

POLISH PALACES

Many splendid Renaissance, Baroque and Rococo palaces have survived in Poland. Wilanow and Lazienki palaces , both in Warsaw, are two of the most important ones as they used to be the royal palaces.

Other remarkable palaces were built in Lancut, Nieborow, Rogalin, Pszczyna, Kozlowka but every region has at least several which are worth visiting.

Many castles and palaces of Silesian Voivodship have fallen in ruins, others now serve as museums (Bedzin, Bielsko-Biala, Gliwice, Pszczyna, Sosnowiec, Wodzislaw Slaski, and Zywiec), or as cultural or health-care centres (Krzyzanowice, Lubie, Rajcza, Rybna, and Wielowies). The former palaces in Chalupki, Promnice and Swierklaniec have been turned into hotels.

PŁAWNIOWICE PALACE



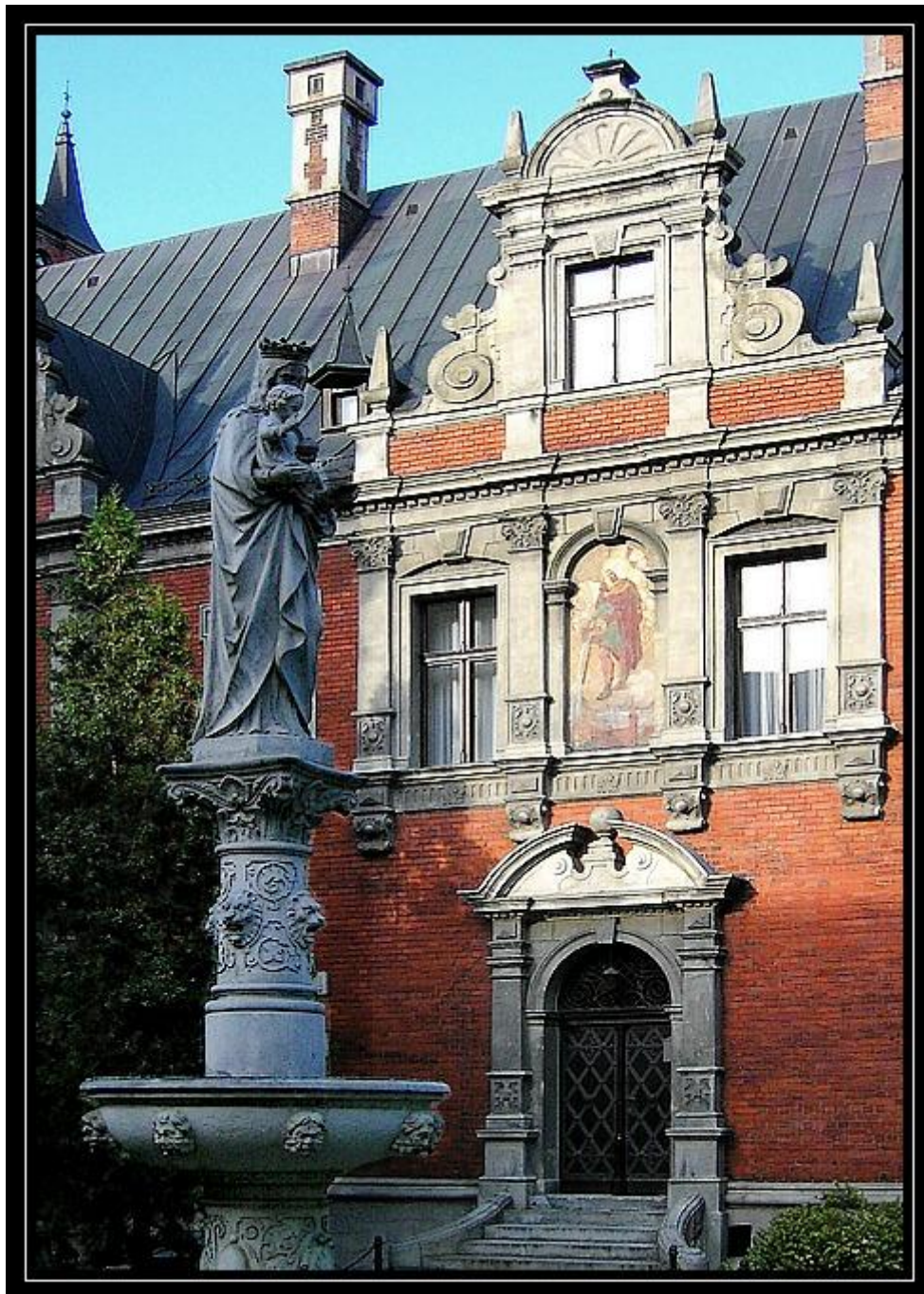
Pławniowice is a small village located near a big lake, not far from the A4 highway, between Gliwice and Strzelce Opolskie. The village was established in 1317 but its importance grew when Franciszek Wolfgang von Stechow bought Pławniowice in 1737. Then the count Karol Franciszek von Ballestrem built a magnificent palace and surrounded it by carefully selected trees.

The Ballestrem family has its roots in an old Italian nobility. The Silesian line of this family comes from Giovanni Baptiste Angelo Ballestrero di Castellengo, born in 1709 in Turin. In 1730 he became a page at the manor of a Saxon-Weimar prince, where he changed his name to Johann and accepted the last name Ballestrem. In 1732 he joined an elite unit of the emperor's regiment, where he became a lieutenant colonel. In 1740 he joined the Prussian army where he served in the third hussar regiment and in 1748 became a leader of the squadron, part of which quartered in Gliwice. In 1748 in Pławniowice, in a chapel of the old castle, he married countess Marie Elisabeth Augusta von Stechow, the daughter of Wolfgang von Stechow, the founder of entail (the property that can not be divided and passes to the oldest son in the family) composed of estates in Pławniowice, Ruda and Biskupice. After the death of Charles Franz von Stechow in 1798 (Wolfgang's son) that died without leaving a

male offspring, the property passed to the oldest son of his sister, Charles Franz von Ballestrem and stayed in the hands of the family until the end of the war.

In 1945 the Red Army soldiers destroyed the palace's interior and furniture. After the war the Benedictine nuns stayed in the palace for some years.

Nowadays, after the renovation the palace and park complex is a beautiful example of residence architecture in Upper Silesia.



A monumental palace with its unique interiors from 19th century is located in a peaceful surroundings, far from the city . surrounded by a small but picturesque landscape park.

Since 1989 the building has belonged to the Diocese in Gliwice that created the House of Retreat here. It offers accomodation and organising conferences and seminars. The palace chapel and several rooms are open to the public as a museum.