Underground Lower Silesia
1. The underground of the Książ Castle

Location
District: Wałbrzych
Municipality: Wałbrzych
The castle is situated within Wałbrzych town borders, in Książ Landscape Park. It is a part of Piast Castle Trail.

Historical background
The history of the Książ Castle is a very stormy one. Over the centuries, its owners changed several times until finally in 1509 it became the property of one of the richest families in Silesia, the Hochbergs. It remained in their hands until World War II, when this Baroque residence and its adjacent areas were surrounded by barbed wire, and inside began construction works (1943). The campaign was carried out under the name Operation Riese (German: Giant) and received the codename “Brabant 1”.

In the rock under the castle a network of corridors was drilled, 900 meters long and 50 meters deep. The central transportation shaft led from the underground labyrinth to the surface. However, it was also possible to get to the Baroque part of the castle in separate elevators. After WW II, entrance tunnels to the underground were also discovered, which – according to some researchers – proves the intention of creating an underground railway line leading up to the castle.

Present
According to some hypotheses, the underground complex below the Książ Castle was being prepared as a new headquarters for Hitler. According to others, it was meant to be a powerful command centre for a complex of underground factories and laboratories designed to conduct research on new types of weapons. Both hypotheses are equally likely. In fact, there are historically confirmed testimonies, according to which Hitler often expressed his fascination with bacteriological and high frequency electronic weapons. Both would be implicitly used for the destruction of the enemies of the Führer’s pure Nordic race.

Just before the arrival of the Soviet troops, the tunnels were mined. Some corridors could be reached even in 1947, but shortly afterwards the area inlets were buried.

Since then, the mysterious underground tunnels under the Książ Castle have inspired and excited many. Treasure hunters are convinced that this is where the lost Amber Room was hidden, or at least some pieces of art and valuables looted by the Nazis in Lower Silesia. So far it has been impossible to determine what really is behind the piles of ground obstructing the entrance to the underground tunnels.

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2. The Osówka Underground Town – tourist route

**Location**
District: Wałbrzych
Municipality: Głuszyc, Sowie Mountains

**Historical background**
Construction work started in 1943. It was carried out using forced labourers and concentration camp prisoners from Gross-Rosen. Many of them never saw the light of day. They died of exhaustion while pickaxing the huge halls in hard rock. The daily food ration was so small that even the strongest prisoners quickly lost their strength. The activity was part of the project “Riese” (German: giant) and had a clause of utmost secrecy. The researchers are not unanimous as to its purpose. According to some, it was meant to be Adolf Hitler’s secret headquarters. Others insist that the spacious carved halls were supposed to accommodate the production of secret weapons. The surface part of the building, which is the outlet for ventilation shafts and emergency exits, is cleverly hidden in the surrounding hills and greenery of the forest. Innovative materials were used for its construction, such as camouflage netting made from recently discovered plastic. Today, the remnants of these nets can be seen inside the underground halls.

**Present**
The tourist route is scheduled for about an hour. Visitors pass through the huge, several-meters-high halls and smaller rooms covered with concrete, similar to bunkers. The exhibits are mainly keepsakes of forced labourers and prisoners: tin cups, bent cutlery, chipped crockery. There are also helmets, shells and fragments of clothing. The route leads to two landmarks named “Casino” and “Gym”. “Casino” has window holes, wall insulation, ventilation ducts, and its roof is shaped like a trough, which was meant to be masked with soil and plants. In “Gym”, whose purpose is not known, hatches with steel buckles can be found.

Osówka is the longest and the most interesting complex of the ones made available for tourists in the Sowie Mountains. In 2006, Osówka won a contest of the Lower Silesian Tourist Organisation for the most interesting tourist attraction in the region.

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3. The Walim Drifts

**Location**
District: Wałbrzych
Municipality: Walim

**Historical background**
Since 1943 Germans were engaged in construction work under the codename “Riese” (German: giant) in the Sowie Mountains region. The large scale works included the construction of “Rzeczka”, “Jugowice Górne – Jawornik”, “Włodarz”, “Osówka”, “Sobóń”, “Sokołec - Gontowa” and “Książ” complexes. The drifts and halls were dug using typical mining methods: explosives were placed in the drilled holes and blown up, and the debris was transported to the surface in narrow-gauge railway. The construction was never completed, and we can only guess the purpose of many of those complexes. The unique and mysterious structures attract adventurers, treasure hunters as well as professional explorers and scientists to Lower Silesia.

