



Poland in World War 2: Stories Behind Famous Movies

DURATION	AVAILABILITY	DEPARTURES FROM
13 days	July - August 2027	Gdansk

This tour is inspired by true stories of courage, tragedy, and survival during World War II — the very stories that became the foundation for some of the **world's most acclaimed films**. As we journey across Poland, we'll follow in the footsteps of history — visiting cities scarred by conflict, sites of heroic resistance, former ghettos, secret hideouts, and locations immortalized on screen.

Films such as:

- *The Great Escape*, directed by John Sturges
- *Valkyrie*, directed by Bryan Singer
- *Schindler's List*, directed by Steven Spielberg
- *The Pianist*, directed by Roman Polanski
- *The Zookeeper's Wife*, directed by Niki Caro

...will come to life as we **uncover the real events behind them**. Throughout the journey, you'll stay exclusively in carefully selected **5- and 4-star hotels** — comfortable bases for what is, at times, an emotionally demanding itinerary.

And on one day each year, history steps off the screen entirely. **August 1st** in Warsaw marks the anniversary of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising — one of the most courageous chapters of Poland's history, and the largest resistance operation in German-occupied Europe. This tour brings you to Warsaw on that very day. At **5 p.m. — known as "W-Hour"** — sirens sound across the capital, traffic halts, and the entire city falls still for a minute of remembrance.

The day continues with the *Varsovians Sing (Un)Forbidden Songs* concert at Pilsudski Square. Beginning at 8:30 p.m., thousands gather with an orchestra to sing the songs of the Uprising — a tradition that turns memory into a living, shared voice.

PRICING

TOUR DATE	DOUBLE OCCUPANCY	SINGLE OCCUPANCY
22/Jul/2027 - 3/Aug/2027	3734 EUR / per person	4540 EUR / per person

Friends & Family Saver

Book this tour for at least 4 people to receive a **10% discount for each participant**. [Terms & conditions](#)

Promotional pricing: If a tour is offered at a promotional price, the discount is available only to customers who have not previously booked the same tour. If another discount is available for the selected tour date (for example, the Friends & Family Saver), the discounts cannot be combined; in such cases, the higher discount will be applied. The discount applies only to reservations made directly on www.staypoland.com and does not apply to bookings made through travel agents or third-party platforms. The order of visits may vary. Accommodation in a triple room — subject to availability. The tour is not recommended for people with disabilities.

Prices may vary due to currency exchange rate fluctuations. Current prices are always available at:
<https://www.staypoland.com/tour/223/ii-world-war-trail-in-poland-tour>

INCLUDED IN PRICE

- hotel accommodation as described or similar
- hotel breakfast
- transport as per the itinerary (air-conditioned premium motorcoach, minibus, or van)
- experienced driver
- parking fees

- professional English-speaking tour escort throughout
- 5 dinners and 2 lunches — all three-course set-menu meals with water included
- sightseeing tours as per the itinerary, with local or museum guides where required
- admission fees in Gdansk: Museum of the Second World War
- admission fees in Lodz: Museum of Polish Children – Victims of Totalitarianism
- admission fees in Zagan: Stalag Luft 3 Sagan Museum
- admission fees in Krakow: Schindler's Factory, the Home Army Museum
- admission fees in Warsaw: Warsaw Rising Museum, Mausoleum of Struggle and Martyrdom, Jewish Cemetery, the Zabinski family villa
- guided tours of Westerplatte, Wolf's Lair, the Explozeum Museum, the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz-Birkenau, KL Plaszow, and the Podgorze district of Krakow
- Chopin piano concert, with a glass of wine included
- city tax where required
- information booklet
- tour organization and travel documents

NOT INCLUDED IN PRICE

- tour headsets — 9 PLN per person per day, added to the tour price for groups of 12 or more
- airfare
- airport transfers
- departure transfers
- travel insurance
- gratuities for your tour escort, driver, local guides — optional but appreciated

ITINERARY

Day 1

A City That Changed the World

Morning:

Independent arrivals in Gdansk; check-in at the hotel.

Afternoon & Evening:

At approximately 4 p.m., meet and greet your tour leader and fellow travelers in the hotel lobby. Following a short introduction, you will enjoy a **guided walk through Gdansk's Old**

Town. The walk concludes with a welcome dinner.

