



Kalisz

KALISZ

THE OLDEST CITY IN POLAND





Kalisz

Kalisz is the second largest city in Wielkopolska region, situated in the valley of the Prosna River. Kalisia, as one of the places on the amber route, was mentioned for the first time in the work of the Alexandrian scholar Ptolemy II in the 2nd century A.D. According to the scholars, Kalisia of Ptolemy can be identified with today's Kalisz. Thanks to that Kalisz can be seen as the city with the oldest written record in Polish history.

Its favourable location at the crossroads of the trade routes from the north to the south and from the west to the east of the continent fueled the development of Kalisz and its openness to newcomers representing various peoples, nations, religions and cultures. An early medieval stronghold in Zawodzie (9th/10th-13th century) was one of the greatest Piast town centres. After 1233 a Silesian Duke Henry the Bearded relocated the settlement into a new place north of Zawodzie. Around 1257 prince Bolesław the Pious founded Kalisz in accordance with the Środa law. The city was characterised by a spindle-like layout of two market streets, with cross streets and a rectangular square situated in the centre. This medieval town design has remained until present times.

World War I took a tragic toll on Kalisz. In August 1914 Prussian army obliterated and burnt the city down. 95% of old-town buildings laid in ruins. The city's restoration between 1920s and 1930s was the first such venture nationwide. The old centre was reconstructed according to restoration guidelines, preserving its ancient layout, although historic buildings were not reconstructed. During World War II Kalisz was incorporated into an area called "Warthegau" by the Germans. The Nazi occupation was a period of oppression and discrimination for Kalisz citizens. Post-war years were marked by the development of industry, city infrastructure and sociocultural growth.

Modern Kalisz covers an area of 70 km², with app. 90 thousand residents. Between 1975 and 1998 it was a capital city of Kalisz Voivodeship, while in the new administrative division the city is located in Wielkopolskie Voivodeship. Kalisz enchants with its magic beauty. Here, the past and the present are intertwined and form a unique atmosphere.

TO FIND THE OBJECT PICTURED
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Kalisz

What to see?

The City Hall

The current Kalisz City Hall is actually the third building to serve its role. Constructed between 1920 and 1925, it showcases a Renaissance-style design, crowned by a striking tower with a magnificent clock—truly the heart of the building. This timepiece impresses with its precise mechanical workings.

