



Liberation  
Route  
Europe

TOUR & TRAVEL GUIDE  
**POLAND & CZECHIA**

Key events & commemorations

1<sup>st</sup>  
of March  
National «cursed  
soldiers»  
Remembrance Day

24<sup>th</sup>  
of March  
National Day for the  
Remembrance of  
Poles Rescuing Jews  
under Nazi German  
Occupation

8<sup>th</sup>  
of May  
Victory Day

12<sup>th</sup>  
of July  
Day of Struggle and  
Martyrdom of the  
Polish Villages

1<sup>st</sup>  
of August  
National  
Warsaw Uprising  
Remembrance Day

## History - Poland



Warsaw, 1939, refugees and soldier

The Second World War began with the invasion of Poland in September 1939.

The country was attacked and occupied by both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Both occupying powers immediately established ruthless regimes that were responsible for the deaths of countless Polish citizens and especially Polish Jews. On paper, Poland ended the war as one of the victors. In reality, as a result of the war, Poland lost half of its territory and its freedom.

Key events & commemorations

6<sup>th</sup>  
of May  
Liberation of Pilsen

8<sup>th</sup>  
of May  
Liberation Day

## History - Czechia



Pilsen liberation

During the Second World War, Czechia was part of Czechoslovakia which was one of the first countries to fall prey to Nazi Germany and one of the last to be liberated.

Several minority groups were present in the country including a large German speaking minority in a region called the Sudetenland. Hitler used the presence of this group as an excuse to take over the area in 1938. To prevent war, France and Britain did not intervene. In March 1939 Germany occupied the rest of the country. Czechoslovakia was liberated in May 1945.



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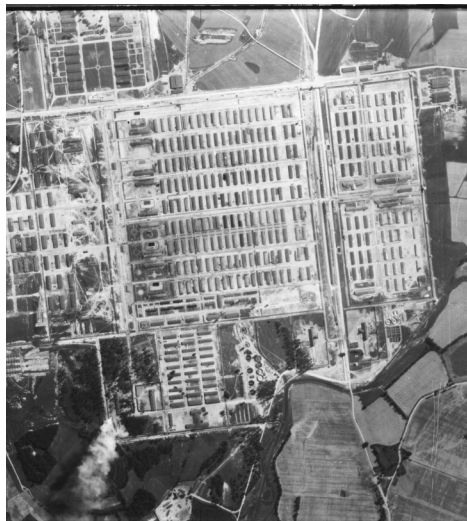
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End of the war in Gdańsk



Auschwitz aerial view

### POLAND

#### Krakov and Małopolska

Małopolska, with its capital Krakow, was captured during the massive winter offensive which ended with the liberation of the western half of Poland by the Red Army in January 1945.

During the advance, on 28 January, soldiers of the Soviet 100th Rifle Division liberated the infamous Auschwitz-Birkenau camp, the largest concentration and death camp established by Nazi Germany. Soon after the liberation the Soviet Union used the abandoned camp to incarcerate persons accused of collaborating with the German troops.



Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

### CZECHIA

#### Pilsen

From 1939 until the end of the war the region of Pilsen was occupied by Nazi Germany.

During the war several thousand Jews were deported from Pilsen to concentration and extermination camps. By May 1945 it was clear that Nazi Germany was going to lose the war. In several places in Czechoslovakia the local population rose up against the occupying forces. This also happened in the city of Pilsen on 5 May. The next day U.S. forces reached the city and the German forces surrendered.



Pilsen - May 6, 1945

## General George Patton

FROM SICILY TO PILSEN



General Patton

### POLAND

#### Gdańsk and the outbreak of WWII

On 1 September 1939 the German battleship Schleswig-Holstein opened fire on the Westerplatte in Gdańsk.

These shots are regarded as the first shots of the Second World War. After forty days of fighting the Poles were defeated. After the war this battle became an important symbol of Polish resistance. In the 1970s and 1980s Gdańsk would again become the scene of resistance in the form of the Solidarity Movement, which heavily contributed to the end of the communist rule and to restore Polish independence.

### POLAND

#### Warsaw and Mazovia

The Polish capital of Warsaw suffered greatly during the Second World War.

The heavy fighting during the German invasion, two uprisings, and the liberation in early 1945 destroyed much of the city and cost the lives of countless soldiers and civilians. Furthermore, the Polish population did not experience the arrival of the Red Army as a liberation, but rather as another occupation. It would take until 1989 before Poland regained its freedom.

## Danuta Siedzikówna alias 'Inka'

Danuta Siedzikówna alias 'Inka' (1928-1946) experienced the horrors of both the German and the Soviet occupation of her home country.

At the age of 15, she joined the Home Army, the Polish armed resistance movement, and she started working as a medical orderly. In June 1945, Danuta was arrested by the communist security service, but was soon liberated by Polish partisans. In the following year, while acting as a courier, she was arrested and sent to prison. As she refused to give the names of her contacts in the resistance, she was sentenced to death, which came less than a week before her eighteenth birthday. Only in recent years she was rehabilitated, her body was recovered and given a state burial, and a monument was dedicated to her in the city of Gdańsk.



