

Warsaw dances, grinds and sways to hot rhythms of everything from traditional melodies to sounds from around the world – and no one in the West seems to know about it. That's probably because weekend tourists find this city – destroyed by World War II and neglected by communists – forbidding and are unable to penetrate its cultural underground gems. But Poles are very open to foreigners, especially those with shared interests such as music. Whatever the music, vodka is a common social lubricant here. And it makes striking up friendships and discovering Warsaw's hidden charms even easier.

Since communism ended in 1989, there has been a revival of klezmer and traditional Slavic folk, fused with modern sounds. There is a youthful expectant energy that surrounds the recent return to Polish folk.

Supported by the Polish guru of world music, radio personality Włodzimierz Kleszcz and his determination to "save the music of our people," who nourishes this revival through April's New Tradition Festival. Here voices of Poland's Jewish past resound through the instruments and intonations of groups that fuse sounds and herald the music of the future. Another interesting phenomenon is the extensive popularity of reggae and dancehall in Poland.

Aside from its quaint Old Town, the Vistula River and multitude of parks and tree-lined boulevards recommended in every travel guide, Warsaw may not strike visitors as the most beautiful of cities. For a view into why, those interested in history may take a tour of the multimedia Warsaw Rising Museum (www.1944.pl). On a lighter note, the roof-top park at the University of Warsaw Library on ul. Dobra 56/66 provides a breathtaking view of the Vistula

River while the excellent Biblioteka Restaurant downstairs makes it a perfect site for a romantic date. Warsaw's 17th century Ujazdowski Castle and the Centre for Contemporary Art it houses (ul. Jazdów 2) is worth a visit for the modern art exhibits, a beautiful location and excellent Qchnia Artystyczna restaurant. The adjacent Laboratorium stage books excellent acts – from Japanese noise you would expect to hear at a modern art centre, to folk and independent crossover acts.

Warsaw has a burgeoning club scene, with world music DJs heating up dance floors (especially salsa); but it is festivals that draw the biggest stars and audiences.

In a city which was nearly wiped off the map 60 years ago, there is a tangible enthrallment with both the traditional and modern – apparent in the new and sometimes unexpected musical forms on offer.



Poland's capital is rapidly changing as modernist architecture springs up alongside the historic old town. There's also a burgeoning music scene as Jerry Kamecki discovers

GOING TRAVELLING?

Songlines has now profiled the world music scene in over 30 cities. Check the archive on www.songlines.co.uk

FESTIVALS

Warsaw Cross Cultural Festival

The broadest spectrum of culture-spanning music in downtown Warsaw. The 2007 edition hosted over 40 events with artists from nearly 20 countries.

September (free), Palace of Culture, Plac Defilad, www.festival.warszawa.pl

New Tradition Folk Music Festival

Many success stories from this festival have gone on to forge international careers. Discoveries include Sounds of Times, Kwadronik, and Warsaw Village Band.

April, Polish Radio Witold Lutosławski Koncert Studio, www.polskieradio.pl/rckl/NowaTradycja

Singer's Warsaw – Festival of Jewish Culture

Jewish culture in Warsaw – from classical to klezmer, discussions to dance lessons.

September. Picnics and concerts throughout the city, www.festivalsingera.pl

Mizrach Festival

A small two-day festival mixing Jewish culture in its sacred and profane – featuring traditional and contemporary songs – with avant-garde and jazz.

Square at Zamenhofa and Anielewicz Streets, September, www.jewishmuseum.org.pl

JAZZ FESTIVALS

JVC Jazz Festival/Jazz Jamboree

Europe's oldest jazz festival, now in its 50th year, has brought

names ranging from jazz classics like Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, and Thelonious Monk through to Joshua Redman, Diana Krall, Steve Coleman & Five Elements. Plus world music acts like Richard Bona, Globetrotters and Take 6.