**Present**
The underground tourist route in Walim leads through the huge halls bored in rock, small bunkers reinforced with concrete and long corridors. On the surface you can see the remains of the infrastructure necessary for the functioning of the bunkers, such as camps, workshops, warehouses, mixers and compressors pumping fresh air into the tunnels. While visiting those mysterious corridors we should remember the thousands of lives that this building site has claimed.

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4. Underground Tourist Route “Coal Mine in Nowa Ruda”

Location
District: Klodzko
Municipality: Nowa Ruda

Historical background
The beginnings of mining in the area date back to the fifteenth century. It was not difficult to discover coal deposits, since due to geological conditions it was located near the surface. Mining gained significance only at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when technological developments allowed the construction of drainage drift. The turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century saw a growing demand for coal which was the fuel for steam engines in the mass-producing industrial plants. That, in turn, increased the number of mines, employment and output. The Piast Mine in Nowa Ruda was founded in 1742. Until 1869 coal mining was done by using the drifts. Besides, the output was quite small: in 1840 less than 3.5 thousand tons. The discovery of shale deposits and the expansion of the Wałbrzych–Klodzko railway line gave the mine new opportunities. The output rose to over 80 thousand tons and 35 thousand tons of shale per year (1891). On May 10, 1940 a tragedy occurred in the coal mine — as a result of the so-called gas and rock ejection, 187 miners were killed. After the disaster the excavation work rigors were tightened. After the war, three other mines merged into one under the name of Nowa Ruda. The coal mined here was a low-sulfur high-quality coking coal. However, the complicated geological structure of the deposits prevented the mechanization of work underground. With time, the exploitation of coal became more expensive, until finally — uneconomic. The mines were closed in 1994.

Present
The underground tourist route is a 1.5-hour-long journey into the past. You can see for yourself over 700-metre-long underground earthworks. There is also gallery protection, old mining equipment and old ways of miners’ work presented. You will ride in wagons, formerly used to transport the excavated material. The great attraction of the underground tour are the petrified tree trunks, dating over 250 million years back and fossilized specimen of araucaria, unique in the world. Another splendid attraction is the ghost of a treasurer guarding the secrets of the mine. To this day, he lives in a tunnel and can scare the tourists well, hooting and jumping at them all of the sudden.

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5. Underground Tourist Route Kowary Drifts

Location
District: Jelenia Góra
Municipality: Kowary

Historical background
The Kowary mine was probably established by the Walloons — the mining people who came to Lower Silesia from the west of Europe. Legend has it they were endowed with the ability to find precious stones and metals. Their patron was St. Lawrence, who later became the patron of all treasure hunters and mountaineers. In the 1920s, the Germans found uranium in the drifts left after the extraction of iron ore, and started extracting it. Kowary uranium was transported to German laboratories during World War II, where it was the subject of research for the development of atomic weapons. After the war, mining of uranium continued for the Soviet Union to the same end. Until 1973, the Kowary mine had a total of 24 tunnels dug to a depth of 700 meters. In the same year, Wroclaw University of Technology took over the mine to conduct research on explosives and mining activities for students. The discovery of medicinal properties of radon in the former “Pogórze” mine resulted in the creation of a third Underground Radon Inhalation Facility in Europe, which effectively treats cardiovascular disease.

Present
Kowary underground tourist route is also a museum of mining technology. In the so-called “Uranus Labyrinth” we can find the “Walloon Treasury” — a unique collection of minerals and gemstones from the collection of the Sudeten Walloon Brotherhood. The exhibits gathered in underground corridors offer a unique opportunity to get acquainted with mining tradition and the history of the Walloons, their tools and secret signs.

