

Bielsko-Biała is a city situated in South Poland, Silesia. City came into existence on 1st of January 1951 by joining two cities – Bielsko, which has its origins in XIII century and Biała, founded in XVI century.

Bielsko-Biała is the centre of industry, education, administration, culture and tourism in region known as Podbeskidzie. Bielsko-Biała is one of the best-developed parts of Poland. It was ranked 2nd best city for business in that country by Forbes. About 5% of people are unemployed (compared 9,6% for Poland). Bielsko-Biała is famous for its textile, machine-building, and especially automotive industry.

According to the statistics from 30th of June 2010 Bielsko-Biała has 175 183 inhabitants. It's 23rd

, comparing to other major Polish cities, with area of 124,51km²

, placing it on 18th

place in Poland.

Bielsko-Biała has very diversified terrains within its borders – hills of **Pogórze Śląskie** and mountains:

Beskid Śląski, Beskid Mały

City centre is located on 313m, where the lowest elevation is Stawy Komorowickie on 262m. The highest is the peak of Klimczok mount in Beskid Śląski.

There are 17 mountain peaks within borders of the city, following: Cuberniok, Dębowiec, Górna Równia, Klimczok, Kołowrót, Kopany, Kozia Góra, Łysa Góra, Mokry Groń, Palenica, Pod Błatnią, Przykra, Równia, Stołów, Szyndzielnia, Trzy Kopce.

Bielsko-Biała history formally starts in 1951, but the history of separate cities, which combination gave birth to the city we know today is much longer. Older part of joined city is

Bielsko, founded in XIII century. From XVI century city was focused on production of pottery and cloths. It was the capital city of state country, then turned into duchy. Biała was founded in 1560, as a weavers settlement. In early XIX century, industry started to grow here, in XIX/XX century, Bielsko-Biała region was one of the major industry facility in Austria-Hungary. And this time was the beginning of two cities union, with its final in 1951. Through centuries attribute of the cities were multinational community (Poles, Germans, Jews) and different religions living along (Catholics, Protestants, Jews). All was ended by II World War (in which it luckily avoided several damage). In post-war time, the city was still growing, in 1975-1998 it was the capital of Bielskie province, to become today one of the best prospering city in Poland.

Sights

Although the history of the city begins in XIII century, the majority of historical places came into existence in XIX century. Buildings and monuments are representing wide range of historical styles, with dominant gothic revival, renaissance revival, baroque revival and lesser represented classicism and secession. In the Interwar Period, many modernist architecture buildings were built, in post-war period – socialist realism buildings.

The most interesting includes:

- **Railway station** on Warszawska street, built in 1900, designed by Karol Dorn. It's the pride of the city.
- **Museum** in Sułkowscy castle – located on a city hill, it's one of the oldest constructions in Bielsko-Biała. Its history begins in XII century, when it was defense facility, beginning to grow in XIV century. Its current look was formed in renovation in 1855-1864, which removed its old defensive character.
- **Weavers House** on Sobieski street – it is a unique example of the 18th-century craftsman architecture. It is situated in the Old Uptown in a log cabin with its characteristic hay store. The building is a museum branch belonging to the Museum in Bielsko-Biała.
- **The Museum of Technology and Textile Industry** - a branch of the Museum in Bielsko-Biała - was founded on the 1st January 1979 with the aim of evidencing the traditions of the local wool industry centre by means of collecting machines, devices and documents related to this field of production. Apart from this the Museum also exhibits items connected with firefighting, printing and metal machine industry.

- **Old town** with its picturesque architecture, worth seeing Podcienie street.
- **City hall** – representing renaissance revival architecture, seat of local government.
- **Post office** on 1st of May street. Built in 1898 in style associated to Austrian post office style.

- **Pharmacy “pod Jeleniem”** – founded in 1775, renovated in 1865, it has wooden furniture, with old pharmacy tools exhibit.
- **“President” Hotel** on 3rd of May street. Built in 1893, in renaissance revival style, designed by Karol Korn. Its first name was Hotel Carski (Emperor’s Hotel), in 1922 changed to “President” as a tribute to first Poland’s president – Gabriel Narutowicz.

- **Dom “Pod Żabami”** (Frog House) - an example of art nouveau architecture. It features two frogs seated over the entrance, one smoking a pipe and the other playing a mandolin, while beetles roam freely over the walls.
- **Teatr Polski** (Polish theatre) – stylized on theatres in Vienna and Budapest, built in 1890.

- **St. Michael Cathedral** – catholic church, previously gothic building, suffered from many fires. It was thoroughly renovated in 1908-1910.
- **St. Trinity Church** on Sobieski street. Catholic church, which has its origins in XVI, however, it was rebuilt many times. It has antic St. Anthony painting, XVIII century crucifix, organ from 1883 and many more.
- **Divine Providence church** – catholic baroque church constructed in 1765-1790.
- **Church of the Redeemer** – evangelical church of the Augsburg confession. Constructed in 1782-1790 and rebuilt in gothic revival style 100 years later.

In Bielsko-Biała there are many places where you can eat, rest and have fun. For the ones who like outdoor rest, the major tourist attraction is Cable Car Szyndzielnia, built in 1952. It guarantees great landscapes, also allows to see city’s panorama. For the ones who like walking, there are many walking paths on the suburbs of the city. Favorite place for tourists who like to rest by walking is Straconka, path which leads along the stream Straconka and leads to Magurka Wilkowicka (913m). Another good place to rest is Cygański Las (Gypsy Forest), from where you can start walk towards lower hills of Beskid: Dębowiec (525m) and Kozia Góra (683m).

Everyone will find something for oneself in Bielsko-Biała: mountains, relics, museums, clubs, bars and wide range of restaurants. Bielsko-Biała is situated in Southern region of Silesia, that makes it great base for trips around the area. It has good communication with cities like Cieszyn – 37km, Katowice – 60km, Kraków – 100km, Oświęcim – 37km.

In Bielsko-Biała 100km area there are 3 international airports:

- Kraków-Balice

- Katowice-Pyrzowice

- Ostrava-Mosznów (Czech Republic)