

Czestochowa

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CZĘSTOCHOWA, A HOLY CITY

Identity card

"Częstochowa is a good city". With that slogan Częstochowa is introduced to. In this city (located in Silesia region) live 248.032 people distributed in 160 Km².

Częstochowa was born as a small town on the banks of the river Warta. The king Kasimierz The Big One catalogued that town as a City and seat there the Paulin monastery. Six centuries later it remains in the same location. During XIX century that, already called holy city, started to grow up thanks factories, schools and housing. In that moment this was the most prosper city of Silesia. Step by step, Częstochowa developed bigger and a reference Paulin center in Europe. It was the first city which awarded with the title of Honor Citizen to the Pope Jan Paweł II (John Paul II) and, on the other hand, was also the first European city which received the Honor Flag and the Honor Commemorative Plaque.

Jasna Góra & Company

The Paulin monastery Jasna Góra is the main tourist attraction in Częstochowa. The place called Jasna Góra (means white or light mountain) are the religious building and two parks divided by the main avenue (al. NMP III) in its end. In those parks you can spend a relaxing time sitting in the benches and gazing the round. There is also a tiny artificial lake. For over 600 years Jasna Góra's been a shrine, and is still visited by millions of Catholic pilgrims each year. They go during all year but especially they do it en masse since June until the end of August. On the 15th August the Poles celebrate Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the most crucial moment in pilgrim movement.

In Jasna Góra you can of course go to the religious services during all day but also there are some exhibitions about history and traditions of the nation, most of them religious: art expositions about Jesus Christ Passion, paintings, sculptures, listed buildings, a imposing figure of the Pope John Paul II, exhibitions rooms with a huge quantity of jewels of countless value. Sometimes are organized religious concerts, too. And the most important moments in the history of this monastery were when the Polish Pope visited it.

The most representative icon located in Jasna Góra is the religious image in the chapel of the Black Madonna, where millions of people walk on their knees in front of her image, as a penance or only as a respect. In that chapel you also can admire the valuable altar made with silver and ebony.

Finally, is indispensable going to the top of the monastery where you can see an amazing view of all city. The only objection is that is not prepared to disabled people, because you must go up by a lot of stairs (not recommended for people who aren't in good shape).

In addition, at the end of that main avenue, Aleja NMP I, there's the Cathedral of Holy Family: a representative monument which you can't omit when you visit Częstochowa. By the way, in all main avenue you can see others interesting facades and buildings.

A small recommendation: the original sun clock in front of the train station. Charming.

Feed your brain

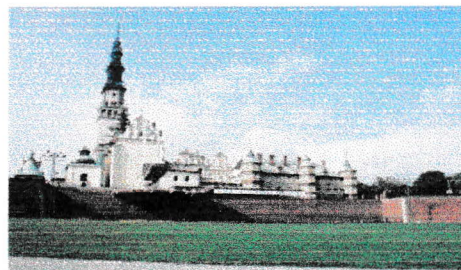
Muzeum Częstochowskie (Częstochowa Museum) is the most important in the city. There are some galleries which are connected with the museum. The main building is located in the main street (Al. NMP, 45). In Focha street there is the Wedding Palace, the best place for me where to see a very good exhibitions. Another place of the Museum is Zagroda Włóściańska, is a Rural House. The most known gallery is which shows the best painting of famous Polish painters like Jacek Malczewski, Teodor Axentowicz, Wojciech Weiss or Jan Cybis.

Miejska Galeria Sztuki is the Art Municipal Gallery where you can admire the best images of Polish painting.

My suggestion for the people who's interested in is Muzeum Produkcji Zapalek, is the Museum of Matches Factory. Is really interesting and educational the production chain to produce matches.

As theatres probably the only one with enough importance is Teatr im. Adama Mickiewicza. It's quite expensive but often they play good performances and also you can know easily their program because you can see advertisements stuck on the walls and buildings facades of the city.

There is a big cinema in the main street where you can watch the last premieres



films. And in a second cinema near Jasna Góra, but also in the center, you can watch more "interesting" films, not such commercial.

Let's go on party

First of all I want to advice that Czestochowa is not the best place for crazy nights of parties. Don't forget is a small city. There are of course some pubs, clubs and discotheques but they can't be compared with the places where you can go out in cities like Warsaw or Krakow. But for a few nights it's enough and you can spend a good time.

The most known places are Don Kixot and Kojot in the main avenue. They are open for parties the weekends and the music you can listen is commercial dance and funk. Those places are available also to dance salsa during the week (classes) and the weekends. But they aren't a Latin club. Are places where teachers and students who learn in the classes exhibit their new movements. In all the times I was there the situation was always the same: people sit while the professionals were dancing. So, definitively we can say that are exhibition performances.

On the other hand, there are lots of clubs which play techno and hip hop, the most known music in Poland. The rapper singer Usher is an idol. There're also infinity of pubs to drink something without dancing. My suggestion: Gruszka (in the main street) a small pub (like the rest) with good music and warm atmosphere. Bad point: the limited variety of drinks. They only can offer beers, coke tea and coffee to you. Nothing more. And Utopia, a pub which sometimes organized good concerts downstairs.

