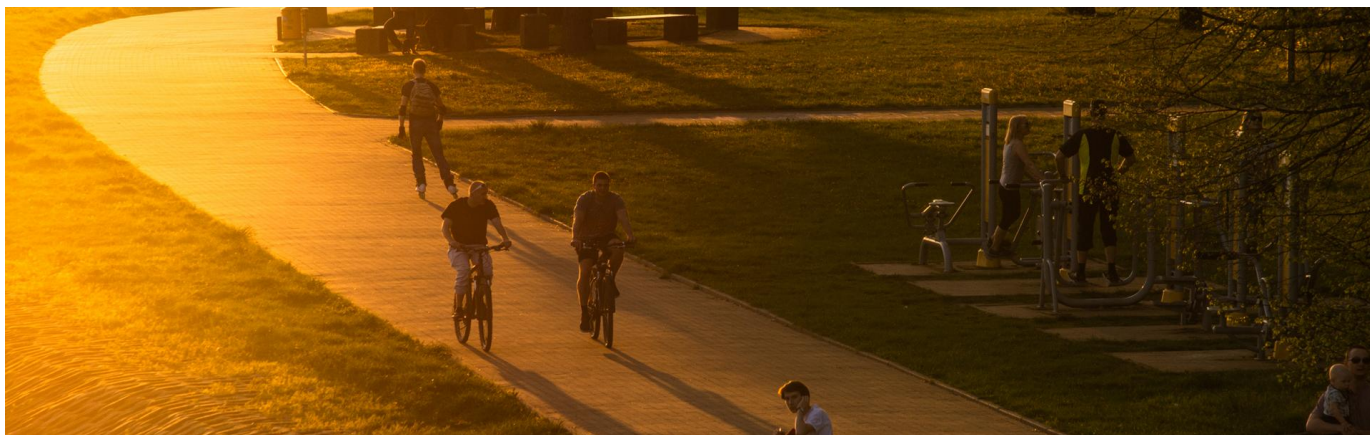




Bicycle

Our exploration of Opole by bike begins with an easy route along the most beautiful parts of the city. We will ride around the Old Town with its historic buildings and across Pasięka Island where, surrounded by the Piast Tower, the city's symbol, and the amphitheatre, we will feel the atmosphere of the famous Opole festivals. We will also visit the boulevards on the banks of the Oder, which lead to the city's green lungs on Bolko Island, where we can visit the Zoo or relax surrounded by nature. You will be amazed at Opole's greenery and beautiful architecture.

Detailed route can be found at:

We begin in the very heart of the city, in Freedom Square. This is where the city's high street, Krakowska Street, is located, beginning at the nearby Market Square and ending at the historic railway station. That is also where Ozimska Street, the main street of Opole, ends its run. The square is watched by the Monument to the Protectors of the Polishness of Opole Silesia, commonly referred to by the locals as the "woman on a bull". Right behind it, you can see the Opole Philharmonic. The square also borders a phenomenal park featuring lush verdancy and flowers, with an interesting fountain reminiscent of Gaudian mosaics. Every true foodie must try the legendary Grabówka crepes, but watch out for sparrows – they like to land on the tables outside.

Now let us go towards Ozimska Street before turning left past the square towards

Sempolowska Street. Cycling uphill on an old, preserved cobblestone road might not be the most pleasant experience, but it does not last long. We pass by the Dworek Artystyczny restaurant, which features a wall with hand prints of Polish music stars. We have now reached one of the main squares in Opole, Copernicus Square. It is worth stopping here for a little while. The southern part of the square holds a gallery with a vantage point. In front of us is the Solaris Shopping Centre. To our left, we can see University Hill with the towering Collegium Maius building, which offers a beautiful view of the Opole Old Town. The Opole University area is a real treat. There are old sculptures and monuments aplenty, in addition to works of art which brought here from various parts of the city and the rest of the Voivodeship to save them from inevitable destruction. Also unique is the Artist Park, which houses statues of popular Polish artists among its greenery and comfortable benches. These include Jerzy Grotowski, Czesław Niemen, Marek Grechuta, Agnieszka Osiecka, Jerzy Wasowski and Jeremi Przybora (the Elderly Gentlemen's Cabaret), Jonasz Kofta and Edmund Osmańczyk. The hill also houses the picturesque St. Adalbert Church. We pass by the square to the left of the shopping centre. We pass another park with the restored Hilltop Castle tower. It is accessible via a bridge hanging over what used to be a moat. The tower is open to visitors. After a while we turn left, going down Osmańczyka Street towards the Market Square.