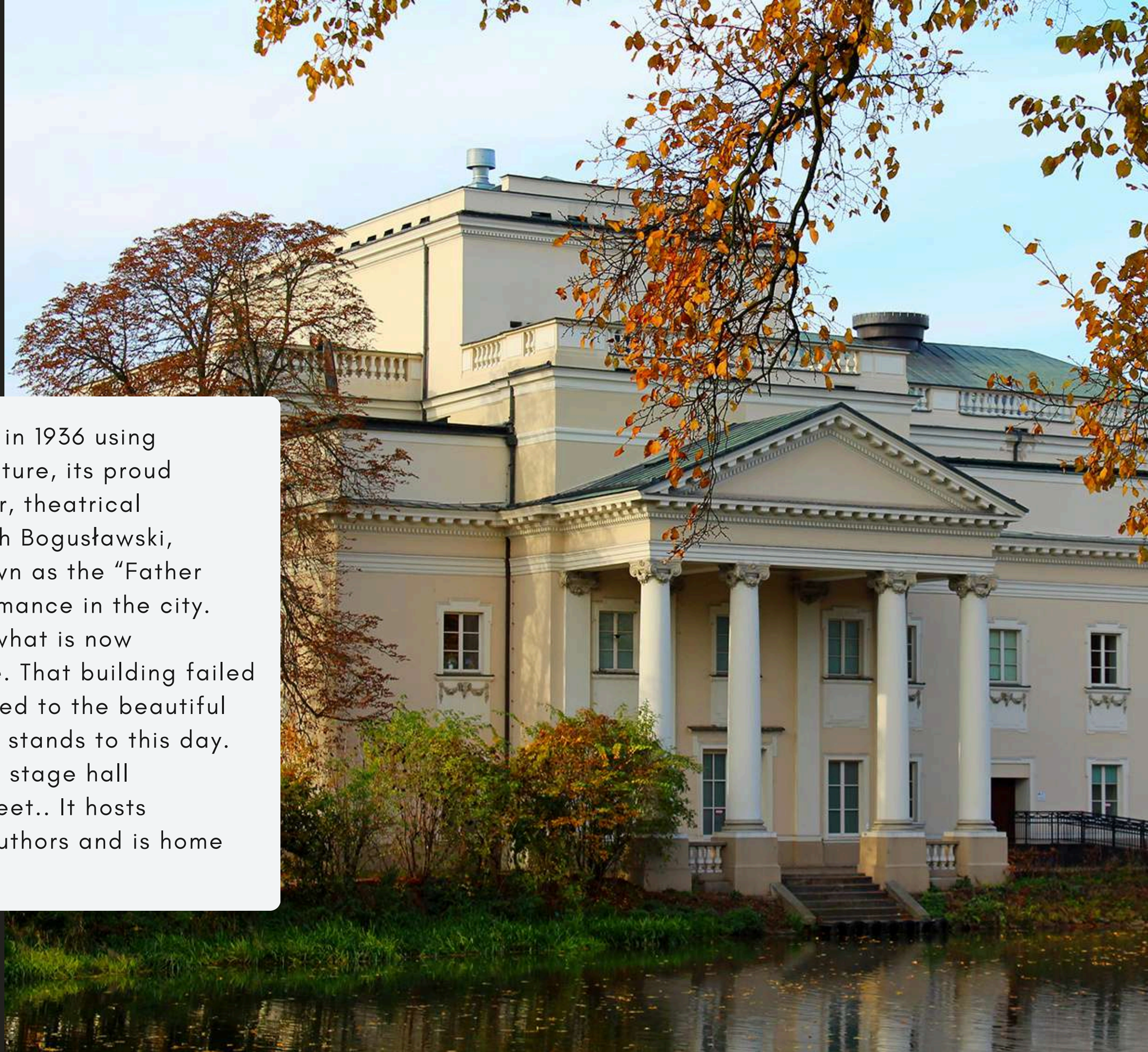
Inside the tower, a multimedia exhibition invites visitors on a journey through the city's eventful history. You'll also find detailed models of historic and modern buildings that have shaped Kalisz over the centuries, along with a panoramic painting that captures the city as it appeared at the turn of the 18th century.

One of the city hall's hidden gems is the statue of the Roman goddess Flora. Once located in the city park, where a replica now stands; the original now graces the building's inner patio, preserving a touch of classical charm in the heart of Kalisz.



The Wojciech Bogusławski Theatre

The third building of the Kalisz Theatre, constructed in 1936 using the surviving walls of the previous 19th-century structure, its proud reflection in the waters of the Prosna River. However, theatrical traditions in Kalisz date back to 1800, when Wojciech Bogusławski, a Polish actor, theatre director, and playwright known as the “Father of Polish Theatre”, staged the first theatrical performance in the city. A year later, he built a wooden theatre building at what is now the intersection of Babina Street and Kilinski Square. That building failed to stand the test of time and was eventually relocated to the beautiful square near the Prosna River, where the theatre still stands to this day. The building can seat around 400 people in its main stage hall and about 100 in the smaller venue on Teatralna Street.. It hosts a variety of plays by both Polish and international authors and is home to a permanent ensemble of actors.