Others places like Depo, Rura, Dekadencja, Iguana, Viva and a long list of them are also well known. Places oriented especially to students who want to relax after weekdays. Fun dance and fun atmosphere.

There's also one place more: Klastor. This is known because is oriented to young people but not teenagers, that means people until 30 years old or more who aren't married (the family is the base of polish society and especially in this catholic city, so singles with that age aren't plentiful). But in Klastor (as a friend told me about) is important Mathematics: man 50 years old + girl 20 years old..... (the answer isn't 70).

All the places I've been mentioned are in the centre of the city. There are also more pubs and clubs further, in some neighborhoods, but if you live in the center and you need to come back home after party isn't such easy if you go out. There aren't buses at night and the tram goes an average of one each hour.



I'm hungry

Indispensable: frytki. That means Chips. Czestochowa is the only city in Poland where you can buy the cheapest chips. There's one street, next to the train station and the main avenue, full of small stands. You can walk along that place and find the cheapest prices of fast food in Poland: 100gr of chips cost 0,65 groszy with mayonnaise or ketchup. Less than 0,20 euros!!!! And I can testify they are delicious. In that street you also can buy mega hamburgers, hot dogs, zapiekanka (typical polish dish which consist in bread with a mixture like pizza), sandwiches... paying a very low price. Especially recommended that place when you go on party and when you want to come back home with a full stomach. Ideal after the disco, because some of those stand are open until dawn.

On the other hand, the whole city is full of some typical restaurant you can find in all world, resulted of capitalism system: Mac Donalds, KFC, Telepizza, Burger King, Pizza Hut... and more fast food Polish restaurants (the least bad, Alamo in the main avenue).

And they are quite good accepted. Those coexist with some kind of restaurants typical in Poland. Their subject matter is Egypt. Their names? Piramida, Kleopatra, Ramses, Sphinx.... Most of their food is pizzas and a similar Italian food: cannelonni, carpaccio, lasagne... This kind of food is by far the most popular, at least in Czestochowa. In all city you can find more than ten pizzeria restaurants and specialized in food from that country.

There are also some "international" restaurants. Those offer Chinese, Vietnamese, vegetarian, or International food in general (mainly Italian). But they aren't famous enough. Actually, since one year ago was in television a new from the uncertain origin of Chinese or Vietnamese food, the people from Czestochowa is quite distrustful with these restaurants.

My suggestions:

Wiking. Located in Nowowiejskiego street, in the center of the city. A restaurant where you can try the original polish food, well cooked. It's rather expensive but it's worth the quality of the food.

Mitkas. A greek restaurant situated in Jasnogórka street (also in the centre). It's a small and friendly place where to eat something different than pizza. The taste, unsurpassable!!

And of course...a spanish restaurant (forgive me I don't remember the name). It's in the park of Jasna Góra, the monastery, in the tennis court, and there you can try Spanish food with the security that is cooked by Spanish people (they are the owners of the restaurant).

Finally, in Czestochowa the best way to try polish food without spending lots of money, is to buy it to take away. There are some places like supermarkets, not restaurants, which cook the food to bring to your house, and you can buy some portions.

Be careful...

Generally Czestochowa center isn't a dangerous place. You can walk alone at night crossing parks, and along streets. But there are some places where is better don't tempt the luck: **Raków** neighborhood is one of them and probably the most known in the city. In the late evening and at night is better don't walk alone by their streets, especially if you're a woman.

By the way, the most signifier thing can happen to you is some slapdash robbery, without violence. When I was living in Poland I thought that maybe was the influence of the big monastery on the top of the mountain, as controlling the whole city with its "glance", the reason why the violence rate is such low.

More...

Although there isn't located in Czestochowa, near to it, is located Olsztyn. A small town which gives the name to the castle ruins situated on the top of the hill. It's worth to visit and to spend the day there visiting the ruin which remain there and the amazing view from the top of the power.

In Olsztyn, like in the outskirts near Czestochowa center, you can practice hill walking and trekking. Actually, this last one is quite known and famous activity between youngsters. Cycling, riding, potholing and rock climbing are others activities you can practice. One of the most well accepted places where you can play them is Zloty Potok, also near Czestochowa.

Twenty minutes by train from the centre you can arrive to Poraj, a tiny village but with a famous lake where you can play all kind of water sports. In this way, in Czestochowa there is a place with aspiration of beach. In summer, people from Czestochowa go there to take sunbathes and swimming. There there're some lakes where you can spend a relaxing day.



If you love the snow the best moment to visit the city is in winter. All Czestochowa is covered by a charming and magic blanket of snow (in despite of the freezing cold). But if you already know that feeling, try to visit the city in August: every day you'll see at least four groups of pilgrims (50 people or more each group) singing with identifying colors and symbols and making a pilgrimage to Jasna Góra crossing the hole city and passing along the main avenue.

In conclusion, maybe "Czestochowa is a good city" for someone. It's up to the people sight to see the city really like it's, not only to remain in the surface of the city.
For me it was...

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