

A Photographer's Guide to Warsaw

Overview of Warsaw and this Guide Book

Warsaw is a highly interesting city for both a tourist and a photographer with a fascinating mix of apparently old and colorful homes and numerous interesting details that make each street corner a potential treasure trove of photographic opportunities. This guide is not intended to replace traditional city guides with their wealth of historic and cultural detail. It is presented as a simple to use but highly useful guide to seeing the city, finding the interesting buildings and sights and includes helpful tips about the best approach to photographing the town. As I am sure most people are aware, Warsaw was virtually destroyed in World War II, and so you are seeing a reconstructed city, but that only adds to the fascination. A final note before we start - Warsaw is a safe city, but always watch yourself and your equipment and don't take unnecessary risks!



Colorful houses in the main town square in Old Town

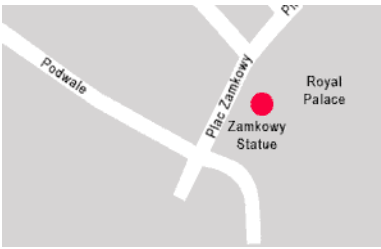
There are two main areas described in this guide - the Old Town and the New Town (which is around the same age!) but it is well worth taking a detour to see some of the churches and monuments on the way to the Palace of Culture and Science - a large solid building that dominates the skyline, is probably pretty ugly in comparison with the other sights, but has great views from the tower. All are well worth visiting. The whole tour can be managed in one day, or alternatively take your time and handle each one on separate days.

The book will follow the same structure on each page - on the left is a small street map showing the immediate location, in the center is the description of the location and the route to the next stop, and on the right is an image of the location itself. Most guide books give you an overview map on one page and then separate walking instructions - in a city with complex street names, I found that very difficult to follow, and the approach in this guide will help you to find your way around without any problems.

I am sure you will find guide books and maps at your hotel that give an overview of the city and Google Maps is great for printing just the area you want to visit so this guide should be used in parallel with those approaches. If you get lost, taxis are freely available, are very inexpensive, and can be used to get back to your hotel or starting point!

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Tour of the Old Town



Our tour starts at the Zamkowy Statue - a landmark in Warsaw and an easy place to get to by taxi. When facing the red brick Palace, you will see a viewing tower by the church on the right - it is well worth climbing the many stairs to this gallery to get your bearings of the Old Town. The sun sets over the town from this area, but in summer it sets very late in the evening and this viewpoint may not be open.

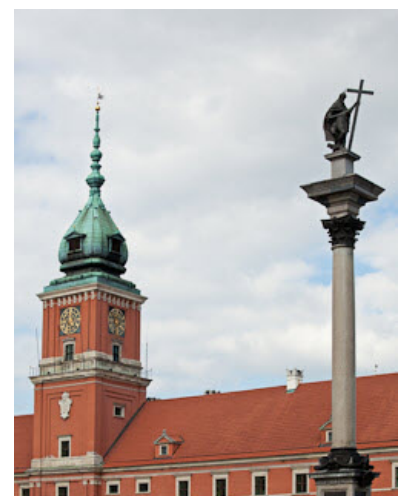
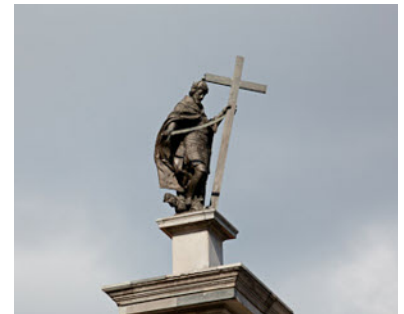
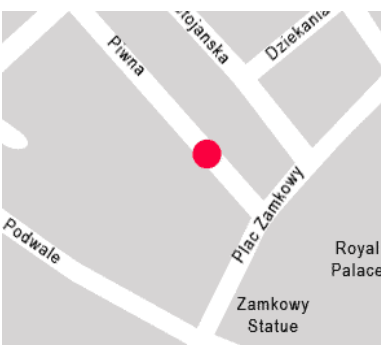
A stroll a little further away from the statue along Krakowskie Przedmiescie will give you various views of the Old Town with interesting lamp formations. These were taken from the left hand side of the road facing toward the statue. Then retrace your steps to the statue and take in the many details on the surrounding buildings.

