

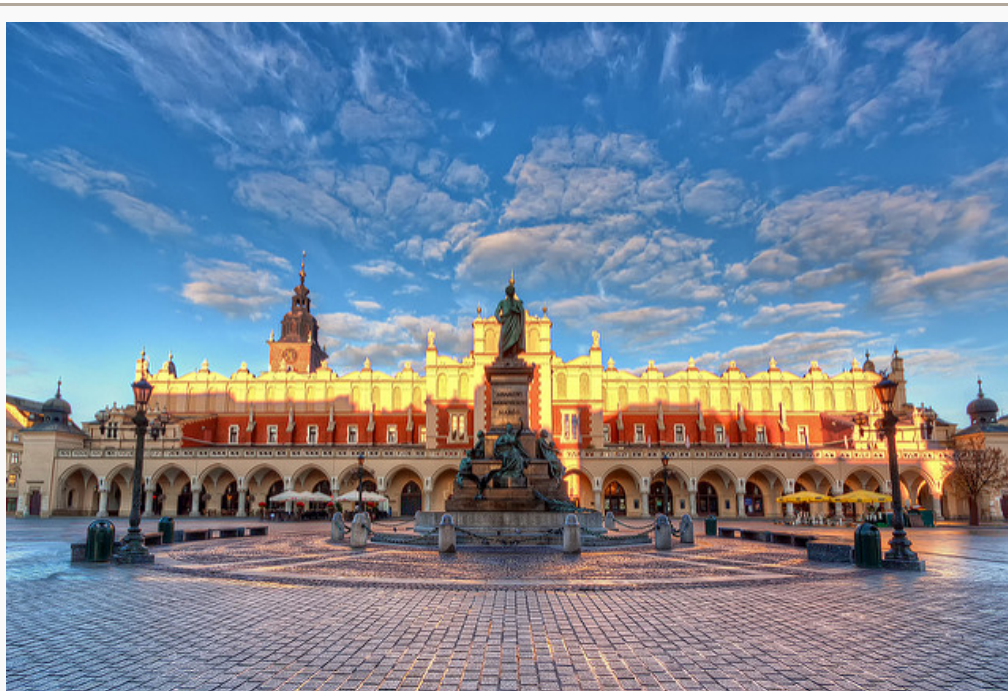
The best bookshops in Kraków, Poland

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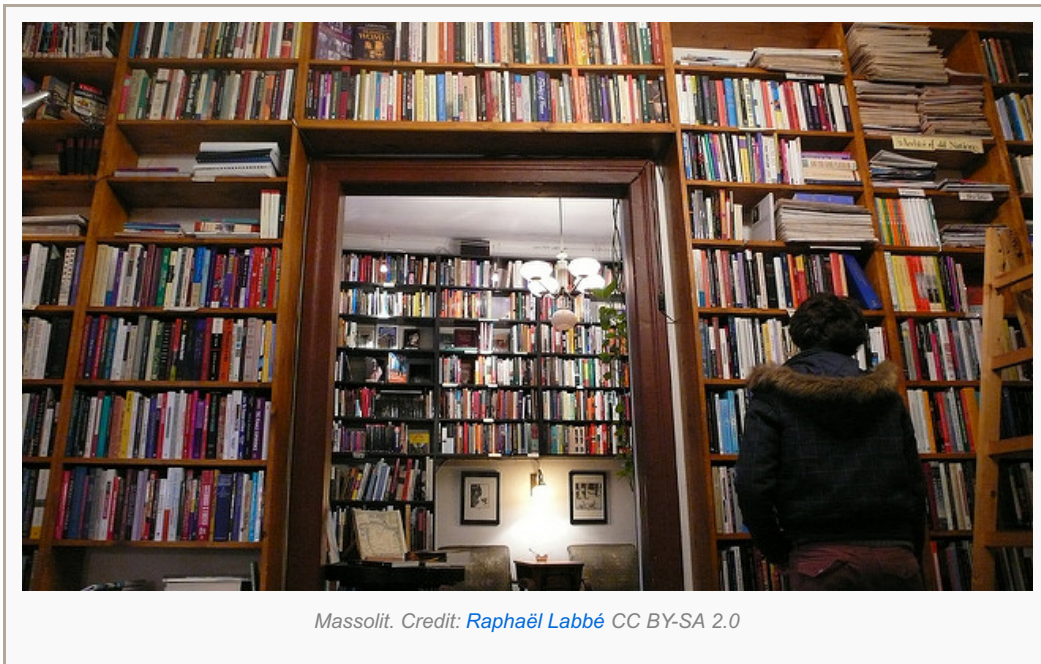
***Evan Easton-Calabria** is a research assistant at the Oxford Department of International Development. In this post she talks us through the best bookshops in **Kraków, Poland**. If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, find more information about contributing below.*