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6. Gold mine in Złoty Stok

Location
District: Ząbkowice
Municipality: Złoty Stok

Historical background
About 2000 years BC ores were already mined in the vicinity of Złoty Stok. In the Middle Ages, the mining fields were taken up by the Cistercians of Kamieniec Ząbkowicki, when they received the land as a gift from Duke Henry IV Probus. In the fifteenth century even Veit Stoss purchased some shares in the mining industry, investing the money he earned for making the altar in St Mary’s Church in Krakow. Unfortunately, this was not a good investment, since the reservoir began to exhaust and the sculptor went bankrupt. In desperation, he attempted to fraud a bill of exchange, for which he was convicted and imprisoned in a dungeon. In the sixteenth century Złoty Stok experienced an economic boom – its 200 mines supplied Europe with 8% of total gold production. Another turning point in the history of the town was when a well known chemist and alchemist Hans Schäffenberg settled here. He developed a technology for the recovery of arsenic from arsenic ores. Thanks to him Złoty Stok became a major world producer of arsenic for the next 100 years.

The mine has survived World War II in almost perfect condition. In 1948, the search for new deposits was ordered, but in 1962, for unexplained reasons, mining operations in the mine were abandoned. Therefore, the water circulating in a natural way was no longer pumped out and in a short time the mine was completely flooded. Over 700 years in Złoty Stok about 16 tons of pure gold were mined. After 35 years, part of the drift was dried and preparations for the opening of an underground tourist route began.

Present
Today, the underground tourist route in Złoty Stok is the most attractive and best-prepared route. For less demanding tourists there is a peaceful route through underground corridors. For the adventurous – underground river rafting. Both will be delighted at the sight of a beautiful underground waterfall, the only one in Poland and unique in Europe. There is still much to discover in the mine in Złoty Stok. Adventurers can come across the remains of the miners, whose bodies were not recovered after a crash a long time ago, or the secrets of the former Third Reich hidden in the collapsed corridors for years.

After the sensations of the underground world, we can take advantage of the thrills which the longest downhill Tyrolean. And for the aesthetic experience, you should visit the town centre to admire the historic charming town houses, especially the famous Fugger House.

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7. The “Aurelia” Gold mine

Location
Location: Złotoryja
Municipality: Złotoryja

Historical background
The exact date of the opening of the mine is unknown. Historical reports mention a tunnel hollowed out around 1660, other galleries and shafts were most likely built in the twentieth century for exploration purposes. During World War II, part of the corridors were buried for unknown reasons, the retreating German soldiers are believed to have done that. The mine has been opened for tourists since 1973. The air of mystery surrounding “Aurelia” attracted adventurers and professional explorers of the underground world. In 1997 the 28-meter long Charles Shaft was discovered, it will be made available to tourists in the future.

Present
The route currently open to tourists is about 100 metres long. While walking, we move through low narrow tunnels with dim light. Because of these difficulties, it is not suitable for people with reduced mobility. The tunnel was excavated in very hard diabase rock. Numerous side corridors and ventilation shafts branch off from the main walkway. They are currently inhabited by bats. In the basement there is a constant temperature of +8°C. Many interesting legends are related to the mine. One of them tells about a monk who, after a miserable death and a curse cast on him, wanders underground to the present day. One often hears his weeping and wailing.

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8. The Bear Cave in Kletno

halls were discovered. In 1977, the Bear Cave was legally recognized as a protected nature reserve. On June 11, 1983 the caves were made available for tourism.

Present
The Bear Cave is the largest and most beautiful cave in Poland open to tourists. The total length of the corridor exceeds 2.5 km, and the difference in height between the highest and lowest point is 60 meters. The air temperature in the cave is constant and is always around 6°C. The tourist route runs in the middle floor of the cave. It is perfectly prepared - the groups wander on a comfortable, dry pavement, as opposed to the cavers who had to squeeze through narrow gaps or wade in the mud. The tourist route starts at the entrance, continues through the so-called Great Crevice to finally go under the water roof (grooves squeezed out by water flowing here once under high pressure), the Bat Hall, the Primitive Man Corridor and the Basin Corridor. In the Stalactite Hallway there are wonderful stalactites, adorned with pearl droplets of water, which means that the cave is still alive and the flowing water still deposits calcite. On the walls we can admire the so-called cascades: stalagmite forms of limestone. Most of them are gathered in the Cascade Lane. The tourist route has a total of about 360 meters, and the duration of the visit is about 40 minutes.

