

SBW 2026

Łódź, Poland



social
boundaries
of work

Urban Safari

Social Boundaries of Work: The Everyday Work and Lives of Women Textile Workers

Idea

This urban safari uses a self-guided, collaborative walk to explore how work is produced, experienced and remembered in urban space. Participants move through the city together, observe specific sites, take photographs and discuss what the route reveals.

Participation in urban safari is optional. Conference participants willing to explore the host city this way gather in the specified place. Next, they go through the city together, taking pictures and discussing the issues noticed along the route.

Technicalities

This year's urban safari is organised on Wednesday, October 21, between 10:30 and 12:45 local time.

Meeting point: outside Vienna House by Wyndham Andel's Łódź, Ogrodowa 17, a former textile mill in the Manufaktura complex. Use the 'Meeting point' QR code or link. The walk ends at the conference venue, Rewolucji 1905 roku 39.

Participation in this urban safari does not require public transportation since it is only for walking. The estimated walking distance along the recommended route is 3.0 kilometres.

A map of the walk is provided on the following page. The numbered markers correspond to the eight stops described in this brochure.

Description

The route asks where work ended when the factory shaped not only paid employment but also housing and everyday routines. In industrial Łódź, textile production depended heavily on women workers, while factory shifts overlapped with responsibility for shopping, cooking and maintaining the household.

Former Poznański's Factory and Former Worker's Housing make the spatial relationship between production and domestic life especially visible. The walk then enters the Old Town, where trade, Jewish religious life, wartime destruction, post-war reconstruction and contemporary regeneration created successive layers of urban meaning. Seen together, the eight stops expand the history of work beyond the factory gate. They invite discussion about gendered labour, company housing, informal worker networks, forced labour and the transformation of industrial landscapes into heritage and leisure.

