Polish culture has produced visionaries in many different fields. On this cultural tour of Poland, begin in the sophisticated capital, Warsaw, where Chopin was born and raised and where his heart is buried. Explore the house where he was born and learn about the peculiarly Polish musical forms, the polonaise and mazurka, which he employed to great advantage. Enjoy an accomplished performance in one of the city’s renowned theaters before continuing on to Krakow, an 8th century picture-book city untouched by the bombings of World War II. Here, amidst tours of the medieval Town Square and the incredible Wieliczka Salt Mines, attend another fine performance in one of Krakow’s concert halls. The final performance is in one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in Poland, Wroclaw, where delicate baroque architecture mixes with the atmosphere of a vibrant European city center.
Overview Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Fri, Oct 9     Depart USA
Day 2, Sat, Oct 10   Arrive Warsaw
Day 3, Sun, Oct 11   Warsaw
Day 4, Mon, Oct 12   Warsaw • train to Krakow
Day 5, Tue, Oct 13   Krakow
Day 6, Wed, Oct 14   Krakow
Day 7, Thu, Oct 15   Krakow • drive to Wroclaw
Day 8, Fri, Oct 16   Wroclaw
Day 9, Sat, Oct 17   Depart Wroclaw

Highlights and Special Features

• Experience **four UNESCO Sites** – the Old Towns of Warsaw and Krakow, the Wieliczka Salt Mines and the Centennial Hall in Wroclaw

• Visit the **house that Chopin was born in**, located in **Zelazowa Wola**

• Wander the **historic centre of Krakow**, which UNESCO included on its first list of World Cultural Heritage Sites
• Visit the Royal Chambers inside Krakow’s Wawel Castle, with its tapestry collection that once numbered 356 pieces

• Attend musical and theater performances in Warsaw’s, Krakow’s and Wroclaw’s renowned concert halls

Descriptive Daily Itinerary

Day 1, Fri, Oct 9          Depart USA
Depart USA on international flights to Warsaw, Poland.
Meals: In flight

Day 2, Sat, Oct 10        Arrive Warsaw
Arrive in Warsaw and transfer to the hotel. Enjoy a free afternoon to rest and settle in. In the evening meet fellow travellers for a welcome dinner at a local restaurant.
Meals: In flight, D

Hotel Bristol or similar
Hotel Bristol is one of Warsaw’s most exclusive properties, situated on the “King’s Walk,” a short walk from the historic Old Town, the Royal Castle, and the National Theater and Opera House. Rooms include cable TV, Internet access, direct dial telephones, minibar and air conditioning. The hotel also features a restaurant, business and fitness center, sauna, and conference center.

Day 3, Sun, Oct 11        Warsaw
Following breakfast, set out on a full day tour of the highlights of Warsaw. Founded in 1374, Warsaw became Poland’s capital in 1596, when King Zygmunt III moved here from Krakow. For the next 200 years, Warsaw was beset on all sides by the Swedes, the Prussians and the Russians. The late 18th century was Warsaw’s “Golden Age,” under King Stanislaw August Poniatowski, Poland’s last king. Since then, except for a brief period between the two world wars, Poland was not truly independent until 1991, when the Soviet Union dissolved.

By the end of World War II, nearly 85% of Warsaw was rubble. The city has been rebuilt since then, including a painstaking recreation of the historic Old Town.

Begin the day with an introductory lecture followed by a tour of the Old Town. At the entrance to the Old Town stands the powerful Royal Castle, home of Poland’s kings from the 16th century up to Poland’s partition. Damaged during World War II, the historic brick castle was carefully restored after the war.
Walk through the **Market Square**, a beautiful pedestrian area filled with cafes, market stalls and strolling townspeople and by Warsaw’s neoclassical **Grand Theater**. The entire Old Town was meticulously reconstructed after its destruction at the hands of the Nazis after the Warsaw Uprising, and is now a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

After lunch at a local restaurant, travel a short distance outside Warsaw to **Zelazowa Wola, Chopin’s birthplace**. The house that Chopin was born in, much reconstructed and restored, has been transformed into a museum and a monument to the composer’s life. Originally an outbuilding on the grounds of the Countess Skarbek’s manor, the house was acquired by Chopin admirers, rebuilt to more suit his elevated status and filled with the books and furnishings that he deserved.