Gdansk changed the course of history twice in the 20th century. In 1939, **the first shots of World War II in Europe were fired at the nearby Westerplatte Peninsula**. Decades later, it was here that a new Poland began to emerge, sparked by the combined efforts of the Solidarity movement and St. Pope John Paul II — a transformation that would ripple across the entire region.

Day 2

Tracing the Beginnings of WWII

Morning:

After breakfast, we begin the day with a **guided visit to the Westerplatte Peninsula** — the site of the first battle of World War II. There, we'll walk among the preserved ruins of the defenders' barracks and guardhouses.

It was here, on September 1, 1939 at 4:45 a.m., that the German pre-dreadnought battleship *Schleswig-Holstein* opened fire on the Polish military outpost. Although expected to hold out for only a few hours, **the Polish garrison of around 200 men resisted the German forces for seven days**, delaying the enemy's advance and gaining time for Poland's defense. Their stand is remembered as one of the war's first acts of heroism.

Afternoon & Evening:

Later, we will visit the **Museum of the Second World War — one of the most modern museums in Europe**. Its architecture and design immerse visitors in the wartime experience, beginning with a descent into bunker-like exhibition levels that trace the human cost and consequences of the global conflict.

The remainder of the day is free for your own exploration.

Day 3

Inside the Wolf's Lair

Morning:

After breakfast, we depart on a **full-day excursion to the Wolf's Lair**, located near the village of Gierloz. This remote, forested area once served as Adolf Hitler's eastern headquarters during World War II.

It was here that he directed operations on the Eastern Front and **survived the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, later portrayed in the film *Valkyrie***. At its peak, the complex included fifty bunkers, its own power system, an airstrip, a railroad terminus, and even a cinema. During excavations in 2019, new artifacts were uncovered, adding to the site's historical significance.

Afternoon & Evening:

After exploring the grounds, we stop for dinner at a local restaurant on our way back to Gdansk.

Day 4

Exploseum: Inside Hitler's Secret Factory

Morning:

After breakfast, we leave Gdansk and head south to Lodz, stopping en route near **Bydgoszcz** to visit the former German explosives factory known as DAG Fabrik Bromberg, now the **Exploseum Museum**.

This was one of Hitler's secret industrial facilities, where the Reich produced explosives such as nitroglycerin, TNT, and nitrobenzene, used in German weapons including V1 flying bombs. The museum presents an **interactive exhibition located in the original factory buildings**, tracing the history of arms and weapons, as well as acts of resistance, conspiracy, and sabotage that took place within the facility.

Afternoon & Evening:

After the visit, we continue to **Lodz**, where we stay overnight. The evening is free for your own exploration.

Day 5

Little Auschwitz and the Lodz Ghetto

Morning:

We begin the day in Lodz with a visit to the **Museum of Polish Children - Victims of Totalitarianism**. Known as the "Little Auschwitz", this German Nazi concentration camp for children was established on the edge of the Lodz Ghetto, where thousands of Polish children were imprisoned, abused, and killed. The museum honors the memory of these young victims and tells the story of the cruelty inflicted upon them during World War II.

Next, we visit the **Radegast Station**, which served as both the arrival point for Jews deported from across the Reich and the final point of departure for those sent from the Lodz Ghetto to extermination camps. Our guided tour continues with a stop at the **Litzmannstadt Ghetto Monument and the Survivors' Park**.

Afternoon & Evening:

In the afternoon, we travel to Wroclaw for an overnight stay. Enjoy a relaxing evening.

Day 6

The Great Escape

Morning:

We set out on a day trip to Zagan to visit the site of **Stalag Luft III**, the prisoner-of-war camp where **one of the most daring escapes of World War II took place**.

Built in 1942, the camp was the setting for the **mass breakout later immortalized in the film *The Great Escape***. At the Stalag Luft III Museum, we will see the reconstructed barracks and the preserved remains of the escape tunnels known as Tom, Dick, and Harry, dug by Allied airmen.

It is a truly sobering location — a powerful reminder that freedom is not free.

Afternoon & Evening:

We drive back to Wroclaw. The rest of the day is yours to enjoy at leisure.

