warsaw were destroyed by the end of World War II, including the Old Town and Royal Castle.

After the German Invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939 started the Second World War, Warsaw was defended until 27 September. Central Poland, including Warsaw, came under the rule of the General Government, a German Nazi colonial administration. All higher education institutions were immediately closed and Warsaw's entire Jewish population – several hundred thousand, some 30% of the city – were herded into the Warsaw Ghetto.^[53] In July on 1942, the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto began to be deported en masse to the Aktion Reinhard extermination camps, particularly Treblinka.^[53] The city would become the centre of urban resistance to Nazi rule in occupied Europe.^[54] When the order came to annihilate the ghetto as part of Hitler's "Final Solution" on 19 April 1943, Jewish fighters launched the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.^[55] Despite being heavily outgunned and outnumbered, the Ghetto held out for almost a month.^[55] When the fighting ended, almost all survivors were massacred, with only a few managing to escape or hide.^{[55][56]}

By July 1944, the Red Army was deep into Polish territory and pursuing the Nazis toward Warsaw.^[58] The Polish government-in-exile in London gave orders to the underground Home Army (AK) to try to seize control of Warsaw before the Red Army arrived. Thus, on 1 August 1944, as the Red Army was nearing the city, the Warsaw uprising began.^[58] The armed struggle, planned to last 48 hours, was partially successful, however, it went on for 63 days. Eventually, the Home Army fighters and civilians assisting them were forced to capitulate.^[58] They were transported to PoW camps in Germany, while the entire civilian population was expelled.^[58] Polish civilian deaths are estimated at between 150,000 and 200,000.^[59]

Hitler, ignoring the agreed terms of the capitulation, ordered the entire city to be razed to the ground and the library and museum collections taken to Germany or burned.^[58] Monuments and government buildings were blown up by special German troops known as Verbrennungs- und Vernichtungskommando ("Burning and Destruction Detachments").^[58] About 85% of the city was destroyed, including the historic Old Town and the Royal Castle.^[60]



The Warsaw Uprising took place in 1944. The Polish Home Army attempted to liberate Warsaw from the Germans before the arrival of the Red Army.^[57]

On 17 January 1945 – after the beginning of the Vistula–Oder Offensive of the Red Army – Soviet troops and Polish troops of the First Polish Army entered the ruins of Warsaw, and liberated Warsaw's suburbs from German occupation.^[61] The city was swiftly taken by the Soviet Army, which rapidly advanced towards Łódź, as German forces regrouped at a more westward position.

1945–1989



A tourist standing beside the iconic Palace of Culture and Science, 1965

In 1945, after the bombings, revolts, fighting, and demolition had ended, most of Warsaw lay in ruins. The area of the former Ghetto was razed to the ground, with only a sea of rubble remaining. The immense destruction prompted a temporary transfer of the new government and its officials to Lodz, which became the transitional seat of power. Nevertheless, Warsaw officially resumed its role as the capital of Poland and the country's centre of political and economic life.

After World War II, the "Bricks for Warsaw" campaign was initiated and large prefabricated housing projects were erected in Warsaw to address the major housing shortage. Plattenbau apartment blocks were a solution to avoid Warsaw's former density problem and to create more green spaces. Some of the buildings from the 19th century that have survived in a reasonably reconstructible form were nonetheless demolished in the 1950s and 1960s, like the Kronenberg Palace.^{[62][63]} The Śródmieście (central) region's urban system was completely reshaped; former cobblestone streets were asphalted and significantly widened for

traffic use. Many notable streets such as Geşia, Nalewki and Wielka disappeared as a result of these changes and some were split in half due to the construction of Plac Defilad (Parade Square), one of the largest of its kind in Europe.^[64]

Much of the central district was also designated for future skyscrapers. The 237-metre Palace of Culture and Science resembling New York's Empire State Building was built as a gift from the Soviet Union.^[65] Warsaw's urban landscape is one of modern and contemporary architecture.^[66] Despite wartime destruction and post-war remodelling, many of the historic streets, buildings, and churches were restored to their original form. In 1980, Warsaw's historic Old Town was inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage list.^[67]

John Paul II's visits to his native country in 1979 and 1983 brought support to the budding "Solidarity" movement and encouraged the growing anti-communist fervor there.^[68] In 1979, less than a year after becoming pope, John Paul celebrated Mass in Victory Square in Warsaw and ended his sermon with a call to "renew the face" of Poland.^[68] These words were meaningful for Varsovians and Poles who understood them as the incentive for liberal-democratic reforms.^[68]

1989–present

In 1995, the Warsaw Metro opened with a single line. A second line was opened in March 2015.^[69] With the entry of Poland into the European Union in 2004, Warsaw is experiencing the largest economic boom of its history.^[70] The opening fixture of UEFA Euro 2012 took place in Warsaw^[71] and the city also hosted the 2013 United Nations Climate Change Conference and the 2016 NATO Summit.

Geography

Location and topography

Warsaw lies in east-central Poland about 300 km (190 mi) from the Carpathian Mountains and about 260 km (160 mi) from the Baltic Sea, 523 km (325 mi) east of Berlin, Germany.^[72] The city straddles the Vistula River. It is located in the heartland of the Masovian Plain, and its average elevation is 100 m (330 ft) above sea level. The highest point on the left side of the city lies at a height of 115.7 m (380 ft) ("Redutowa" bus depot, district of Wola), on the right side – 122.1 m (401 ft) ("Groszówka" estate, district of Wesoła, by the eastern border). The lowest point lies at a height 75.6 m (248 ft) (at the right bank of the Vistula, by the eastern border of Warsaw). There are some hills (mostly artificial) located within the confines of the city – e.g. Warsaw Uprising Hill (121 m (397 ft)) and Szczęśliwice hill (138 m (453 ft) – the highest point of Warsaw in general).