



# Gdańsk

Discover what delights await in Poland's main port

**Gdańsk, Poland's main port and the city most closely associated with Lech Wałęsa and the Solidarity movement, is just over a two-hour flight from the UK, and perfect for a relaxing minibreak. Although it suffered badly during the Second World War, the Main Town has been lovingly restored and given a new lease of life. Today you'll find a vibrant, cosmopolitan city centre, filled with cafés, restaurants and bars.**

## GETTING THERE

No-frills flights to Lech Wałęsa airport, on the outskirts of Gdańsk, are available from several UK regional airports.

- **Ryanair** ([www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) flies direct from Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool and London Stansted.
- **Wizzair** ([www.wizzair.com](http://www.wizzair.com)) flies from Doncaster-Sheffield, Glasgow Prestwick, Liverpool and London Luton.

## Getting from the airport

Traffic is extremely slow-moving in the city, so take that into consideration if choosing to go by taxi – the journey won't be that much quicker than the bus. At 4pm, our taxi took almost an hour and cost 60zł (£13). Bus B takes just over an hour to the main railway station and costs 3zł (70p).

## GETTING AROUND

The Main Town area is pedestrianised and all the sights can be easily accessed on foot. As mentioned above, traffic is very slow moving in the city (and not just at peak times), so a taxi often won't get you to your destination any quicker.

During the summer months, a small ferry will take passengers from the Waterfront across the Motława River to Ołowianka island. Here you will find the Maritime Museum and also Hotel Królewski. The journey costs 1zł (20p).

Instead of catching a ferry to Sopot (see THINGS TO SEE AND DO, below), jump on the train. It's easy to buy tickets (even if you can't speak Polish) and trains are frequent. The journey only takes 20 minutes and costs 3zł (70p).

## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

- Wander down the Royal Way in the Main Town, the route used for state processions. Walk through Golden Gate, then along Długa Street with its tall townhouses, until you come to the impressive Town Hall. A Gdańsk history museum is housed inside – although the entrance fee is only 10zł, we felt it wasn't worth seeing. Instead, turn off and visit Mariaka Street, a pretty cobbled street strewn with amber jewellery shops, workshops and galleries.
- Visit the Monument to the Fallen Shipyard Workers on Solidarity Square. Three 42-metre-high steel crosses commemorate the workers killed in the riots of December 1970. Combine this with a trip to the Roads of Freedom exhibition, a fascinating look at Poland's turbulent path to democracy. English information cards help visitors to understand the displays (not always the

case in Gdańsk museums). The Roads of Freedom exhibition is open Tues-Sun, 10am-5pm. Adult entrance is 5zł (£1).

- Go inside Gdańsk's Crane. Built in the 15th century and used to lift heavy goods and place masts on to ships' decks, the medieval crane was powered by men running inside a wooden wheel – hamster-style! You can visit separately for 8zł (£2), or buy a joint ticket for the Crane, Maritime Museum and museum ship, *MS Soldek*, for 18zł (£4). You don't need to see them all in one day and the joint ticket includes a return ferry ride between the Crane and museum.

- Go on a trip on the Motława River to Sopot. Ferries leave the waterfront near Green Gate twice daily – the journey takes an hour; return adult fare is 30zł (£7). En route you'll pass Westerplatte, where the first shots of the Second World War were fired in 1939.

Sopot itself is a popular beach resort. Many guidebooks recommend a walk up the fashionable Bohaterow Monte Cassino Street – we say don't bother, as the shops are nothing special. If you've only got a couple of hours to kill, stick to the promenade and wander along the golden sand.

- If it's raining, or even if it's not, pop in to St Mary's Church, said to be one of the oldest brick buildings in the world. Apparently, 25,000 people can fit inside. Check the side doors for notices advertising free music concerts.
- The Amber Museum, located inside Gdańsk's Torture Tower (so be prepared for lots of stairs), is only for true amber jewellery fans. If you think once you've seen one amber lump, you've seen them all, stay away. Entrance is 10zł (£2) or visit on a Monday and it's free – though in August we had to queue for 20 minutes.

