Praga (not only) for beginners

Filip Makowiecki
Warsaw citizen by choice, an avid cyclist, fan of Zoliborz and Praga.

Mysterious alleys, trendy clubs, greenery and street art.

Full of surprising places, Praga is a gem of Warsaw. Here, you can truly feel the atmosphere of the capital’s history.

Some people say that Praga Północ can be narrowed down to only two major streets: 11 Listopada and Zabkowska. This is not true. The whole quarter is a beguiling place for sightseeing or – what I recommend the most – disorderly exploration, since by simply following the map, you will certainly miss some noteworthy sculptures of heavenly angels, murals, and Marian shrines.

Start your trip at Plac Wilenski. Then follow Wilenska and Inzynierska streets. Walking along the latter, you will see numerous remains of the old days, including the historical building of the former Joint-Stock Company for the Storage and Transportation of Furniture and Goods, A. Wroblewski. Reach 11 Listopada Street and turn right to get to Praga’s popular clubbing area. It is worth coming back here in the evening. Now, however, head towards Konopacka Street and continue until Stalowa Street. They may not look like much, but you are actually walking down the cheapest streets in the Polish edition of Monopoly.

If your heart is beating faster at the sight of the old industrial buildings, you will love a walk along Szwedzka Street. Next, continue until Solidarnosci Avenue, cross the street and ask for directions to the Basilica on Kaweczynska Street. Along the way, you will have an opportunity to step into an inconspicuous bar called Praski Kociolek, which offers the best potato pancakes with stew in Warsaw. Continue down Kaweczynska Street until Zabkowska Street where on your right you will notice the prominent buildings of the former Koneser Vodka Distillery. Today, an innovative Google Campus is based there, while designer lofts are under construction. You will soon enter a completely different world, namely Brzeska Street, reportedly the spookiest street in Warsaw.

Once on Kijowska Street, turn left and go through the tunnel of the modernistic Warsaw East Station. Head towards Minska Street to SOHO, another example – after Koneser – of how the red-brick Praga district has been revitalised. On the way, do not miss my two favourite Warsaw murals – the raven and the castle.

On your way back, get to Okrzei Street and continue to walk along Jagiellonska Street. At the corner, you will find classy pubs such as Centrum Zarządzania Swiatem and Bazar, an extension of the bar area on Zabkowska. Take Florianska Street where you can find the Monument of Praga’s Backyard Orchestra, and go past the Cathedral of St Michael the Archangel and Florian the Martyr until you reach Solidarnosci Avenue. On the other side of this street, you will find Praski Park, a paradise for joggers and a little further away, the Zoo.

Now, it is time for our last task: find a giraffe sculpture and pull it by the tail. I tell everyone it brings happiness and ensures many adventures in the Praga district. In fact, I am starting to believe it myself.