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The Museum of the History of Toruń will allow you to learn about the city's history from the very ancient past to the times when your grandparents and parents were born. We start our journey in the period when the area of today's Toruń was inhabited by reindeer – the same ones that pull Santa's sleigh.

CHIVALROUS AND SOLDIERING

As you probably already know, Toruń was founded by the Teutonic Knights. They built the first castle at the edge of the emerging state, which soon would become a major European power. Above the ruins of the stronghold looms the Gdansk Tower – a toilet tower. A priceless luxury, the Teutonic Knights did not have to bother flushing, because this one did it all automatically: at the foot of the tower flowed, and still flows, a stream. The medieval toilet can be visited today, although unfortunately it is not in use anymore. The real tough guys will be excited to find out about the castle dungeon ghosts (no, really!), and in the well in the courtyard you can spot a skeleton.

On the other side of the Vistula, right off the Piłsudski bridge, you will find the ruins of another castle. Dybowski Castle is the only remnant of Nieszawa – a competing city that annoyed the Toruń merchants a great deal. Eventually Nieszawa was demolished and rebuilt forty kilometres away; everything at Toruń's request. You will learn the little-known details of everyday life in the times of King Jagiełło from the Adventure Guild that operates around the castle. Try your hand at archery, and get to know the life of the people that ran this medieval stronghold.

What went on during a war in a bombarded city? Fear, chaos, cramped huddling, and terrible explosions. That's how you'll feel when you visit the Bunker-Wisła next to the river. A place for determined and courageous people. Remember: there is no shame in admitting that you're scared.

One hundred fifty years ago, Toruń became a large fortress on the border between two empires – the Prussian and the Russian one. A walk through the dark and mysterious corridors of a huge fort, lit only by torches, allows you to better feel the atmosphere of those years. Your guide will be a Prussian soldier. Try to persuade your parents to agree to spend the night in the barracks! Of the two hundred remaining buildings of Toruń's fortifications, only Fort IV is suitable for safe, family sightseeing. The rest lie waiting for explorers and born risk-takers.

THE RIVERSIDE

The Queen of Polish Rivers flows through Toruń. In the past, it was thanks to the Vistula that the city grew rich and powerful. Today it is one of the biggest attractions and an impressive, scenic place to spend your free time. Even if you're not an angler, thanks to the river you will experience something beautiful.

Between the Old Town and the Kępa Bazarowa (the island in the river), „Katarzynka” is sailing – a tiny ferry. If you are not in a hurry for the train, you can get from the Old Town to the main Railway Station in this original way. Between two bridges – the Marshall Józef Piłsudski road bridge and the railway bridge – „Wanda” sails, a sigh-seeing boat with a deck built for scores of visitors.

Philadelphia Boulevard – the riverside promenade – is a favourite place for walks of Torunians and their guests. At the mouth of the Bridge Gate stands a platform reminiscent of the oldest river crossing in Toruń. Right opposite, on the bank of the Kępa Bazarowa, there is another platform with the most beautiful view of the city's skyline.

The western edge of the Boulevard and the marina area have been turned into a city beach. Sports courts, a playground and an outdoor gym are also situated here.



TORUŃ

FOR KIDS

GINGERBREAD

Famous for its gingerbread, the city enjoys unflagging popularity, spice-wise. The crowds of people who want to bake and keep a peppery souvenir increase each year. Fortunately, we can propose several places where this dream will come true! The Living Museum of Gingerbread invites you to an adventure that will live on in your memory. The original scenario allows you to play the role of an apprentice, and, under the watchful eye of the master, you will personally bake that treat. In the Museum of Toruń Gingerbread, next to the baking, it's worth checking out the collection of exhibits that evoke even the oldest traditions of this craft. Gingerbread was baked from the fourteenth century onwards, and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a period of strong competition in this spicy market. The shapes and detail on the greatest manufacturers' „pierniki” will prove neat and original keepsakes. In addition to the museums, there is also a group of easily-found smaller gingerbread houses in the Old Town. On Żeglarska Street alone, there are several gingerbread shops. You can also buy them on the Old Town Square, in Piekary and Kopernika Street. And if you overeat on gingerbread, the excess calories should be burned off, and how — in Gingerbread Town; where a fancifully arranged playground will encourage even parents to get moving.