**For the full magazine report on Gdańsk, see p31 of the January 2009 issue of Which? Holiday**

## PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK

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### ■ Café Kamienica

Mariańska Street 37/39  
Tel 58 301 1230

Whether you're after a coffee, beer, snack or main meal, this is one of the best cafés, with the best spot on Gdańsk's prettiest street. We visited a couple of times during the Dominican Fair and on both occasions were treated to performances from talented street musicians.

### ■ Estragon

Tel 58 309 1700  
[www.estragon.pl](http://www.estragon.pl)

Chlebnicka Street 26

Modern restaurant with friendly staff serving a good selection of fish, meat and chicken dishes. Also a choice for vegetarians. There is a main dining area, but also room to eat in more relaxed surroundings on stylish sofas and chairs. Two-course dinner for two, with wine, cost approximately 130zł (£28).

### ■ Pierogarnia u Dzika

Tel 58 305 2676  
[www.pierogarniaudzika.com](http://www.pierogarniaudzika.com)  
Piwna Street 59/60

This restaurant, on a busy tourist street, is popular with fans of pierogi – boiled dough dumplings filled with meat, cheese or fruit. Dishes cost approximately 17zł (£3.50). Try to get a balcony table where you can watch the world go by – indoors is a bit bright and canteen-like.

## GOOD PLACES TO STAY

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### ■ Aureus City Hotel

Tel 48 58 326 0750  
[www.fortenhoteles.pl](http://www.fortenhoteles.pl)

A recently renovated tenement house, this three-star hotel with 32 rooms is stylish and modern, yet manages to retain a unique interior design, thanks to its rooms with exposed 18th-century brick walls. Warm and welcoming, reception staff deserve a special mention for their helpfulness. Located a five-minute walk from the main city centre, you may feel the area is a bit too quiet and deserted, but the accommodation is of a high standard.

**PRICE** 260zł (£60) for a double room.

### ■ Dom Muzyka

Tel 48 58 326 0600  
[www.dom-muzyka.pl](http://www.dom-muzyka.pl)

In a residential part of the city, this spotless, well-maintained hotel can be found in the historic building complex of the Academy of Music. Our attic room, complete with eaves and dark wooden beams, meant climbing quite a few stairs, but the high ceiling and sense of space was worth it.

**PRICE** 290zł (£67) for a twin room – or pay an extra 20zł (£4) to upgrade to a luxury twin.

### ■ Hotel Królewski

Tel 48 58 326 11 11  
[www.hotelkrolewski.pl](http://www.hotelkrolewski.pl)

A former granary situated on Ołowianka island (but only a short walk or ferry ride to the Main Town), this hotel boasts an excellent waterfront location. The hotel has 30 rooms, many with views over the Motława River and Old Town (our standard room, however, overlooked the car park and, unfortunately, a nearby working site).

**PRICE** 295zł (£68) for a double room.

## USEFUL INFORMATION

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### Time difference

GMT +1

### Money matters

The Polish currency is the złoty, which is divided into 100 groszy, and the exchange rate we have used in this factfile is £1 = 4.52zł.

### Tipping

When it comes to tipping, don't say 'thank you' when your waiter picks up your cash – well, not if you want to see some change.

### When to go?

If you don't mind the crowds, visit during St Dominic's Fair, the largest trade and cultural outdoor event in Poland, which dates back to 1260. Check the website ([www.jarmarkswdominika.pl](http://www.jarmarkswdominika.pl)) for exact dates, but the fair normally starts at the end of July and lasts for 23 days. During this time you'll be able to enjoy concerts, theatre performances and firework displays, as well as street after street of market stalls. The weather in Gdańsk is pleasant from May to September, with temperatures around 23°C. It gets very cold during the winter months.

## GUIDEBOOKS & WEBSITES

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### ■ City Spots Gdańsk,

Thomas Cook Publishing, £5.99  
(ISBN 978-1-84157-626-8)

■ Also pick up a copy of **Gdańsk In Your Pocket**, found at tourist information centres and in some hotels, or online at [www.en.gdansk.gda.pl](http://www.en.gdansk.gda.pl)