The District Court Building

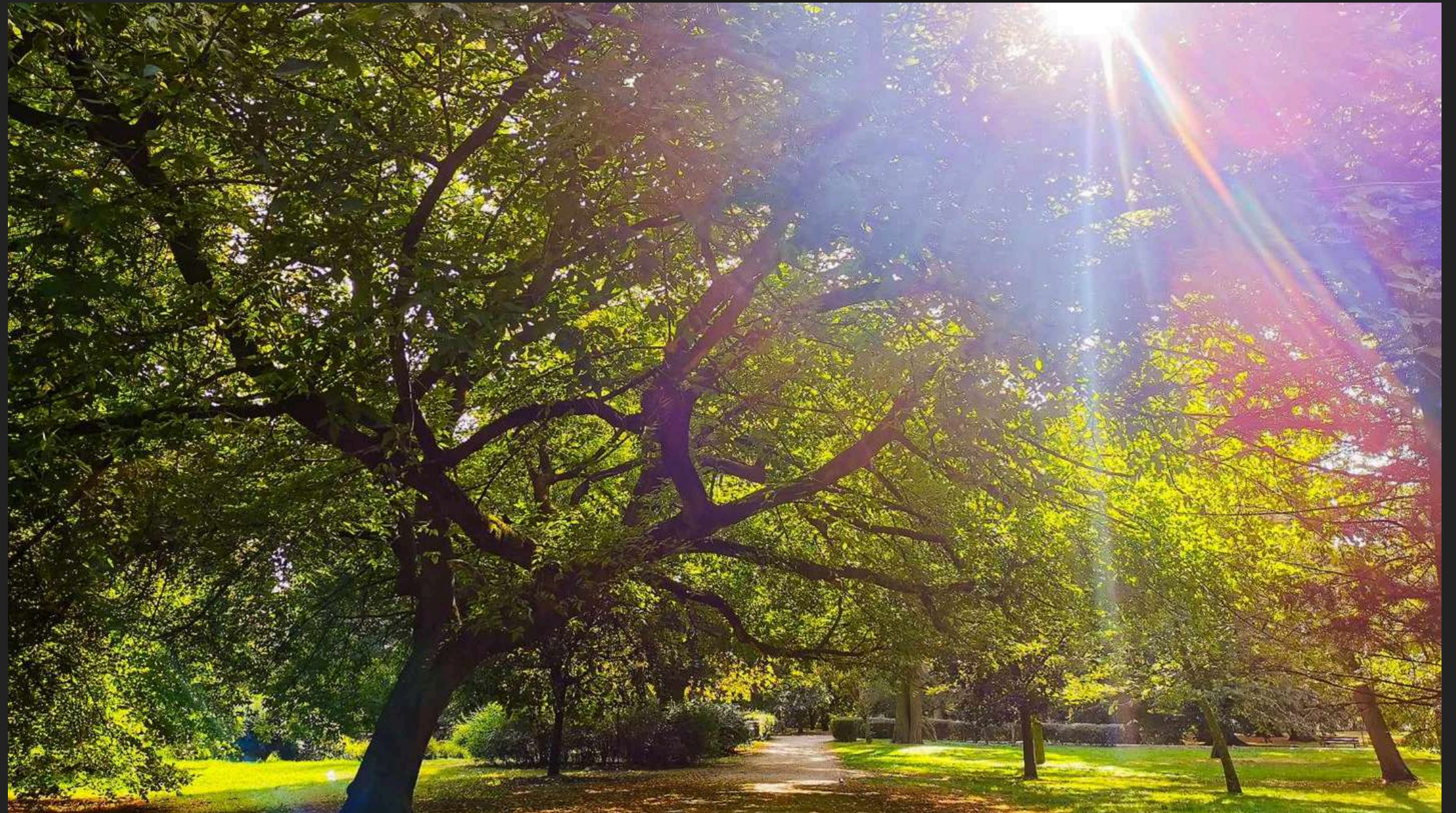
The classical building of the former Tribunal (today's District Court) was raised by order of the tsarist authorities in the years 1819-1823 according to a design prepared by the province architect S.Szpilowski. Its eight-column portico is crowned with a triangular tympanum, under which there is a Latin sentence: "Suum Cuique" - "May all get their due". It housed the Civic Guard, which was established in the summer of 1918 as a secret organization which was meant to maintain public order during the anticipated disarming of German soldiers and taking over power from them in the city.



“Dorotka” Tower with a piece of the city walls

Built in the early 14th century, just behind the Collegiate Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the building originally served as a prison for unruly women. The city walls, commissioned by King Casimir the Great, were constructed between 1350 and 1361. Shaped in an oval, they stretched for about 1,600 metres and remained well-preserved until the mid-17th century. By the end of the 18th century, however, the walls had fallen into ruin. To prevent further collapse and allow for the city's expansion, the occupying Prussian authorities dismantled them following the Second Partition of Poland. Today, the building houses the Kalisz Centre of Fairy Tales and Legends.





The City Park

One of the oldest and most beautiful parks in Poland. It was established in 1798 at the initiative of the Prussian authorities, who governed the city after the Second Partition of Poland in 1793. Originally known as the "Wild Garden," it was created on the site of former city pastures and a stunning Renaissance-era Jesuit garden. Over the years, the park has evolved, and today it welcomes visitors with its picturesque English-style landscape. It is home to around 4,200 trees, including 65 designated natural monuments. One of its most treasured specimens is a red oak known as Asnyk's Oak.



