

Bielsko-Biala is a regional capital town in the south of Poland, close to the Polish-Czech border of about 175 thousands inhabitants. Once there were to separated towns: Silesian Bielsko founded in 12th c. (granted city charter in 13th c.) and Lesser Poland's Biala known from about 1560 (city charter on 9 January 1723), they were linked together on 1 January 1951.

Situated at the foot of Silesian (Slaski) and Little (Maly) Beskid Mountains on the Biala river the town is important administration and industrial, as well as tourist and academic centre. It is one of the best economically developed towns in Poland with low unemployment (less then 6%). The centre of trade and industry in which medium and small-businesses are predominant. Many tourist trails leading to the mountains begin in the town. It is also well-known cultural centre offering various cultural events, such as concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions or festivals (e.g. Bielsko Jazz Jesien and Bielsko Jazz Zadymka festivals).

Since 16th c. Bielsko has been developed as clothing and trade industry and the pottery, while Biala was the weaving centre. At the turn of 19th and 20th cc. both towns became one of the most important industry centres in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the process of the unification them began. Since ages the two-towns have been multinational and multicultural as well as multidenominational centre inhabited by Poles, Germans and Jews. During the WWII the city was annexed to the Third Reich and its Jewish population annihilated.

Its current architecture is eclectic in character reverting to Roman, Gothic and Renaissance style. The city of medieval Bielsko has a classic layout based on Magdeburg law (at present mostly 18th c. buildings). There are among others:

- the Sulkowski Castle from 13 c., the seat of Silesian Piasts' from Cieszyn;
 - the Weavers' House – textile production heritage can be admired in this wooden house;
 - the Polish Theatre Building in Classicistic style,
 - St. Nicolas' Cathedral (1443-1447);
 - the Neo-Gothic Church of Saviour – the Eevangelical Cathedral (1782-1790);
 - **the Statue of Martin Luter – the only one of this theologian and reformer in Poland;**
 - the wooden St. Barbara's Church in Mikuszowice dated 17 c. with polychrome paintings;
 - the Art Nouveau Buildings (e.g. „Pod Orlem” Hotel, the District Court),
 - the President Hotel with Neo-Renaissance facade;
- and many, many other interesting places one can find in Bielsko-Biala.