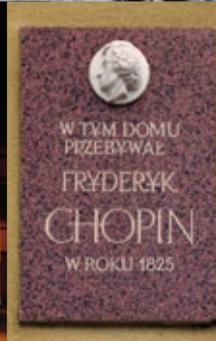
GO ANIMALISTIC

On the west side of the Old Town Hall, a rafter stands surrounded by frogs. Today, few people remember what the rafters were all about, although they were still a colourful and loud element of the city landscape less than a century ago. Their work consisted in floating timber on the Vistula and on other rivers. At a time when the Vistula had traffic jams almost like today's motorways at the beginning and the end of the holiday season (this was half a millennium ago), Toruń was hit by a terrible misfortune: a plague of frogs! Because the desperate mayor could not cope, he asked one of the young rafters for help, who began to play his violin, which interested the croaking invaders. They followed him out of the city and settled in the wetlands. As a reward for this daring act, the mayor gave his daughter to the raftsmen, to wed, and for the two youngsters' start in life — a pot of golden ducats. All boys who plan to have wonderful and wise wives should kiss all the frogs at the foot of the statue.

Having the rafter behind us, and the Town Hall on the left, do look up: on the roof of one of the tenement houses, the biggest cat hero in the city's history lurks. When in 1629 the Swedes approached the city walls, Toruń's army gained an ally in an obese tomcat, never before suspected of having a soldier's cunning. The cat scratched the faces of the uninvited guests and forced the Swedes to retreat. After this amazing feline success story, part of the northern fortifications of the city were renamed in its honour, and so there were three towers, named Cat's Head, Cat's Paws, and Cat's Belly, the first of which still stands today.

The dog you can pet on the corner of the Market Square and Chelmińska Street is the hero of a once popular picture story. Filuś, because that's his name, belongs to Professor Filutek. He holds his owner's bowler hat in his mouth, and the professor's umbrella is leaning against the lantern. Zbigniew Lengren — a cartoonist who graduated from the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń — invented this famous and funny duo.

On Przedzamcze Street, just above the tiny stream called Struga Toruńska, Toruń's dragon scowls and glares. Although this monster was only two meters long, he copied the dragon of Cracow's Wawel when he seriously frightened the life out of some local people in 1746. The scary thing is that this isn't just a legend, because the official city chronicles mentions the event. It is entirely possible that the descendants of the creature still live in Toruń.



It is worth seeing how animals were depicted centuries ago. In the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the feet of St. Christopher a fish and a lobster were painted more than six hundred years ago. In the Cathedral of St. John, one of the tombstones shows a dog and a squirrel. A golden lion guards over the entrance to the New Town Square pharmacy.

These days, a sweet donkey brings only happy thoughts. But to the Torunians of the past, it brought to mind shame, and a painful bottom. The donkey served as a pillory — a place where public punishment was administered. Those who broke the law had to sit on it for up to twelve hours! The slimmer criminals had extra weights tied to their legs so that the metal blade made sitting extremely uncomfortable. Apart from the hurt, the shame was terrible, since the whole city would laugh and point at the donkey-sitter on the square.

The donkeys living in Toruń's zoo are a lot nicer. Animals have been added to the oldest botanical garden in Poland — more than two hundred years old. It's well worth visiting the birdhouse and the reptile collection. Be sure to also meet the lynx, the bears, wildcats and bison. The visitors' favourites include the restless meerkats, the famous Madagascar lemurs, the pygmy marmoset, the Indian muntjacs, and the small Bennett's tree kangaroos.

Near the zoo, in front of the entrance to the State Forests office, two stone bears stand proudly. One of them is a female, the other a male, which you can recognise by his pinned-back ears.

THEATRICAL

If you dream of becoming a famous actor or actress, take your first steps on the stage of the Toruń House of Legends. It's a kind of theatre where all the guests become players! Your performance will show a journey through the history of the city — from the very beginning, when the Teutonic Knights built a huge tree house to observe the whole area. The braver among you will play the knights, and someone will become king, someone else the belfry in the cathedral tower. The story also needs a rafter who will save the city from the frog plague. Finally, you'll have the opportunity to lock your mum in a cage and put dad in the stocks.