The historic churches of the Kalisz city centre



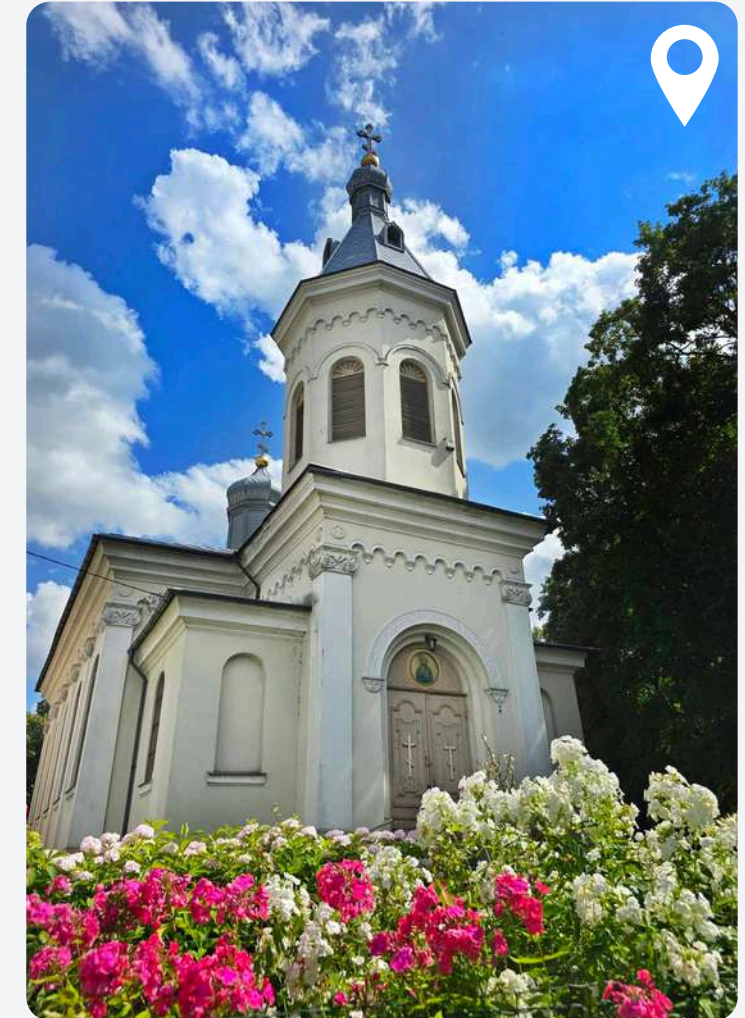
St. Nicholas
Cathedral



Former Bernardine
Church of the
Visitation of the
Blessed Virgin Mary



St. Family
Church



St. Peter
and Paul
Orthodox
Church

The historic churches of the Kalisz city centre



Church of the
Assumption of the
Blessed Virgin Mary
(St. Joseph's Church)



Former Jesuit Church
of Saints Adalbert
and Stanislaus



Franciscan Church
of St. Stanislaus,
Bishop and Martyr

The Stone Bridge

The oldest and most beautiful bridge in Kalisz. It was built of sandstone in 1825. Distinctive handrails were decorated with two engraved plaques – the city emblem on one and an inscription on the other. The latter explains that the bridge was built in honour of the tsar Alexander I.



The Bench of Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński

The monument depicts the Kalisz-born traveler and explorer of Cameroon, Stefan Szolc-Rogoziński, who is seated on an unfolded map, gazing thoughtfully at the outlines of the continents while pointing to Africa. Visitors can sit next to the figure of the traveler, take a rest, snap a commemorative photo, and enjoy the view of Złoty Róg.



The squirrel trail



The Kalisz Squirrel Trail is a walking route that combines recreational and educational values. This project, designed for both residents and tourists, encourages active exploration of the city. Hidden throughout Kalisz are small bronze squirrel figurines that invite visitors on an urban adventure. Initiated in 2024 by Krystian Kinastowski, the Mayor of Kalisz, the trail now includes eight stops across notable locations in the city.

The squirrel sculptures, designed by Gabriela Michalak, a student at the Kalisz School of Fine Arts and winner of the "City Squirrels" contest, are placed in locations that are significant or symbolic to Kalisz. Their presence highlights the city's special relationship with these rodents, particularly evident in the City Park, considered one of the oldest public parks in Poland. It is there, in the green heart of the city, that squirrels truly feel at home.