Day 7

The Symbol of the Holocaust

Morning:

We continue our journey with a visit to **Auschwitz & Birkenau** en route to Krakow. This site has become **the symbol of the Holocaust** — the place where the German Nazis deported at least 1.3 million people, representing 20 nationalities, mainly Jews and Poles. When humanity plumbed the depths of depravity, it also reached the heights of heroism. One such example is **Saint Maximilian Kolbe, remembered as a "martyr of charity"**. Another is the **resistance hero who infiltrated Auschwitz — Polish army officer Witold Pilecki**, whose reports from inside the camp were among the earliest firsthand accounts of Nazi atrocities to reach the Western Allies. Thousands of others could be named.

Afternoon & Evening:

We continue to Krakow for an overnight stay.

Day 8

Schindler and Plaszow: Stories of Survival

Morning:

We begin the day in **Krakow's Podgorze district**. Metal chairs scattered all over **Ghetto Heroes Square**, the main place for the deportation of Krakow's Jews, will not let you pass without remembering its terrible past. Few Jews managed to escape from the ghetto; **Roman Polanski, the Oscar-winning filmmaker**, is a well-known example.

We visit the **exhibition at Schindler's Factory**, which tells the story of Krakow under German occupation between 1939 and 1945. **Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List** brought this story to a global audience. The German industrialist arrived in Krakow in hope of making profits. In the end though, he saved the lives of more than a thousand Polish Jews by employing them in his factories.

Afternoon:

A Powerful Memorial and Site of Reflection

We continue the day at the **KL Plaszow Memorial Museum**, the former German Nazi Forced Labor and Concentration Camp (1942–1945).

Evening:

The balance of the day is at leisure.

Day 9

Acts of Courage: The Polish Underground

Morning:

We begin the day at the **Home Army Museum**, named after **General August Emil Fieldorf "Nil"**. The Polish Underground State, with the Polish Home Army at its forefront, was the largest in all of occupied Europe, covering both German and Soviet zones of occupation. It is most notable for disrupting German supply lines to the Eastern Front, providing military intelligence to the British, and for saving more Jewish lives in the Holocaust than any other Western Allied organization or government.

General August Emil Fieldorf "Nil" was one of the most distinguished leaders of the Polish Underground State and a victim of postwar communist persecution, often counted among the

"Cursed Soldiers". During WWII, he was the commander of **Kedyw (Directorate of Sabotage and Diversion)** of the Home Army (AK). Under his command, Kedyw carried out sabotage and assassination operations against high-ranking German officials, including the successful 1944 assassination of SS-Brigadeführer Franz Kutschera, the SS and Police Leader of the Warsaw District.

General August Emil Fieldorf "Nil" was executed on February 24, 1953. The search for the remains of the legendary Polish Home Army commander is still ongoing.

Afternoon & Evening:

The rest of the afternoon is free for your own exploration.

Day 10

The City of Two Uprisings

Morning:

After breakfast, we check out and **transfer by bus to Warsaw**. The history of the city provokes powerful emotions in every visitor. Many renowned filmmakers have made Warsaw their setting.

A notable example of this is *The Pianist* by Roman Polanski — a WWII Holocaust drama about human resilience, and the beauty and power of music to overcome sheer adversity. It tells the true story of **Wladyslaw Szpilman**, the renowned Polish-Jewish pianist and composer, and his unlikely survival under German Nazi control in Warsaw. The movie won three Academy Awards in 2003.

Afternoon & Evening:

Brave And Desperate

Warsaw is the city of two uprisings which have deeply marked the identity of Poles and Jews, and played a critical role in shaping historical consciousness. Moving statues mark the **Ghetto Uprising of 1943**, and the **Warsaw Uprising of one year later**, regarded as the biggest resistance operation in German Nazi-occupied Europe. As an attempt to achieve its goals, the

uprising was a failure, but it was also a remarkable success in showing the courage of the Polish nation. Every year at 5 p.m. (W-Hour) on August 1st, sirens go off in the Polish capital, and traffic stops throughout the city for a minute's remembrance, to pay tribute to the heroes of Warsaw.

We visit the **Warsaw Rising Museum**, which captures the experience of the uprising brilliantly. It immerses you in the streets of 1940s Warsaw. The hopes, the fears, the desire for freedom, and the ultimate despair of defeat are all there. Floor after floor is full of fascinating items, photos, artifacts, leaflets and videos. *The City of Ruins*, a silence-inducing 5-minute 3D aerial film, recreates a picture of the desolation of 'liberated' Warsaw in March 1945. A replica of a Liberator B-24J bomber is also on view.