Location
Location
District: Kłodzko
Municipality: Stronie Śląskie
The Bear Cave is situated in the Śnieżnik Massif (Kletno). Its length is 2,230 m.

Historical background
In 1966, during mining work in the Kletno III quarry, a horizontal slot was unveiled. It led to a small chamber, which was named the Bear Hall after a large number of cave bear bones found there. In the years that followed, more bones were discovered. In 1977, the Bear Cave was legally recognized as a protected nature reserve. On June 11, 1983 the caves were made available for tourism.

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9. Radochów Cave

Location
District: Kłodzko
Municipality: Łądek Zdrój

Historical background
Radochów cave was formed in the Early Pliocene, which means it is 2 to 5 million years old. It was created by erosive flow of water filling the corridors. At the end of the Pliocene, progressive erosion of the surrounding slopes led to the decrease of water in the riverbed and the water gradually left the cave rooms. The corridors were developed along the tectonic cracks and crevices. After the water subsided, in the corridors a process called sediment accumulation began. It consists in the deposition of a mixture of clumps, clay sediments, precipitate of calcium carbonate and organic debris. In Radochów Cave, silt completely filled nearly all the spaces but in 1933–39 it was removed.

Present
The cave was first mentioned in 1757. Very quickly it became a destination for the patients of the nearby health resort - Łądek Zdrój. Studies of the silt conducted in the interwar period led to the discovery of the bones of about 20 different prehistoric animals – the cave bear, cave hyena, woolly rhinoceros.

The cave is open for visitors every day.
10. The Kłodzko Fortress

Location
District: Kłodzko
Municipality: Kłodzko

Historical background
The Kłodzko Fortress is the most precious military monument and fortification complex in Poland. The underground part, open to the public, was built much earlier than the fortress. Residents of the area, harassed by continuous attacks and numerous military conflicts, began to dig a shelter hidden in the rock under the city for refuge. Underground halls corresponded to the social status of the owner, who sometimes had to spend a lot of time in hiding, therefore they equipped the halls in such a way as to ensure the greatest comfort. In the corridors linking them there were niches with craft workshops, such as bakery ovens or breweries. In the second half of the seventeenth century, regardless of the residents’ underground shelters, the construction of fortifications began. After the Silesian wars the maze of corridors expanded. Eventually, they were designed to lead up to the line of the enemy besieging the city and fortress. The intention of the strategists was to mine them in case of an emergency and blow them up together with the invaders’ troops on the surface. The galleries were being carved for many years. The strategy was never used because before the network of tunnels was finished, artillery weapons were invented and the enemy army no longer had any need to approach the stronghold.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the end of World War II, the fortress housed a high security prison. From this period comes the extraordinary story of the priest Faulhaber, who with a shoe buckle engraved his prison memories on a pewter mug. It was an exhibit in the Kłodzko Museum until 1945 when it disappeared without a trace.

Present
The underground route consists of two parts: in the first one you can see the underground shelter of the medieval inhabitants of Kłodzko. Apparently, the complex of these rooms is huge, but only less than one kilometre of the route is available for tourists. In the second part, you can explore the stronghold itself. The defence complex consists of: The Main Fortress, the Owca Mountain Auxiliary Fort, city walls and field fortifications. From the High Bastion of the fortress stretches a magnificent view over the city and the plain situated below, occupied by the enemy troops so often in the past. In the distance you can see the imposing contours of the Table Mountains. The braver tourist may dare to visit a short stretch of the miners’ gallery.

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11. The Polish Millennial Anniversary underground tourist route

Location
District: Kłodzko
Municipality: Kłodzko

Historical background
Since the thirteenth century Kłodzko residents burrowed cellars and corridors under the Old Town buildings. Originally they were used mostly for economical purposes, such as storing food. Later the underground served as a place of refuge from assaults and fronts of numerous war outbreaks. Due to the lack of any protection of the undergrounds in the mid-twentieth century the Old Town area was exposed to a danger of collapse. During the maintenance works it turned out there was a possibility to set up a multilevel tourist route leading under the streets of Kłodzko. The route was outlined in 1966, exactly thousand years after the Baptism of Poland, symbolically considered the beginning of Polish statehood.

