

# Wieliczka

## Salt - the white gold

The city of Wieliczka has 18 thousand inhabitants and is situated 15 km from Cracow. Its Salt Mine, founded at the beginning of 13th, is the oldest salt company of Poland. In the year 1978 it was put on the UNESCO world heritage list. Over centuries Wieliczka Salt was the wealth source and material cultural basis of Poland. They called salt the white gold. But today no more rock salt is mined, only evaporated salt is produced in Wieliczka. There is no great need for the ancient white gold because Wieliczka's Salt Mine is now the most often visited tourist place of Poland with more than 1 million visitors yearly. They all want to see the tourist route with its chambers, chapels and salt figures.

## Excavation area, Chambers

The salt mining, lasting about 700-years, created countless cavities and excavated areas. So under the city nine levels are hidden reaching a depth of 327 metres. The subterranean Wieliczka contains about 300 km (190 miles) of excavation area and 3000 chambers. However, the tourist route encloses only a 2,5 km (1,6 miles) distance and gradually goes down from 64 to 134 metres (210 feet to 440 feet). The first 370 steps down the Danilowicz shaft to the first level can be avoided by taking the lift for an extra fee.

## Salt sculptures, St. Kinga Chapel

Attractions like salt sculptures, marvellous subterranean lakes, authentic mining equipment, traces of the salt mining, the wonderful holy Kinga chapel show the faith and passion of the Wieliczka miners. They left a vast amount of sculptures and reliefs whose most famous is the Last Supper Relief after Leonardo da Vinci. Nowadays conferences, parties, weddings, banquettes are organised in the Salt Mine Wieliczka. There is also a sanitarium because the salty air is particularly good for people with respiratory diseases and allergies.