Registration



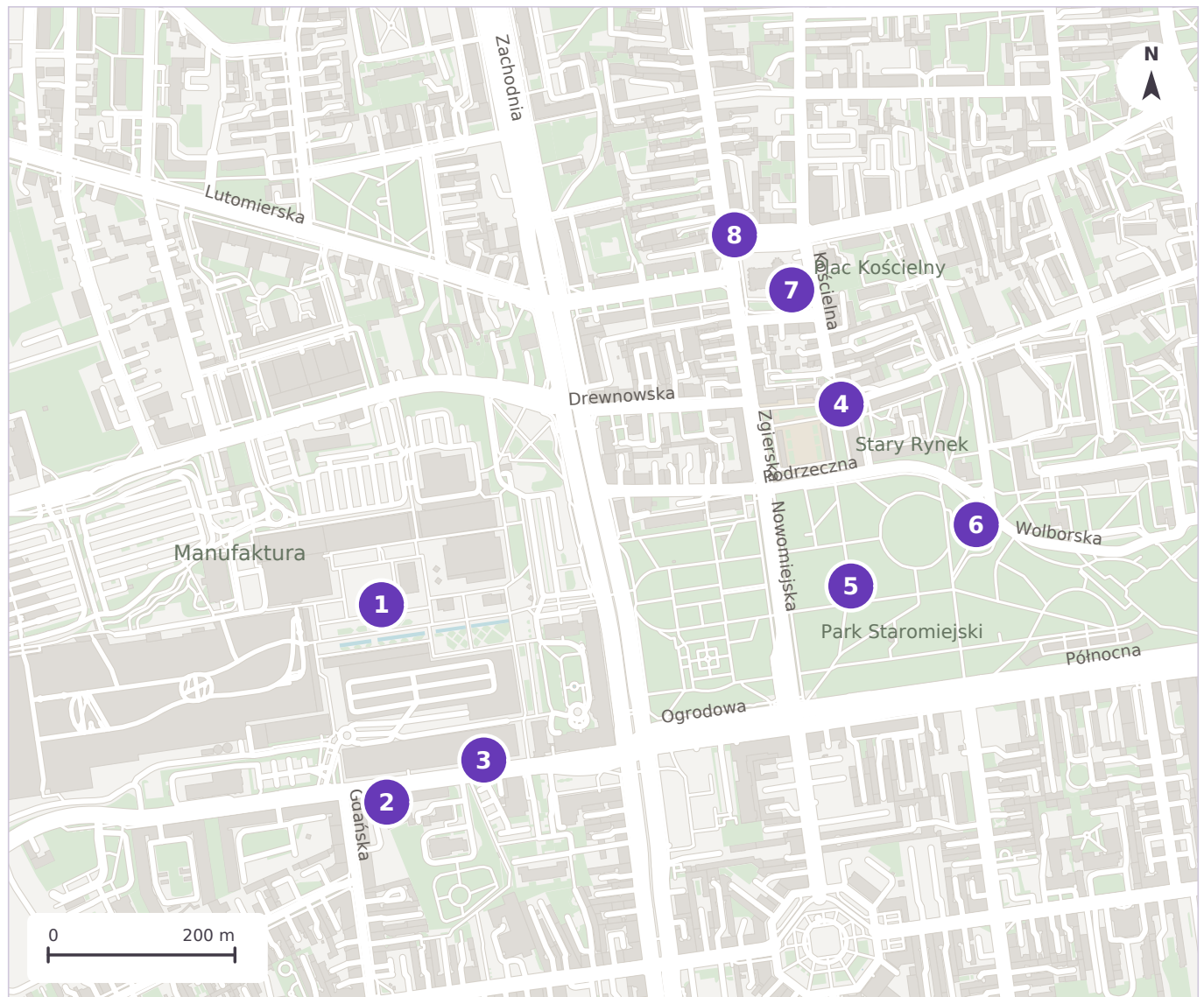
Meeting point



**Only 30 places available.
Places allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.**

This urban safari was prepared by
Artur Parys, PhD.

Map of the walk



Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors · openstreetmap.org/copyright

Points of Interest

- 01** Manufaktura (Former Poznański's Factory)
- 02** Worker's Housing (Former Poznański's Famuła)
- 03** Factory Gate
- 04** Old Town Market Square
- 05** Old Town Park and Market
- 06** The Decalogue Monument
- 07** Church Square
- 08** Litzmannstadt Ghetto · former bridge at Zgierska / Lutomierska

Markers indicate the tour stops. Stop 8 marks the former bridge site, not the full historic ghetto area.

01 Manufaktura

(Former Poznański's Factory)

Manufaktura is a super-large (25 hectares) shopping, culture and entertainment centre created through a regeneration of the post-industrial site. The former textile factory in this location was owned by Izrael Poznanski, the richest among the 19th-century Jewish industrialists in Lodz. The factory operated until the early 1990s, when the production eventually stopped, due to the problems associated with Poland's transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy. It remained unused for years. Finally, the French company Apsys acquired the land and building and transformed it into Manufaktura. The centre opened in 2006 and rapidly became one of the favourite places for Lodz's residents and the city's top tourist attraction. The success of Manufaktura changed the common perception of Lodz's post-industrial heritage: It has become fashionable and a point of interest for private and public investments.

Participants will see photographs from the late 1960s showing women textile workers' bodies, gestures, work clothing and proximity to machines, revealing the material and embodied character of textile labour. They will also learn about working conditions in light industry: three-shift schedules, dust, noise, no breakfast breaks, inadequate social facilities and outdated machinery. Low wages and output-based piecework pushed workers to intense effort at the expense of their health. The contrast between factory labour and today's leisure spaces invites reflection on how workplaces become sites of memory and commercial redevelopment.



Manufaktura, 2026.

Photo: A. Parys.



Spinning mill with ring spinning frames, 1969.

Photo: W. Parys.

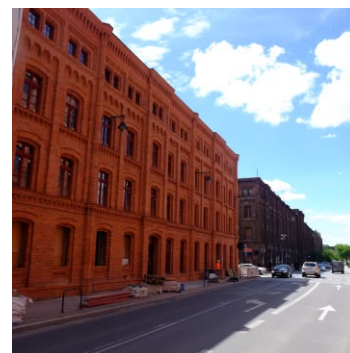
02 Poznański's Famuła

(Former Worker's Housing)

Poznański's "famuły" extend along the even-numbered side of Ogrodowa Street, from nos. 24 to 28. Built in the late nineteenth century, these imposing masonry blocks have three upper storeys above the ground floor. Their nearly square dwellings measured 5.4 × 5.1 metres, approximately 28 m². Originally, apartments had no sanitary facilities apart from a sink near the entrance; toilets, storage sheds and hand-pump wells were in the courtyard. Sanitary facilities were gradually installed over time. Company housing helped retain skilled workers while increasing their dependence on the factory owner, including during strikes.