At each location, there is a stamp that can be marked on special maps available at partner institutions along the trail or downloadable from the attached file. Collecting all eight stamps not only brings the joy of discovering the city but also serves as a ticket to a small gift, which can be collected at City Hall during promotional campaigns. Updates on these activities are regularly posted on our city's social media channels.

The entire route takes around 10,000 steps to complete, which experts consider the perfect daily distance for health and well-being. The Kalisz Squirrel Trail offers an active way to spend time while discovering the city and its history.





Murals and street art





Park Przyjaźni – The Friendship Park and its Graduation Tower

In the Friendship Park, you can catch a breath of fresh air by the brine graduation tower. What's more, concerts, festivals, and cultural events are held at the amphitheater, while the renovated playgrounds, outdoor gym, and relaxation zone make the park an attractive spot for families and active residents and tourists. Wide alleys, large meadows, and ponds where ducks and swans raise their young add to its charm. Kalisz's answer to Central Park is the perfect place for an afternoon picnic.



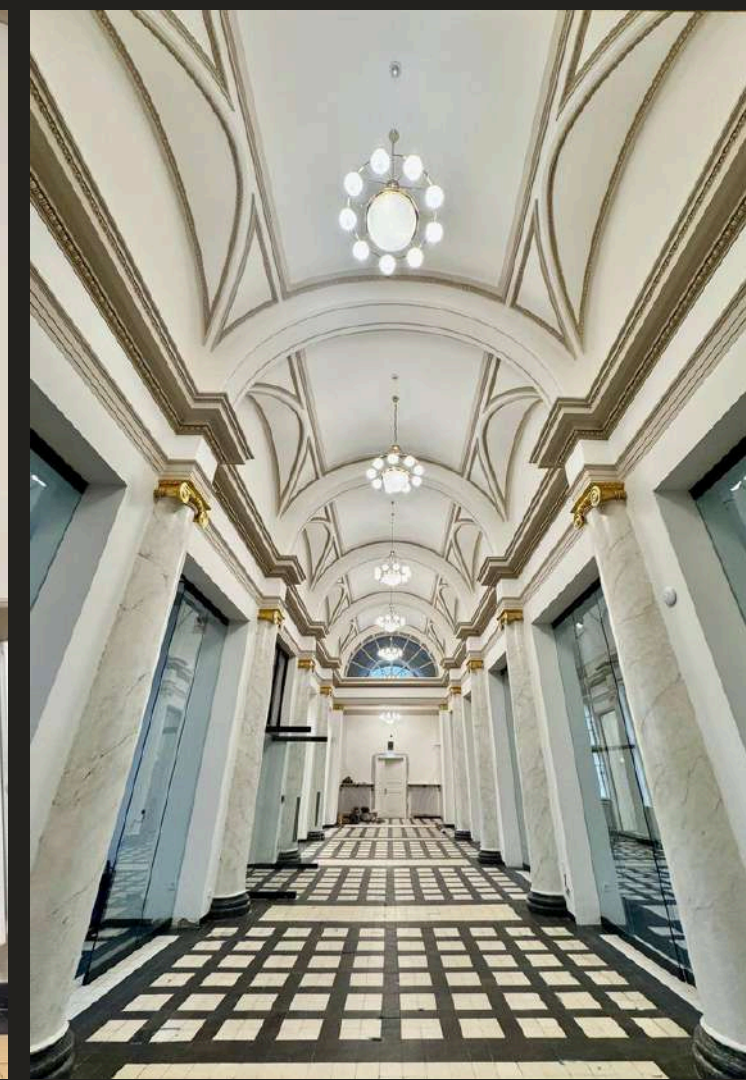
Kalisz riverside promenade



Calisia University – Rector's Office

Located at 2 Wojciech Bogusławski Square, the building that now houses the Rector's Office of Calisia University is a striking example of interwar architecture. Constructed between 1924 and 1926, it originally served as the headquarters of Bank Polski. Remarkably, this historic structure has survived to the present day almost entirely unchanged, preserving its original charm and architectural integrity.

Until 2003, the building was home to a branch of the National Bank of Poland. It was then transferred to the ownership of Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego, and today, it proudly serves as the seat of Calisia University's Rector.