The Market Square is full of historic, Baroque tenements, but the most impressive building by far is the City Hall with its tower, which makes Opole impossible to mistake for any other city, Florence being the only possible exception. After all, Florence houses the source of inspiration for the Opole building – the Palazzo Vecchio. The southern frontage houses the monument to Prince Casimir I of Opole. Another popular attraction is the Polish Song Walk of Fame, which commemorates artists who have performed at the local festivals. The Market Square is also a great place to slake your thirst in one of its beer gardens or grab a bite to eat at one of the local restaurants. The place and its surrounding streets begin to teem with nightlife come sunset. In summer, many festivals, outdoor theatre plays or concerts of popular bands take place there every weekend and on many weekdays. After all, Opole is the Song Capital of Poland.

From the Market Square, we head towards the Holy Trinity Church, commonly known as the Franciscan Church, whose catacombs house the tombs of the princes of Opole. We then cross the Castle Bridge to reach Pasięka Island before turning right. We take a short ride down the crowded Piastowska Street past one of the most beautiful places in Opole to our right – the Opole Venice on the Młynówka Canal.

After 100 metres we turn left and pass by the Voivodeship Office, which stands in front of the Piast Tower and the National Centre of Polish Song, an amphitheatre which hosts the annual National Polish Song Festival. The tower offers a gorgeous view of the city. Inside, you can see a multimedia exhibition on the history of Opole. Among things worth seeing in the amphitheatre is the Museum of Polish Song, which received the “Oscar of tourism” from the Polish Tourism Organisation for the Best Tourism Product.

We make a left at the amphitheatre and arrive at the Castle Pond. This is one of the favourite places to rest among the locals and visitors alike. The beautiful panoramic vista encompasses the Piast, City Hall and Franciscan towers. The local fountain dances to the rhythm of popular Polish songs in summer, illuminated with colourful lights. The Pond also hosts outdoor concerts by orchestra musicians from Opole and beyond. In winter, the water surface freezes over and turns into an ice rink.

The Castle Pond is where the recreational areas of Opole begin. The Karol Musioł Oder Boulevard is but a few steps away, leading all the way down to Bolko Island. The Boulevard is a popular place for walking, cycling and inline skating. It is also another place where outdoor events are organised. Those who like to exercise can enjoy a wide variety of exercise equipment scattered along the entire length of the Boulevard. There is also a dock for cruise boats which can take you on a trip around Opole.

The Boulevard leads to the Green Bridge on the Oder, which in turn leads to Bolko Island, Opole’s most popular park. It is a large island lush with plants and criss-crossed by many avenues, and the local meadows are perfect for a picnic. The lovely pond, which features a pier, is also where Laba café is located. There, you can rent a deck chair, bask in the sun and watch swans lazily swim by. The main attraction of the Island is undoubtedly the Zoological Garden, which draws thousands of visitors every season. Though the Bolko Island is teeming with people in summer, it still retains its wild nature. Fans of ornithology will be delighted with the diversity of bird species which can be watched here and wild roe deer are a common sight as well. They have become so accustomed to visitors that you should not be surprised to see them a couple of steps away.

The Island can be crossed in two ways: through the middle or along the banks of the Oder, and then along the flood control channel. Then simply head towards the city down the pedestrian-bicycle path running on the embankment along the western bank of the Oder. Before we climb it, we must pass by the Pagaj sailing club, where we can rent kayaks or quench our thirst at the pub. There is also another dock for

tourist boats very close by. Riding along the Oder, we pass the meadows, which are another popular picnic spot. From there, you can see a beautiful panorama of the older part of Opole.

We arrive at the Piast Bridge, which we cross riding down the bicycle path on the left side. We pass by the arcades of Piast Hotel before crossing the bicycle bridge on the flood control channel. Behind the bridge and to the left are the old city walls with a reconstructed artillery tower. The neighbouring square is witness to historical re-enactments organised by knight fraternities during Opole Days and other festivities. Right outside its walls is the Cathedral of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross with its characteristic twin towers.

We leave the cathedral and ride down Szpitalna Street. We pass by the Opole Television building, which used to house a synagogue. We go through the gate and turn left at the Franciscan Church, then ride down Minorytów Street to Freedom Square, where the trip originally began and where it now ends.

The trail was created by Przemysław Supernak – traveller, travel blogger, bicycle trip enthusiast, trip organiser and the co-creator of the Opole Travel Festival. Born in Opole, he is fascinated not only with distant lands, but also with his home city and region. Even though he has seen his share of beautiful places across the globe where many would want to live, he has been based in Opole since birth, saying that the city is the best place for him to live. He runs a travel and tourism fanpage on Facebook called SuperGlob: <https://www.facebook.com/superglob1>

Contact data

Odkryj Opole

odkryjopole [at] um.opole.pl

www.facebook.com/OpoleOdkryj

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