Return to the city for dinner and, schedules permitting, an **evening musical or theater performance**.

*Meals: B, L, D*

**Day 4, Mon, Oct 12 Warsaw • train to Krakow**

Enjoy a leisurely morning, which offers an opportunity for a lecture by the faculty leader. Later, transfer to the railway station for the mid-day express train to Krakow. Enjoy views of the Polish countryside, dotted with small private farms and horse-drawn carts. Lunch is independent on the train.

Upon arrival in Krakow, transfer to the city center hotel. In the afternoon take an introductory walking tour of the **Krakow Old Town**. Poland’s royal capital from the 11th to the 17th century, Krakow was included on **UNESCO’s first World Heritage list** in 1978. Since the Tatar raids in the 13th century, the Old Town has remained mostly intact, the only large Polish city to escape the destruction of World War II.

The walking tour of the Old Town follows the Royal Road – the coronation (and funeral procession) route of the Polish kings. Begin at the **Florian Gate**, the only one of the seven original gates left standing from the nearly two miles of walls that used to surround the Old Town. Just outside the Gate is the **Barbican**, a squat and powerful brick bastion that was originally connected to the Gate by a drawbridge and walled passage. Its walls are nine feet thick.

Walk up lovely **Florianska Street** to the Main Market Square, **Rynek Glowny**. Medieval Rynek Glowny has excellent shopping. Wonderful handcrafted souvenirs are displayed by the artists; wooden boxes, hand-knit wool sweaters, leather goods, ceramics, painted eggs and a wide variety of other articles can be found here for very reasonable prices.
Pay a visit to the stalls of the **Cloth Hall** and stop in at the **Basilica of St. Mary’s** on the corner of the square. Continue along **Grodska Street**, passing one of the oldest buildings in Krakow, the 12th century **Romanesque fortress church of St. Andrew**. Admire the 12 sculpted apostles on the façade of baroque Sts. Peter and Paul Church before turning onto **Kanonicza Street** for a fabulous view of imposing Wawel Castle.

This evening dinner will be at a local restaurant before returning to hotel.  
**Meals: B, D**

**Hotel Radisson Blu or similar**  
The five-star Radisson Hotel stands opposite the Philharmonic Hall in the business and cultural center of Krakow. All rooms offer views of the city as well as amenities like broadband Internet, individual climate control and minibar. The hotel also has several restaurants, cafes, and a fitness center

---

**Day 5, Tue, Oct 13  Krakow**  
Following breakfast at the hotel, continue exploring Krakow.

Tour **Wawel Castle**, on the hill above the Old Town, which was the seat of Polish kings for hundreds of years. The high ground of Wawel Hill has been occupied since the Paleolithic Age. The Polish kings didn't take up residence until the 11th century. In the 16th century, King Sigismund the Old had the castle complex designed and built into the Renaissance ensemble that it is today.

The castle is divided into five separate sections, the most impressive of which is the **Royal Chambers**. The tapestry collection, largely gathered by King Zygmunt August, once numbered 356 pieces; today only 136 survive.

Gothic **Wawel Cathedral**, with its thousand years of history, has since the 14th century been the place where the Polish kings were crowned at the beginning of their reigns, and buried at the end of them. Chapels and crypts have been added on over the years, nearly hiding the central nave. This is where Polish Pope John Paul II celebrated his first Mass as a priest.

Visit **Jagiellonian University**. Founded in 1364 by Casimir III "The Great," it is among the oldest and most elite universities in Europe. Casimir III, who ruled over a newly reunified Poland, founded the university to generate an educated class in his kingdom. Over the centuries, Jagiellonian University has educated some of Europe's most respected figures, including Nicolaus Copernicus, Pope John Paul II and Nobel Prize-winning poet Wislawa Szymborska.
Following a lunch of traditional Polish specialties, tour the **Kazimierz District**, historically a Jewish part of the city. In 1335 King Casimir the Great founded Kazimierz on the outskirts of Krakow, and it grew quickly into a strong trade town. Its ethnic makeup was mixed during its first hundred years, but records show that the area had established a *mikveh*, bathhouse and cemetery by around 1350. In 1407, construction began on the Alte Schul (Old Synagogue), the oldest synagogue remaining in Poland. After a decree by King Jan Olbrecht in 1495 moving the Jewish population of Krakow to Kazimierz, the area grew into a major cultural center of Polish Jewry.

