

THEfirstNEWS

"I must have been inspired" Joseph Conrad

Wawel castle opens its vaults to reveal 500 years of history and how the castle was built

CULTURE | HISTORY



STUART DOWELL JANUARY 03, 2024



Exhibits gathered in more than 500 square metres of exhibition space will tell the story of how the Jagiellonian residence was built, as well as how it was conserved over the centuries.

Lukasz Gagulski/PAP

Kraków's Wawel castle is to open its cellars to the public for the first time, giving visitors unprecedented access to the vaults beneath its eastern wing.

Built by successive kings at the end of the Jagiellonian period, the construction of the cellars was completed in 1524.

Titled "Wawel Underground: The Lapidarium, the exhibits gathered in more than 500 square metres of exhibition space will tell the story of how the Jagiellonian residence was built, as well as how it was conserved over the centuries.



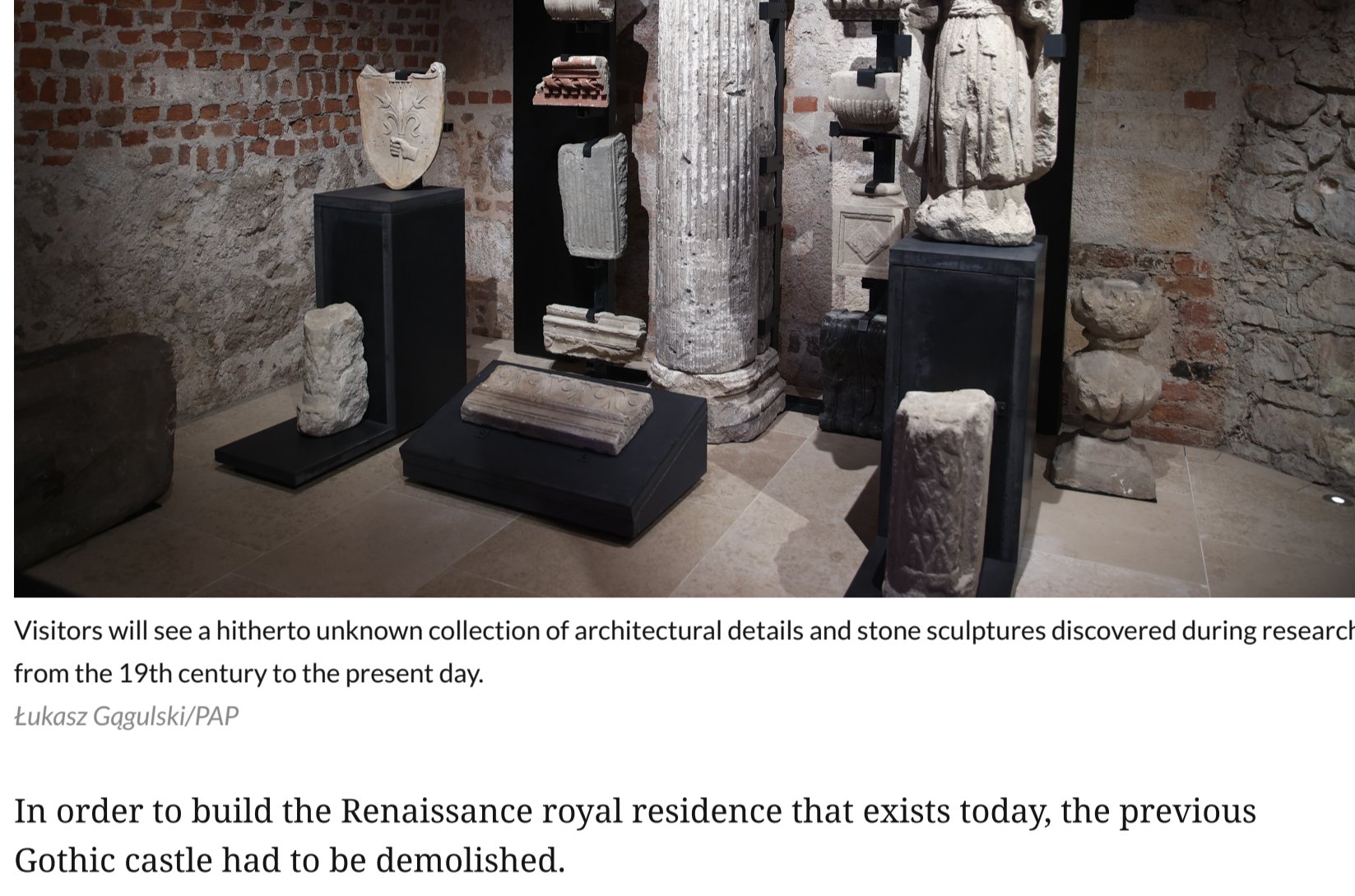
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Lukasz Gagulski/PAP

"It will be a story about the construction of the most important place in Polish history," said Prof Andrzej Betlej, director of the Wawel Royal Castle.