Planty Miejskie – City's green belt

For centuries, a branch of the Prosna River, known as the Babinka Canal, flowed through the northwestern edge of Kalisz's Old Town. Although the canal was filled in during the early 1940s, today its former route has been transformed into a charming green belt that surrounds part of the historic city center.

This area, known as the Planty, stretches from Wodna Street to Kilinski Square, running alongside Babina and Alfons Parczewski Streets, and intersected by the quaint Złota and Kanonicka Streets. Once an industrial waterway, the space now offers a peaceful, scenic escape filled with trees, walking paths, and cultural landmarks.

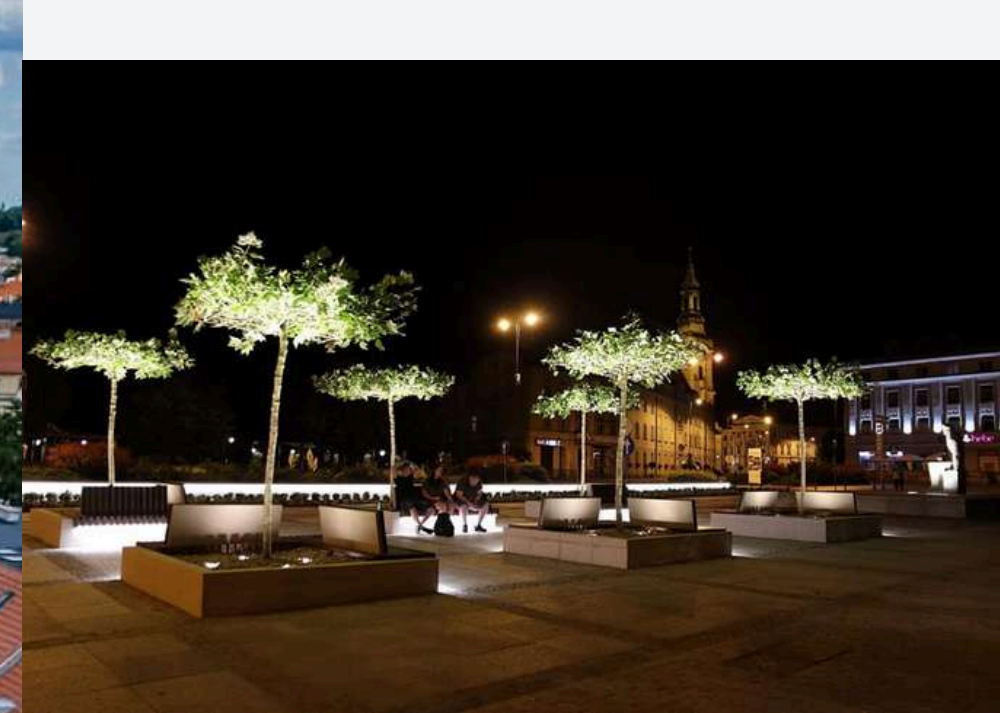
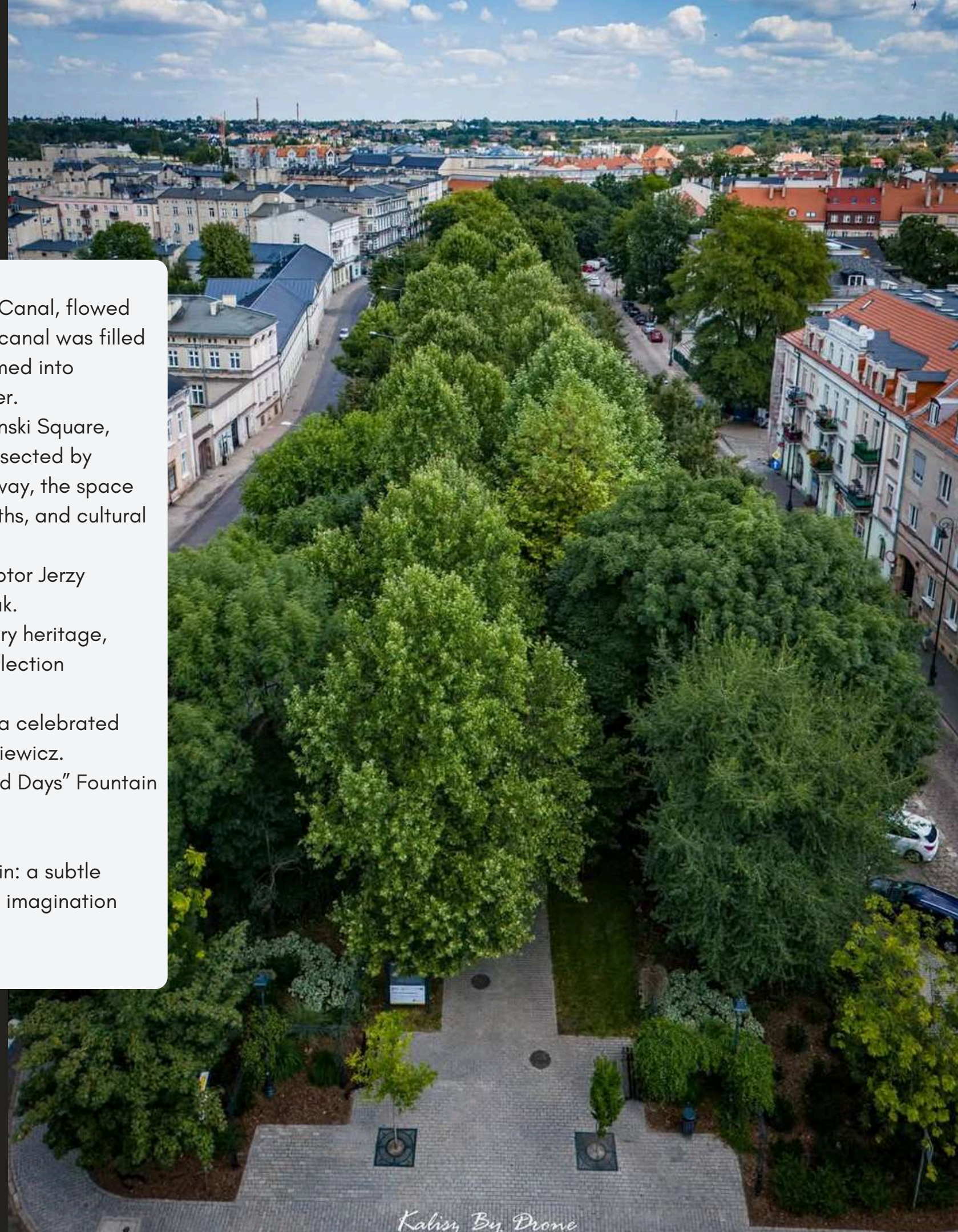
One such landmark is the Book Monument, created in 1978 by sculptor Jerzy Sobocinski based on a design by Kalisz artist Władysław Koscielniak.