Following the fall of the uprising, the Germans set about systematically leveling the city. The ones who stayed in the capital for the months ahead sheltered in their basements, each an island in the ocean of ruins. They have been called Warsaw 'Robinson Crusoes'. The most well-known one was Wladyslaw Szpilman.

Finally, we walk through the **Old Town**, the symbol of Warsaw's rebirth, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The evening is yours at leisure.

Day 11

Rather Die Than Betray The Cause

Morning:

The Gestapo HQ

This day we explore **25 Szucha Avenue** — a place where the walls say more than many monuments. The building served as the Gestapo headquarters for the Warsaw district, and its basement held the interrogation cells where thousands of Poles, Jews, and people of other nationalities were tortured and killed. After the war, the **Mausoleum of Struggle and Martyrdom** was established here. It is one of the few places in Warsaw where cells with inscriptions carved by prisoners have survived almost intact. These are not just words — they are testimony. Lights, sounds, and true stories bring the horror of the times to life.

Wladyslaw Szpilman's Hideout

It is not far from there to the tenement house at **223 Niepodleglosci Avenue**, where Wladyslaw Szpilman was found by a German officer, Wilm Hosenfeld. A commemorative plaque dedicated to the composer was hung on the wall of the building. The ceremony was attended by Wilm's daughter, Jorinde Hosenfeld-Krejci, and Andrzej Szpilman, Wladyslaw's son.

Afternoon:

We also visit the **Umschlagplatz**, where Jews gathered for deportation to the Treblinka extermination camp. It was here that Szpilman saw his family for the last time. By sheer chance he escaped the transport and eluded capture, eventually surviving the war hidden in the ruins of post-Uprising Warsaw.

The Good Doctor of Warsaw — Janusz Korczak and the Orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto

One of the most moving places in the Jewish Cemetery is the memorial to **Dr. Janusz Korczak**, one of World War II's quiet heroes. An educator and writer, he refused to abandon the children of his orphanage. He accompanied them to Treblinka extermination camp, where they all perished. As Szpilman wrote, "Korczak's true value was not in what he wrote, but that he lived as he wrote."

Irena Sendler — One of the Righteous Among the Nations

At Powazki Cemetery, we visit the grave of **Irena Sendler**, a social worker and nurse who saved 2,500 Jewish children from extermination. She organized a network to smuggle children out of the Warsaw Ghetto, finding hiding places in homes, convents, and orphanages. Her story was famously brought to international attention by Kansas students in the late 1990s, through their project and play, *Life in a Jar*.

Evening:

This evening, just steps from the hotel on Pilsudski Square, we recommend **joining the Varsovians Sing (Un)Forbidden Songs concert**. Each year on August 1st, the anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising, thousands of residents gather with an orchestra to sing the songs that once carried hope through the occupation — melodies that were banned under German rule and sung in secret. Among the crowd are Uprising veterans themselves, the last living witnesses to the events you have traced all week. There are no spectators here, only participants: lyrics are handed out, and the whole square joins in. It is one of those rare

moments when history stops being something to observe and becomes something to share.

Day 12

Music That Saved Lives

Morning:

Stories of Survival: The Zookeeper and the Pianist

We begin the day at the villa on the grounds of the Warsaw Zoo. "**The House Under A Wacky Star**" will introduce us to the story of the **Zabinski family**. Their wartime aid to Jews was the subject of the production *The Zookeeper's Wife*, directed by Niki Caro.

In wartime Warsaw, the wife of the Zoo's director spotted Nazis approaching the white stucco villa where she and her family lived. According to plan, she went straight to her piano and began to play a lively tune by Jacques Offenbach — a signal to Jews being sheltered in the house that they should be quiet and not leave their hiding places. She played Chopin when the coast was clear.

"A haven", "an ark" — these are words used to describe the Zoo by those who survived WWII there. We will tour the house with the basement chambers, see the piano Antonina played, and the tunnels where those escaping the Holocaust hid.

Afternoon:

The afternoon is free for your own exploration.

Evening:

Musical Evening: The Pianist And The Power Of Music

The culmination of *The Pianist* is in Szpilman's miraculous rescue by the German Wehrmacht officer Wilm Hosenfeld, who found a defenseless Jewish man in the ruins of Warsaw. One of the questions put by the officer was: "What do you do?", which Szpilman answered: "I am a pianist." After that, he played Chopin for him. Entranced by Szpilman's performance, Hosenfeld helped him to survive.