For the first time ever, visitors will be able to visit the former royal cellars and take a look at the oldest well in Wawel Castle.

They will see a hitherto unknown collection of architectural details and stone sculptures discovered during research from the 19th century to the present day.



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In order to build the Renaissance royal residence that exists today, the previous Gothic castle had to be demolished.

Parts of it are partially visible in the walls of Wawel Castle. Much of the material of the castle from the time of Kazimierz the Great was reused to erect the Jagiellonian residence.

The castle's collection of stonework gathered in the Lapidarium dates to the time when the Austrians withdrew from Wawel in 1905 after having used it to accommodate its soldiers.



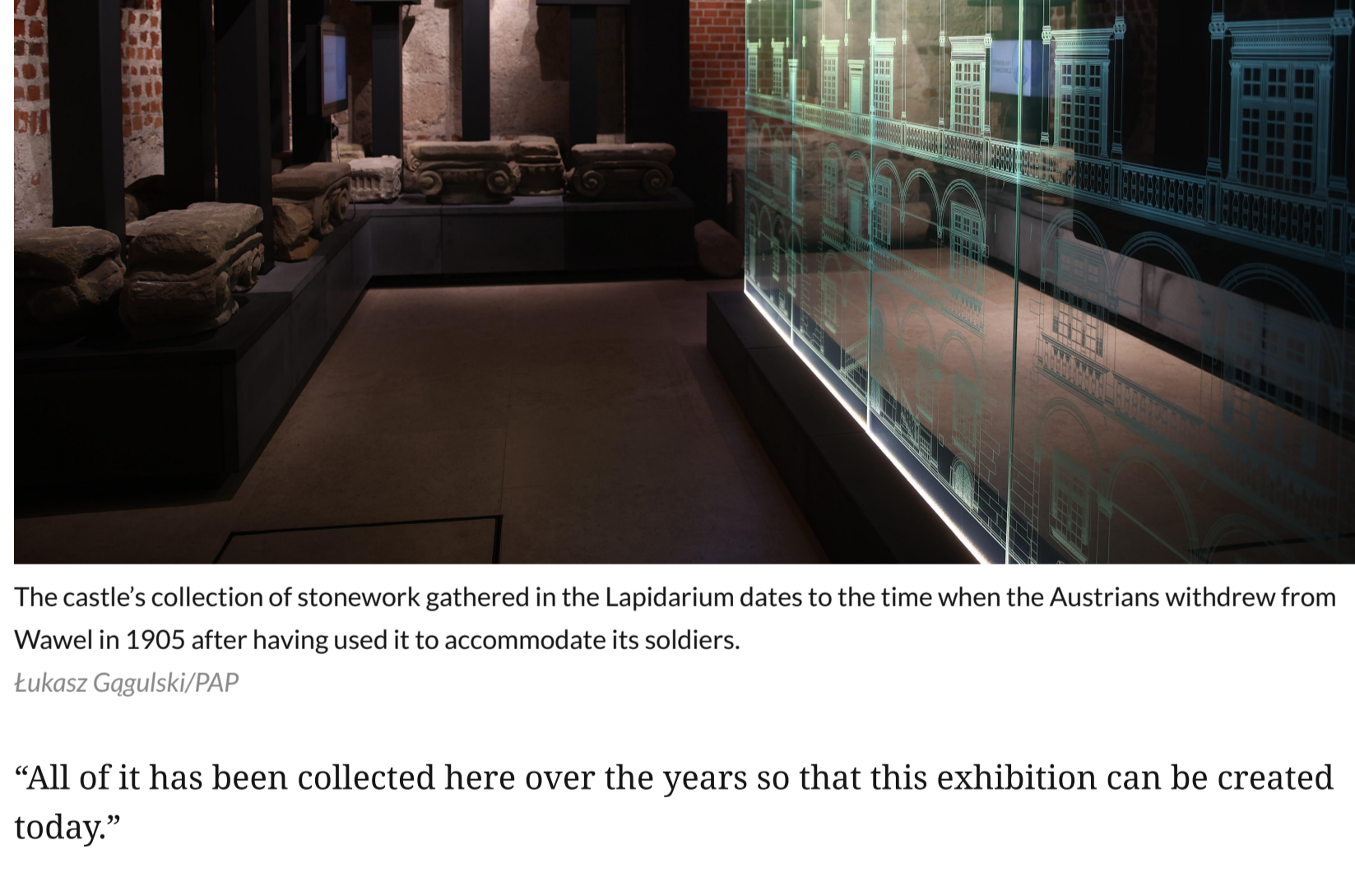
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The collection suffered a lot of damage during World War Two. Only 164 items survived. However, thanks to ongoing conservation work, today the collection numbers more than 3,000 pieces.