It commemorates the wartime loss of local Polish and Jewish literary heritage, thoughtfully turning a somber moment in history into a place of reflection and tribute.

At the end of the Planty, you'll find the monument to Adam Asnyk, a celebrated Polish poet, sculpted by renowned Kalisz-born artist Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz.

Just across the square, at the edge of the city park, the "Nights and Days" Fountain surprises visitors with its artistic design and soothing atmosphere – it's an especially popular spot on warm summer days.

For a touch of history, look down at the pavement near the fountain: a subtle marking shows the original path of the Babinka Canal, guiding the imagination back to the city's flowing past.



“Nights and Days” Fountain

Honoring one of Kalisz’s most celebrated authors, Maria Dąbrowska, the “Nights and Days” fountain offers a cool, soothing atmosphere in the summer and a beautifully illuminated display in the winter.



The Archaeological Reserve Kalisz-Zawodzie

In the early Middle Ages, the center of what is now the oldest city in Poland – Kalisz, was located about 1.5 kilometers south of today's main square, in the present-day district of Kalisz-Zawodzie. From the 9th to the 13th century, this area was home to a settlement that formed the historic core of Kalisz. The stronghold was strategically built on the floodplains of the Prosna River, which provided natural defenses. Today, the site is home to an archaeological reserve where visitors can explore the remains of the early medieval stronghold, learn about the daily life of the Slavs during the Middle Ages, and take part in various outdoor events. These include reenactments and demonstrations that showcase the customs and traditions of early Polish ancestors. Notable annual events include the “Archaeological Fair” in June and the “Piast Feast” in August.





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  [miasto_kalisz](#)

   Kalisz. Dopisz swoją historię.