There are many interesting shots from this area - close-ups of the statue, the Royal Palace itself, the street cafes and restaurants and the walls of the town itself. An interesting fact - all along the walls you will see a black line in the mortar between the bricks. This continuous line represents the level the walls were at following the sacking of the city - everything above the line has been rebuilt.

The statue in Zamkowy square is of Zygmunt, originally erected in 1644, and miraculously survived the war damage with only the loss of his sword. The original column is laying by the side of the Royal Castle if you are interested in seeing that.

The Royal Castle is open as a museum, but you can wander into the courtyard at no cost - a fine red brick building with cobbles and an ornate tower. It was reconstructed from a pile of rubble between 1971 and 1984 - it had originally dated from the 14th Century and was the residence of Kings, then the President and then the seat of Parliament.

Once you have had your fill of this square, walk down Place Kamkowy until you reach Piwna on the left hand side and walk away from the Royal Castle down Piwna.

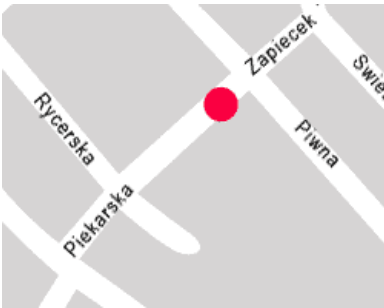


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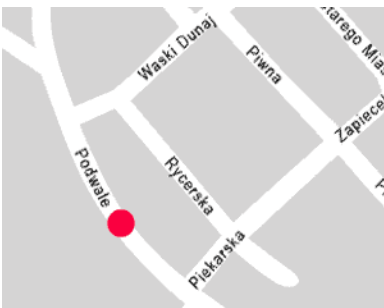
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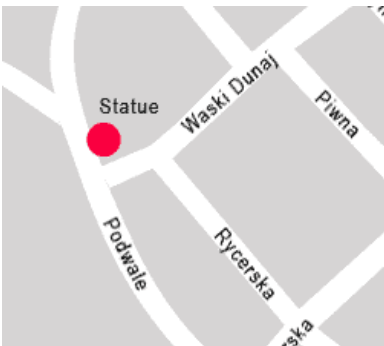
Piwna is an interesting little street, full of details that are worth looking for (and photographing). At number 6, approximately where the red dot is on the map, is a house known locally as Pod Golebiami which translates to “Under the pigeons”. You can see why when you spot the doorway.



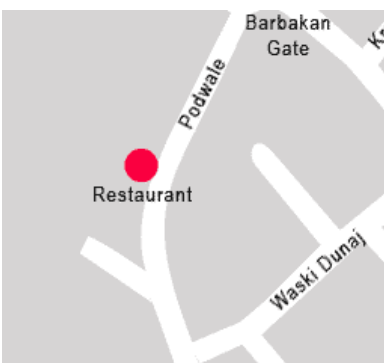
Next on the left is St Martin’s Church, again totally destroyed in the war and since rebuilt. Well worth a stop to sit and ponder!



Continue down Piwna (which means Beer Street) until you reach the junction with Zapiecek and Piekarska, and turn left here away from the Old Town and towards the walls of the town. Just outside the walls here is an impressive statue to Jan Kilinski, waving his saber at all comers. Kilinski was a legendary Polish Patriot in the 1794 Uprising.



At this stage, turn right down Podwale with the town walls on your right. Podwale curves to the right.



Once you reach the junction with Waski Dunaj, turn right a little and go down the narrow path alongside the wall. Just here, on the right, is the Monument to the Little Insurgent which honors the role that children played in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. There is unfortunately an annoying cafe just to the right of the statue, but careful positioning will remove it from the photo!

Not necessarily a detour at this stage, but just across the road on Podwale is a restaurant called Podwale Kompania Piwna. I ate here three times during my visit - great food, large portions, liters of beer and I think the final bill was around \$15...

Next, continue along Podwale with the castle walls on your right until you see the Barbakan - the Entry Tower.