Anna Pieczyńska, coordinator of the 'Wawel Underground' project, said: "The new underground exhibition will feature elements related to the castle's history, archaeology and culture.

"In addition to the stone details presented on special shelves, it will be possible to see details that are built into the walls here (...) details that came from the castle, that were dismantled, used somewhere else in the castle.



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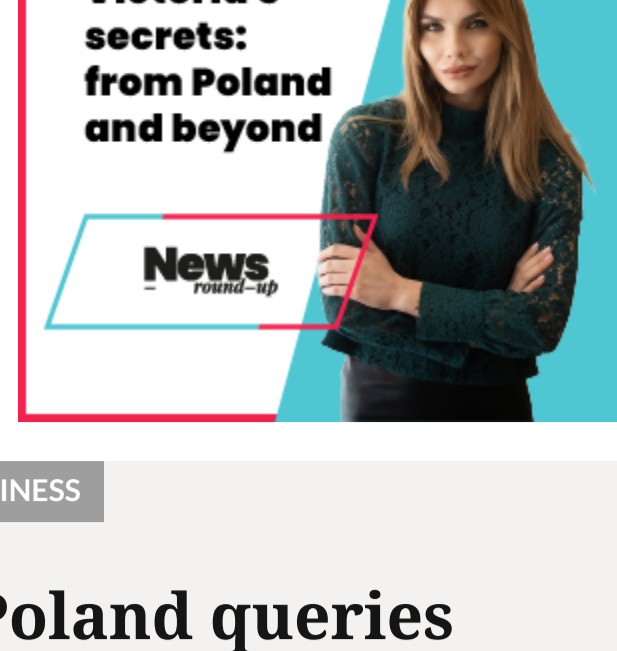
The opening of the new exhibition comes as Wawel Castle announced that in 2023 it was visited by a record number of more than 2.5 million people.

For 2024, the castle is preparing 16 exhibitions and hopes that it will set a new record for visitor numbers.

The exhibition opens on 4 January.

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Poland's finance and digitisation ministries have formally requested Google Polska to provide information on why it published inaccurate information on the zloty exchange rate, the ministries announced on the X platform on Tuesday.



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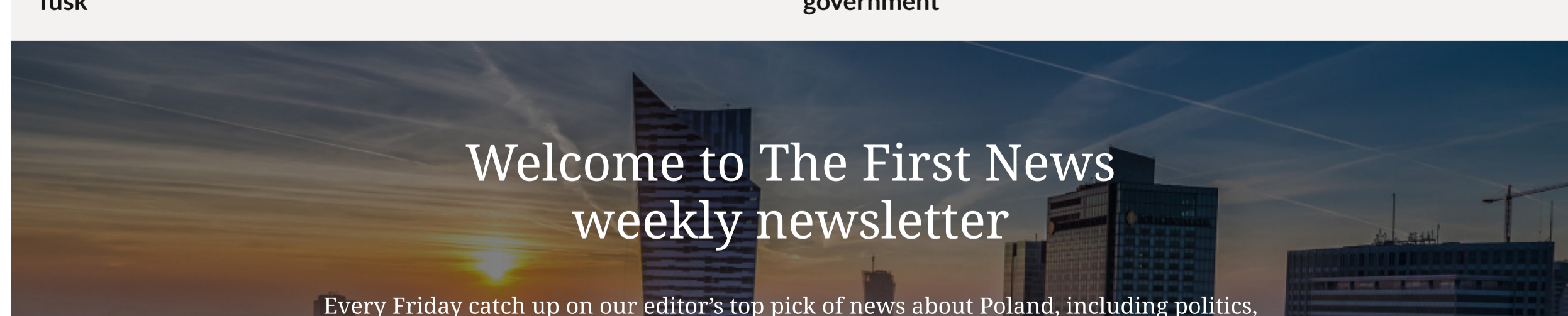
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