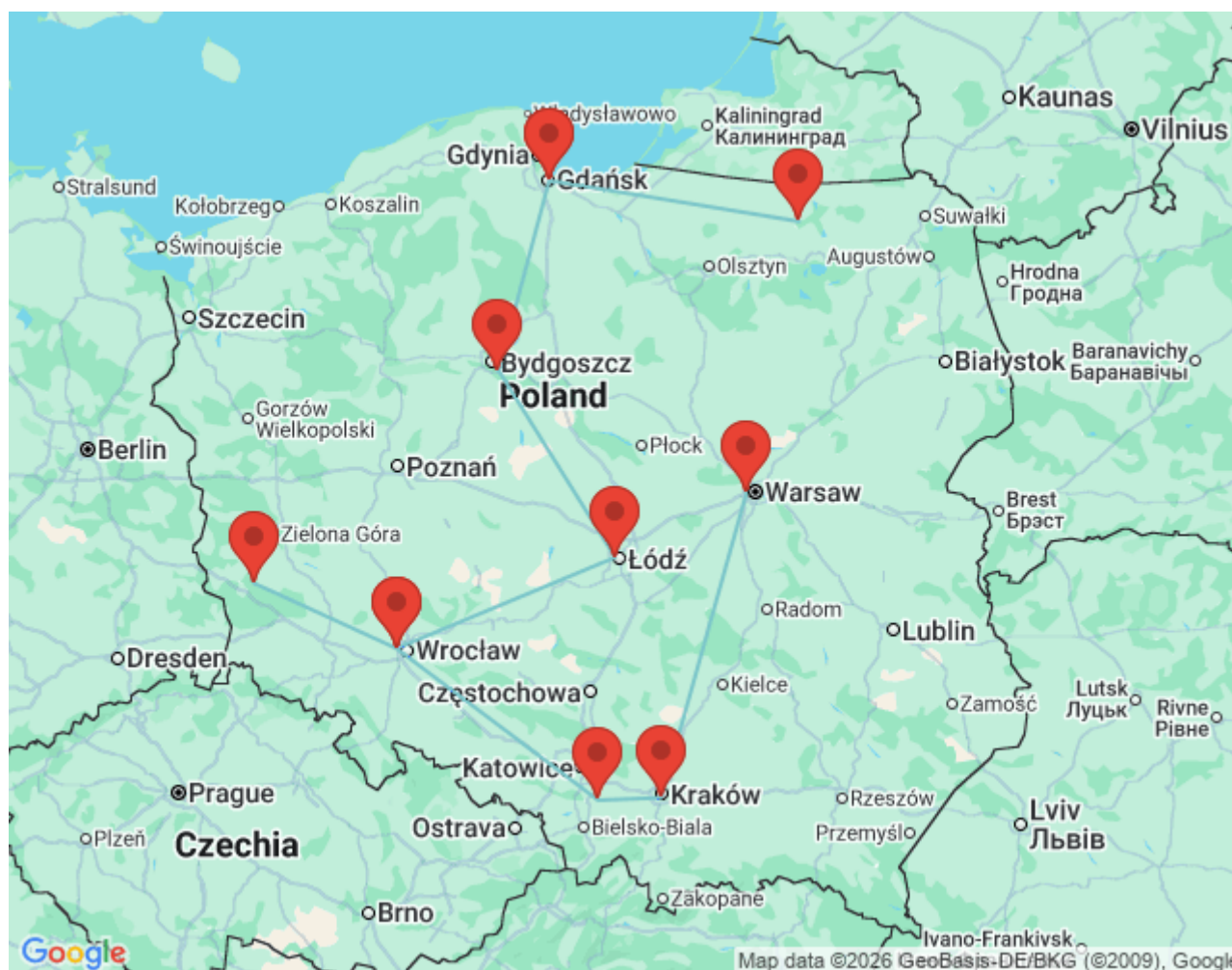
After the war, Szpilman served as director of Polish Radio's music department. He was the last to play on the airwaves of Polish Radio in 1939 and the first to play in 1945.

Chopin's music still connects souls across the centuries. We will enter the **world of Chopin's creations**, which have earned him the title of "the Poet of the Piano".

Day 13

End of the Journey

After breakfast, independent transfers to Warsaw Chopin Airport for your departure flight.



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