Here pay a visit to **Oscar Schindler’s factory** near Ghetto Heroes' Square. This was the site from which Schindler was able to save over a thousand Jews from the Plaszow forced labor camp, and ultimately, from death. The museum, opened in 2010, is housed in the factory's administrative building, and includes Schindler's preserved office, photos and displays about pre-war Krakow, and the story of the five years of Nazi occupation.

Take some time to explore Krakow on your own before gathering for dinner at a restaurant in Kazimierz District featuring *performance of klezmer music*.  
*Meals: B, L, D*

**Day 6, Wed, Oct 14  Krakow**  
This morning tour another **UNESCO Site**, the **Wieliczka Salt Mines**, located a few miles outside of Krakow. Miners have worked the Wieliczka Salt Mines for 700 years. In the 19th and early 20th centuries miner/sculptors carved out beautiful chambers and chapels on the first three levels. A highlight of the trip down the mines is the fabulous Chapel of the Blessed Kinga, where everything, including statuary and chandeliers, is carved from salt. The mine displays 700 years of evolving technology and artistry.

Following lunch, take a free afternoon to discover Krakow independently.

In the evening, schedules permitting, **attend a musical or theater performance**.  
*Meals: B, L, D*

**Day 7, Thu, Oct 15  Krakow • drive to Wroclaw**  
Following breakfast, check out and travel by coach to Wroclaw, arriving in time for lunch.  

In the afternoon, take an introductory tour of the city. **Wroclaw** is one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in Poland. Situated at the foot of the Sudety Mountain upon the Odra River and cut through by numerous canals, it is an exceptional city of twelve islands and 112 bridges. Originally a Slavic settlement already established by the year 1000, Wroclaw was for hundreds
of years called Breslau and ruled by Germans. After the end of World War II, the city was awarded to Poland.

The city’s complex and dramatic history is etched in the city walls. Delicate baroque architecture mixes with the atmosphere of a vibrant European city center in Wroclaw’s Old Town. Much of the main square, Rynek, was meticulously rebuilt after the devastating losses of World War II and today locals mingle with tourists in the shops and cafes on its perimeter. The town hall sits on this square, which has acted as the heart of the city since the 13th century. Nearby, the vividly colorful building facades of Plac Solny (Salt Square) match the flowers being sold on the street. The Old Town is the home of the National Museum, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Museum of Architecture.

After completion of the tour, check in to a centrally located hotel for dinner and overnight. Meals: B, L, D

Art Hotel or similar
The four-star Art Hotel stands in a historic building in the heart of the city, right off Wroclaw’s Market Square. Guestrooms include all modern amenities, and the hotel offers four conference rooms, a business center, fitness room, shopping arcade with bar, flower shop and beauty salon.

Day 8, Fri, Oct 16 Wroclaw
Today continue to explore Wroclaw. Visit the incredible Leopoldine Hall, in Wroclaw’s 17th century University building. It is a gorgeous baroque confection of hanging plaster sculptures, frescoes of coral and turquoise and dark wooden pews. Every inch of the arched hall is decorated with exuberant artwork.

Ostrow Tumski (known as "Cathedral Island") gets its name because of the large concentration of medieval churches, the largest of which is Kosciol sw. Krzyza ("Church of the Holy Cross"), a large Gothic complex dating back to the 13th century. The oldest wooden church here is from the 9th century, and archaeological excavations have confirmed that the island has been inhabited at least that long. Once under the jurisdiction of church authority, the island's churches now house countless art treasures and priceless relics.
There will be an opportunity for independent exploration in the afternoon before an evening musical or theater performance, schedules permitting. After completion of the performance, gather for the festive late farewell dinner marking the conclusion of the journey. Meals: B, L, D

Day 9, Sat, Oct 17  Depart Warsaw
The tour concludes with transfers to airport for departures to the U.S. Meals: B, in flight