Kraków is a spectacular city with a vast history documented in its synagogues, basilica towers, and now in a museum underneath the market square. Many of the historical buildings have been converted into small new and used bookshops with cafes. The mixture of modern and historical books and art offered within the archways, dusty rooms, and by turn trendy coffee shops of these bookstores provides a means to embrace Poland's variegated past as well as its dynamic present.



Credit: First Light on the Kraków Main Square. Credit: Nico Trinkhaus at sunfinity.com CC BY-NC 2.0

I first discovered [Cafe Massolit](#), Kraków's only English bookstore, on a grey fall day when I, a Polish beginner, needed a book I could actually read. I stepped inside and found stacks of modern English literature, histories of obscure places, and books of beautiful poetry. Farther ahead was a cafe counter replete with apple cake and brownies below signs in bright chalk offering tea and coffee and soup. The side door to the right led me to three other rooms full of English new and used books, carefully arranged by themes including history, sex, feminism, and spirituality. That first day I sat on the thick couch in the back room long enough to discover a regular English poetry group hosted by one of the city's many ex-pat language teachers. Massolit would truly be a gem of a book store in any country; given that it is tucked away on a corner street rarely seen by tourists in Kraków, its wide selection of English books is especially astonishing and unique.



Massolit. Credit: [Raphaël Labbé](#) CC BY-SA 2.0

[Księgarnia Bona](#) (literally ‘Nursemaid Bookshop’ in Polish) is a charming bookshop near the famous Wawel Castle and one of Kraków’s main streets, Ulica Grodzka. The arched ceilings and brick walls create an appealingly cavernous space to read in, and the store is a worthwhile stop when in search of a particular book or a pleasant place to have a coffee and relax. Although the English selection is smaller, there are a variety of books focusing on everything from the Holocaust and the history of Kraków to Polish cooking and tourism. While learning Polish, I often read children’s books here over large cups of peach tea, sitting in an armchair near the bookstore’s masterpiece: a large chandelier of scrolls I have always seen as Księgarnia Bona’s fitting homage to the written word.



Wawel Castle. Credit: [Radek Szuban](#) CC BY-NC 2.0

The hip bookstore cafe [Lokator](#) lies one street back from the river Wisła which runs through Kraków and is just one block from the highly recommended [Ethnographic Museum](#). The most modern independent bookstore I have found here, Lokator is a great place to find new books – most of them are in Polish – as well as artistic local t-shirts, cards, and posters. The bookstore is an impressive art hub and advertises local art exhibitions as well as regular discussions. With several small seating areas, from tables outside to a friendly carpet corner for kids, the book store

is a welcoming blend of comfort and chic that makes it an enjoyable place for those seeking both contemporary and classic literature and art.



Dano and Sina playing an instore gig at Lokator, in Krakow May 2007. Credit: robche02 CC BY-ND 2.0

Evan Easton-Calabria studied for a Master's degree in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies from the University of Oxford. She is a writer and consultant focusing on refugee livelihoods and international development.

Do you have a favourite bookshop? If there's a bookshop that you think other students and academics should visit when they're undertaking research or visiting a city for a conference, then now's your chance to tell us all about it.

As part of a new weekly feature on LSE Review of Books, we're asking academics and students to recommend their favourite two or three bookshops in a particular city, with the aim of building an exciting online series for our book-loving community of readers the world over.

Bookshops could be academic, alternative, foreign language, hobby-based, secret or underground institutions, second hand outlets, or connected to a university. We'd like to cover all world regions too.

If something comes to mind, we're looking for around 100 words per bookshop, detailing why this place is a must-see. Our editorial team can then find suitable photos and links to accompany the piece, though you're welcome to supply these too. We only ask that you focus on just one city or region, and two or three bookshops within it.

Email us now if you'd like to contribute: lseviewofbooks@lse.ac.uk

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