October, throughout the city, www.adamiakjazz.pl

Warsaw Summer Jazz Days

A true jazz feast with many events free of charge. Past headliners have included Belá Fleck, Herbie Hancock, Bill Laswell, Bobby McFerrin, Al Di Meola, Pat Metheny, Vernon Reid, Pharoah Sanders, James



Fabryka Trzciny – post-modernist industrial chic

VENUES

Sala Kongresowa

Regal decor and great acoustics allow big, contemplative shows although the plush seats keep audiences from getting up and dancing. **The Palace of Culture, Plac Defilad 1, +48 22 656 76 00, www.pkin.pl**

Fabryka Trzciny

Great bar and a good restaurant, located in a former shoe factory, Fabryka, with industrial charm. Stars such as Transglobal Underground, Dhafer Youssef and various klezmer musicians have all played here. **ul. Otwocka 14, +48 22 619 05 13, www.fabrykatrzcin.pl**

CDQ (Centralny Dom Kultury)

One of Warsaw's best clubs for alternative music. It has hosted Lee 'Scratch' Perry, Mad Professor and Daara J. A welcome change from Warsaw's commercial bars. **ul. Burakowska, +48 22 636 83 00, www.cdq.pl**

Stodoła

It looks like a high-school gym with grimy walls and cheap beer. By some miracle, Bob Dylan is booked to play there this summer. **ul. Batorego 10, +48 825 60 31 32, www.stodola.pl**

Proxima

This college student hangout hosts

reggae, hardcore and experimental concerts. A little stuffy and smoky, but that can also fuel the energy! **ul. Żwirki i Wigury 99a, +48 22 822 30 03, www.klubproxima.com.pl**

SALSA CLUBS

Warsaw loves to dance to salsa and samba. Rei Ceballo and Noche de

Boleros are two live acts featuring Latino musicians with loyal followings. There is also no shortage of DJ clubs.

Palacio de Salsa – Salsa Fridays

This is Warsaw's longest-running 'social' with all kinds of music for Latin lovers and featuring a proper dance floor. Cover price includes intro dance lesson for basic salsa, *bachata* and *merengue*. **Palace of Culture (ul. Emilli Platter entrance), www.salsafactory.eu**

Tygmont

This is a venerable Warsaw club that usually sticks to blues and jazz, though it does feel a bit dated hosting this music. However it comes alive on Saturdays with salsa – located in Warsaw's 'nightclub valley' so you can change locales depending on your mood. **ul. Mazowiecka 6/8, +48 22 828 34 09, www.tygmont.com.pl**

OTHER CLUBS

Sheesha Lounge

Music from Bollywood and the Levant seems to inspire people to dance on the tables here. Either that or it's the drinks. In either case, this place can be a blast, and is nearby other clubs, so you can take your pick. **ul. Sienkiewicza 3, +48 22 828 25 25, www.sheesha.pl**

LISTINGS

For club and concert listings, check out the print or web versions of the *Warsaw Insider* (www.warsawinsider.pl) or *Aktivist* (www.aktivist.pl).

Competition

WIN
A TRIP TO
WARSAW!



We have a weekend in the Polish capital to give away, including flights and accommodation in a five star boutique hotel. To enter, simply answer the following question:

What is the name of the river running through Warsaw?

See p5 for Songlines competition rules and address. Closing date August 8 2008.

Accommodation at the Warsaw Rialto, a five star boutique hotel situated in the city centre near the airport and city's attractions. Trip includes one night in twin/double room over weekend (Friday or Saturday) until the end of 2008 (subject to availability). Flights with British Airways must originate from London City airport. British Airways now flies to Warsaw from London City airport six times a week. Prize is non-negotiable, non-refundable and has no alternative cash value. BA/Rialto retain right to offer alternative dates. Flights must be booked by October 31 2008 and completed by December 31 2008.

www.rialto.pl

www.ba.com

www.destinationwarsaw.com



Blood Ulmer, Joe Zawinul and John Zorn. **June, throughout the city, www.adamiakjazz.pl**

FESTIVALS OUTSIDE WARSAW

Globaltica – World Culture Festival

This festival is a favourite tourist destination (four hours from Warsaw): the line-up is excellent, the location beautiful and crowds responsive. The 2008 edition includes Sinéad O'Connor, Natacha Atlas, Oi Va Voi (pictured left) and artists from Nigeria, Brazil, Russia, Ireland and Poland.

July 24-28 2008. Gdynia, Park Kolibki, www.globaltica.pl

Ethno Port Poznań

Held on the banks of the picturesque Warta River, the 2008 edition includes Oumou Sangaré, Värttinä, Adama Drame and Panjabi MC.

June, Riverside Park on Czartoria Street, www.zamek.poznan.pl



The concert finale at last year's Warsaw Cross Cultural Festival, featuring Moscow Art Trio, Huun-Huur-Tu and the Angelite Bulgarian Choir