The Baj Pomorski theatre has hosted young and old lovers of puppet shows for over seventy years. The building itself resembles a huge chest of drawers, in which the most beautiful fairy tales are hidden. In the wooden frames decorating the façade you will find the heroes of well-known fairy tales. Will you recognize them all?

MUSICAL

When Frédéric Chopin was barely fifteen, he visited Toruń and the surrounding area, spending his holidays here. A plaque on the wall of the house at Mostowa Street where he stayed, reminds us of this. Although he visited the greatest monuments of the city, he wrote in a letter to a friend: „What made the greatest impression on me was the gingerbread”. The young composer also gave concerts in the surrounding manors — in Szafarnia, Turzno, and Kikole.

ASTRONOMICAL / SCIENTIFIC

You certainly know who Nicolaus Copernicus was. Apparently, every child carries an astrolabe in his backpack and it is only a matter of time before you, too, will become a well-known scientist! The father of Nicolaus Copernicus, also called Nicholas, was a wealthy man. The Copernicus family had several houses, so it is not completely proven in which of them the astronomer came into this world. However, the tenement house called the Copernicus House is really worth a visit. Imagine that this huge brick building is... a single-family house! Rich merchants (Nicholas Senior was the one who did the hard work) put up houses that fulfilled several functions. Above all, they were an excellent showcase for their prospering business. The house, apart from the obvious function of

living in it, was also a warehouse and an office. It was here that contractors were accepted — people with whom business was done. The Copernicus House contains an exhibition devoted to Nicholas, the astronomer.

To find out which star is which — and even that some bright objects seen in the sky are in fact other planets of our Solar System — go to the Planetarium. The Planetarium is a kind of cinema in which the film is displayed on the ceiling. This is a rather unusual ceiling; imagine the inside of a humongous ball cut in half — that's how it looks. In the Planetarium, as in the cinema, there are various shows on offer. Be sure to check out the repertoire to choose what you are particularly interested in.

Astronomy is just one of the passions and strengths of Copernicus. Renaissance Men and Women, because that's what people who have many interests and talents are called, should visit the Centre of Modernity Mill of Knowledge. Understand yourself and the world around you — physics, chemistry and mathematics are fully interactive here!

ACTIVE

The best idea to actively learn about Toruń is to sight-see „from the saddle”. The Toruń City Bike system, with many stations located around the city, allows for efficient and pleasant travel.

On these bikes, you can easily get to the Olender water park in Wielka Nieszawka, for example, with a rushing river, water jets, geysers and, of course, a slide that is over eighty meters long! And for youngest tourists there is the toddler zone, where the water is one foot deep.

A smaller water park can be visited in Stawki — on the left-bank part of Toruń, quite close to the Main Railway Station.

It is worth replacing the local bus with a bike also on the way to Barbarka. Probably no other place in Toruń is so suited for a Sunday afternoon break and a bonfire accompanied by family and friends. In this forest settlement you will look at birds and squirrels at their level — all because of a spectacular rope park high up among the trees.

MUSEUMS

Imagine a village from the time of your ancestors. Wooden houses with thatched roofs, wicker fences and old roadside shrines. You will not find such a village in the countryside anymore — you will find it in the centre of a big city! The open-air Ethnographic Museum is just a few steps from the Old Town. Visiting the windmill, it's easier to grasp how bread comes from flour and not from the shop.

Parents get angry sometimes when you get up to something. When they call you a troublemaker, remember Tony Halik — a traveller from Toruń. A born adventurer, he ran away from home at only fourteen, to embark on a raft sailing to Gdańsk. In his long life he was a pilot, a camera operator, and the photographer of Juan Peron — ask your parents about Don't Cry for Me Argentina (sung by Madonna). Halik was a bridge builder, the inventor of an improvised washing machine, and above all: a globetrotter. The Travellers' Museum lets you feel a part of his adventures.

Where does paper come from? Much better to see than to explain! You will learn about how paper and later printing revolutionized our lives in the Museum of Literature and Printing. Those who fill their notebooks badly will get a solid lesson in calligraphy. It all takes place in the interior of the Gothic village church of Grębocin.