Present
The route consists of a raw of corridors, slipways and chambers on three underground levels. The route arrangement is rather random, but one should remember, that it was dependant on the excavation safety level. Nevertheless it shows the way the underground was created throughout the ages. In some niches there still are the remains of mediaeval “household equipment”, e.g. quern or bakery oven. Historical exhibitions about the city’s life await the tourists in others.

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12. Museum of Industry and Technology

**Location**
City: Wałbrzych
District: Wałbrzych
The museum is located in the former coal mine “Julia”.

**Historical background**
In 1770, the “Fuchs” coal mine was formally registered. The excavations were conducted using surface mining tunnels and shafts. The deepest mine shaft was named “Julius” and was 611 meters deep. Excavated material was transported to the surface using a special lift, called a cage. Mine towers were built at the turn of the century. After the Second World War the name “Fuchs” was changed to “Julia.” The annual output of the mine at its peak ranged from 650 to 800 thousand tonnes per year. Given the unprofitability of the mine, a decision was made to close it down and the last wagon with the output went up to the surface on September 20, 1996. In 1999, the Wałbrzych City Council decided to establish a branch of the Museum of Industry and Technology in the mine.

**Present**
The main elements of the museum complex are the towers of the shafts: “Julia” and “Sobótka”. The tour follows through the buildings in which the coal was purified, including boiler rooms, the lamp room, the electrical workshop, baths (with rooms for storing work clothes), the main yard (with locomotives and transport wagons) and the office space. One of the most interesting places for visitors is the seventeenth-century Fox Tunnel. The absolute uniqueness of this place lies in the fact that it was filled with water up to 1 metre, and coal transport was carried out in boats. For those times it was a great achievement of technological thought. The Fox Tunnel was visited by important personalities of that time: Frederick William III, John Quincy Jones (future U.S. President) and Alexandra Feodorovna – the wife of Tsar Nicholas I.

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13. Fortress in Srebrna Góra

**Location**
District: Żąbkowice
Municipality: Stoszowice

**Historical background**
In 1764 the Prussian Lieutenant-Colonel William Ludwig Regeler received an order to build the Srebrna Góra fortress. The building schedule and cost estimation that he drew up were personally approved by Frederick the Great. The construction works began in 1765 and lasted until 1777. The building site employed an average of 4,000 contract workers from western Germany and the Czech Republic, while the local population was forced to work in the transport and construction of the fortress. The fortress was calculated as a garrison for a maximum of 5,000 men. They had 264 guns and mortars at their disposal. Each fort had its own well, an animal farm, a bakery and a brewery, and in the warehouses food and fuel for at least three months of siege could be stored.

When Napoleon decided to conquer Europe, the fortress was ready. In 1807 Napoleon's army besieged the Srebrna Góra fortress, in which a small crew bravely resisted. However, Treaties of Tilsit forced the French to withdraw. Thanks to that, the fortress gained the reputation of being impregnable. On November 28, 1867 the fortress’ existence as a military facility came to an end.

**Present**
Stronghold in Srebrna Góra is the largest such mountain structure in Europe. The main point of exploration is fort “Donjon”. It is the only fortified complex, besides “Ostroróg”, that survived in good condition until today. Extensive casemates of the fortress are still waiting for renovation.

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photographs: DOT archive
content: Anathema
factual revision: Rajmund Papiernik
design & typesetting: ORFIN STUDIO

"European Funds for Lower Silesia Development"

Project no. WND-RPDS 06 05 00-02-002/10
Title: Promotion of Lower Silesia’s Quality Tourist Products on European and Polish Market.
Value of the project: 958,713.51 PLN, ERDF contribution: 627,245.50 PLN

Project co-funded by European Union with European regional development fund as part of Dolnośląskie Regional Operational Programme 2007–2013