Danuta Siedzikówna  
alias 'Inka'

## Liberation Festival Pilsen

Since 1990, the City of Pilsen celebrates the anniversary of its liberation by the U.S. Army with a special event.

Every year in early May, people from all over the world get to Pilsen to celebrate its liberation. Veterans are the protagonists of the celebrations, although their number is getting smaller as time passes. The Liberation Festival's main features are the parade of historical military vehicles, wreath laying ceremonies at the WWII memorials in the city and discussions with veterans, along with other events that involve the whole town.



Liberation Festival in Pilsen vintage military  
parade Convoy of Liberty © City of Pilsen

General George Patton took part in the Liberation of Europe on many theatres of war, from 1943 to the end of the war. First, he led the troops of the 7th US Army in the landings in Sicily.

He was removed from his post for hitting several shell-shocked soldiers, but later on, in July 1944, Patton's Third Army sailed to Normandy and formed the extreme right flank of the Allied land forces. Patton and his troops engaged in the liberation of Alsace, in the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes and subsequently crossed the Rhine and moved to the heartland of Germany and Austria. A last stop was Pilsen. The Third Army led by Patton entered the Czech city on 6 May 1945, shortly before the end of WWII in Europe. Pilsen honours and remembers General Patton and the Third Army with a memorial and museum, which tells the story of the liberation of the city through gear and equipment of the time and war relics left behind by US soldiers, and with other monuments around the city.



Gdańsk and the outbreak of WWII

1 Museum of the Second World War  
GDANSK – muzeum1939.pl

2 Museum of Gdańsk  
GDANSK – muzeumgdansk.pl

3 Polish Post Museum  
GDANSK – poczta-polska.pl

4 The Cemetery of the Defenders of Westerplatte  
GDANSK

5 Westerplatte  
GDANSK

6 Museum of Coastal Defense  
HEL – helmuzeum.pl



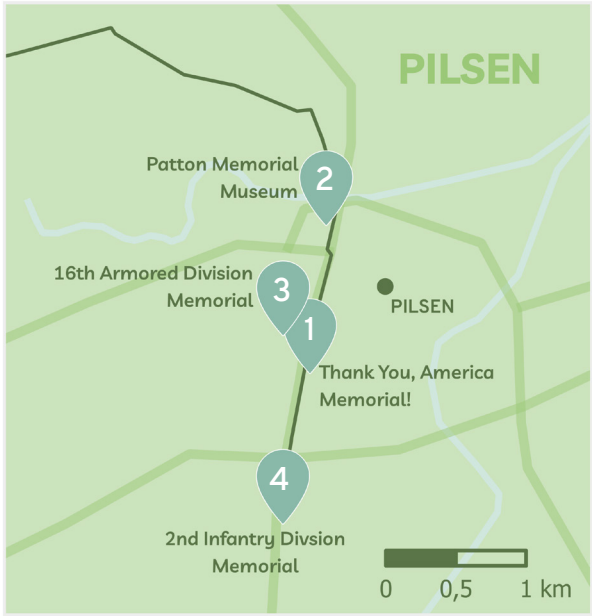
Pilsen

1 «Thank You, America!» Memorial  
PILSEN

2 Patton Memorial Pilsen  
PILSEN – patton-memorial.cz

3 16th Armored Division Memorial  
PILSEN

4 2nd Infantry Division Memorial  
PILSEN



Warsaw and Mazovia

1 Warsaw Uprising Monument  
WARSAW

2 Warsaw Rising Museum  
WARSAW – 1943.pl

3 Soviet military cemetery Warsaw  
WARSAW

4 Warsaw Ghetto Museum  
WARSAW – 1943.pl

5 Museum Treblinka death camp  
TREBLINKA – muzeumtreblinka.eu

Krakov and Małopolska

1 Oskar Schindler Factory  
KRAKOW – muzeumkrakowa.pl

2 Home Army Museum  
KRAKOW – muzeum-ak.pl

3 Auschwitz Birkenau  
OSWIECIM – www.auschwitz.org

4 Eagle's pharmacy  
KRAKOW – muzeumkrakowa.pl

5 State Museum at Majdanek concentration camp  
MAJDANEK – majdanek.eu

6 Museum of the Former Death Camp in Sobibór  
SOBIBÓR – sobibor-memorial.eu

Other (CZ)

1 Lidice memorial  
LIDICE – lidice-memorial.cz

2 Terezin Memorial - Ghetto Museum  
TEREZIN – pamatnik-terezin.cz

3 National Monument to the Heroes of the Heydrich Terror  
PRAGUE – vhu.cz/muzea/ostatni-expozice/krypta/

Other (PL)

1 Wolf's Lair  
GIERŁOZ – wilczyszaniec.olsztyn.lasy.gov.pl

2 Museum of Stutthof  
SZTUTOWO – stutthof.org

3 Radogoszcz Prison memorial and Museum  
ŁÓDŹ – muzeumtradycji.pl

