



NOWA HUTA; IDEAL CITY, WITH A SIDE TRIP TO KRAKOW

FAST FACTS		Similar To
Metropolitan Area Population	850,000	
Urban Area Population*	700,000	Zagreb, Mexicali, Shizuoka
Urban Land Area: Square Miles	85	Modesto, Toluca, Nimes, Niigata
Urban Land Area: Square Kilometers	220	
Population per Square Mile	8,200	Aberdeen, Nagoya, Munich
Population per Square Kilometer	3,200	
*Continuously built up area http://www.demographia.com/db-worldua.pdf		

15 March 2006

Nova Huta

The allure for me of Krakow is not the historical core. Nor is it the single-family residences in both the city and the suburbs that have attract so many people from the crowded city, like their counterparts in the United States or Australia. Rather, it is Nowa Huta, the socialist paradise established in the eastern section of the city.

Nowa Huta was developed, starting in the 1950s, as an “ideal” communist city. It was built principally to house the workers at the huge Nowa Huta steel works. Even today, some claim that it is the best example of a Soviet new town. In some ways, it is better than other products of Soviet state architecture. The buildings are lower, averaging five to seven stories, rather than the 15 or more that can typically be seen in Warsaw and other former socialist cities. There are also more trees. Indeed, it is claimed that Nowa Huta has more trees than any other neighborhood in Krakow.

Trees cover a multitude of sins, but all of the trees in the world cannot compensate for the sterile environment of Nova Huta. It is a planner’s work of art. Four large streets radiate from the central square, which extends inward toward the community for two blocks. It is all very orderly and inhumane. However, Nowa Huta is no place to live. All of the buildings are that shade of gray on which communist governments seem to have cornered the market.

The streets are very wide, as is typical of the triumphal streets in Soviet cities. Given their aversion to cars, the extremely wide streets seem out of place. Perhaps the Soviet leaders had

read Mises, whose pre-1917 volume *Socialism* showed that communism would eventually fall of its own weight. Perhaps they were making provision for the inevitable cars that would follow as a post-communist society became more affluent.

Like Warsaw, Nowa Huta has its corner of Solidarity and John Paul II. Indeed, it is at the very core of the city, at the central square. Even the steelworks, originally named for Lenin, have been renamed.

But Nova Huta stands as just another example of state-sponsored architecture gone awry. In the totalitarian Soviet world, everything was absolute, even the architecture. Its regrettable legacy provides an object lesson to be observed as interests seek to establish a state sponsored architecture in American communities (“new urbanism”). It may be time to amend the “establishment” clause of the US Constitution to outlaw government establishment of architectural style as well as establishment of religion.



Krakow

Krakow has one of Europe’s best loved medieval urban cores. Like other European cities, a larger area of public transport oriented urbanization and an even larger area of automobile orientation surround this core. There is an ample supply of large, modern shopping centers, while single-family houses will be found both in the city and in the suburbs.

The Difference between Urban Areas and Museums

Everyone’s favorite place in Poland is Krakow (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-krakow.pdf>). Krakow’s core is more attractive for its medieval architecture, which was preserved in tact because the city was not destroyed in World War II. A small part of the Warsaw core has been rebuilt. Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-katowice.pdf>) is of considerable disinterest to tourists, as an industrial age (post medieval) urban area, more akin to Birmingham, Manchester or Essen-Dusseldorf (<http://www.rentalcartours.net/rac-rrw.pdf>). However, it is an oversimplification to dismiss Warsaw or even Katowice-Gliwice-Tichy as inferior to Krakow. Outside the small historic cores, the urban areas look remarkably similar. The same is true throughout much of Europe. All of the large urban areas have grown far beyond the historic cores.

Thus, when Krakow is praised and Warsaw or Katowice-Gliwice-Tychy dismissed, the commentary focuses on history, not the present. This is, of course, what makes such areas

interesting for tourists. The mistake occurs when tourists, or worse, urban planners return home wanting to remake their cities in a manner that not even Europeans have built for centuries. They see crowded tram cars (street cars) and presume that people have chosen them over automobiles. The truth is that, for the most part, people buy cars as soon as they can afford them.

It is the difference between urban areas and museums. The attractive European cores are outdoor museums that are unrepresentative of how people live on the continent. For decades, virtually all of the growth in European urban areas, as well as Japanese urban areas has been more similar in form to the suburbs of Melbourne or Los Angeles than to the core of Krakow or Barcelona. Anyone interested in seeing the Europe of today can see this reality by driving just a few miles away from the historic cores.

DRIVING IN POLAND

National Speed Limit: The national speed limit outside cities is 90 kilometers per hour (approximately 55 miles per hour).

Motorways or Autoroutes: On motorways or autoroutes the speed limit is 130 kph (81 mph). Traffic moves at 140 to 150 kph and it is not unusual for cars to pass at 160 kph (100 mph). Generally, there are no speed signs except where the speed limit is below 130 kph.

Divided Highways: On four lane divided highways (dual carriageways) Traffic tends to flow at 110 to 120 kph, or 20 to 30 kph above the limit. On four-lane divided highways (not motorways or autoroutes), there are frequent 70 kph zones at crossroads and pedestrian crossings. The police monitor these closely, often sitting to the side of the road, sometimes hidden. There appears to be little patrol on the 90 kph sections. Generally, there are no speed signs except where the speed limit is below 90 kph.

Two-Lane Intercity Roads are not recommended for travel due to heavy truck traffic. A motorway, autoroute or divided highway alternative will often be faster, even if it is longer.

General Comment on Speed Enforcement: Like many European countries, speed enforcement seems to be considerably more lax than in the United States, Canada or Australia. However, being caught at 40 kph or more above the speed limit is considered a serious offence. The best advice on speed is to generally travel no faster than the fastest prevailing traffic, while complying with any speed limit below 90 kph.

<http://www.rentalcartours.net>

<http://www.demographia.com>

<http://www.publicpurpose.com>



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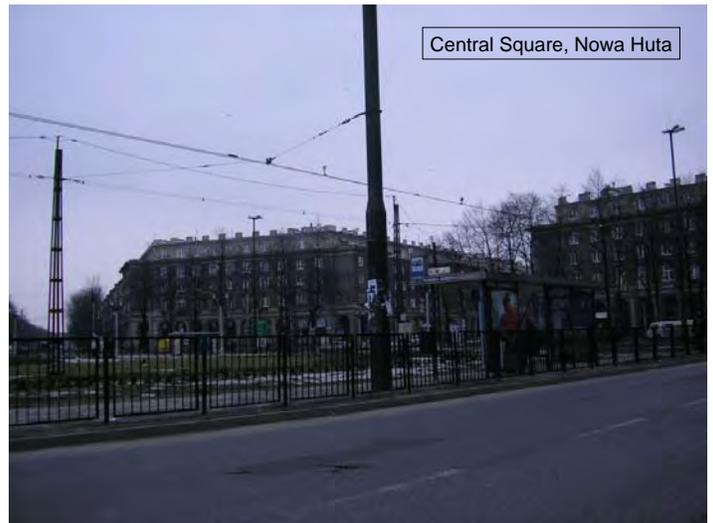
Nowa Huta



Nowa Huta



Nowa Huta



Central Square, Nowa Huta



Nowa Huta



Stalin Meets the Market-I



Stalin Meets the Market-II



Central Square, Nowa Huta



Nowa Huta



Nowa Huta



Church, Nowa Huta



Krakow



Krakow



Krakow



Krakow



Suburbs



Suburbs



Suburbs