In August 2026, part of the renovated complex at Ogrodowa 24 reopened following comprehensive revitalisation.

Participants will view photographs of apartment interiors from the late 1960s and visit recently revitalised interiors. Comparing modest furnishings and limited living space with contemporary apartments will prompt discussion of housing standards, comfort, quality of life and the transformation of workers' everyday surroundings into industrial heritage.



Poznański's workers' housing viewed from Ogrodowa Street, 2026.

Photo: A. Parys.



A retired textile worker inside a worker's apartment on Ogrodowa Street, 1969.

Photo: W. Parys.

03 Factory Gate

The factory gate formed one of the most visible symbolic boundaries between industrial work and everyday life. The actual control of workers entering and leaving the complex took place at a porter's lodge located elsewhere within the factory premises. In the three-shift system, these points of passage structured the daily rhythm of thousands of textile workers and marked the transition between the regulated space of production and life beyond the factory.

Historical photographs of women leaving work make this transition especially visible. The gate therefore offers a useful setting for discussing the social boundaries of work: where does work end when physical exhaustion, domestic duties and dependence on factory institutions continue beyond working hours? Today, the preserved entrance also connects the former industrial landscape with its contemporary role as heritage, leisure and commercial space.



A dancer from the Song and Dance Ensemble (ZPiT) in folk costume, photographed against the factory gate, 1969.

Photo: W. Parys.

04 Old Town Market Square

The medieval Lodz originated in the Old Town Market Square and its adjacent urban blocks. At that time, wooden buildings dominated here, but when Lodz went through massive industrialisation in the 19th century, they were replaced by brick tenements. The Old Town Market Square was for decades one of the bustling places of the Lodz's Jewish population due to a concentration of its trade and craft. During WW2, the Old Town Market Square became a part of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto. After its liquidation and the end of the war, the buildings surrounding the Old Town Market Square were purposely substituted by new socialist realism architecture. Its appearance aimed to reminisce architecture of the Polish towns. In 1964, a monument dedicated to Julian Marchlewski, a communist activist, was erected here but removed in 1991. The former centrality of the Old Town Market Square for Lodz's geographies is undoubtedly gone.



Monument to Julian Marchlewski in the Old Town Market Square.

Photo: W. Parys.

05 Old Town Park and Market

Before WW2, the area of today's Old Town Park was not an urban greenery but a densely built urban fabric consisting of numerous tenements and small factories. They were demolished by Nazi occupiers during WW2 to physically separate the Litzmannstadt Ghetto from the rest of the city. In recent years the history of this place has been revisited by urban activists and public institutions. The park is commonly known among Łódź's residents as Herring Park. Indeed, before WW2, a fish trade was placed nearby.

06 The Decalogue Monument

It was erected to commemorate the Jews who once lived in Łódź. It also functions as a symbol of reconciliation and peace. The monument stands where one of the most impressive synagogues in Łódź stood before WW2, i.e. the Alte Szil Synagogue. The synagogue was built in the late 19th century and exemplified architectural eclecticism by mixing Byzantine, Neo-Moorish and Neo-Romanesque styles. The building was burned down by the Nazi occupiers in 1939.

08 Litzmannstadt Ghetto

The Litzmannstadt Ghetto was a Nazi ghetto established by the German authorities for Polish, Jews, and Roma following the Invasion of Poland in 1939. It was the second-largest ghetto in all of German-occupied Europe after the Warsaw Ghetto. Żgierska Street was always an important route in Łódź. During WW2, it remained a crucial axis connecting Łódź's centre with its northern suburbia. However, since the Jews imprisoned in the ghetto were forbidden to use this street, a pedestrian bridge was constructed here. The bridge was documented in many archival photographs, and it remains one of the most recognisable symbols of the tragic events of WW2 in Łódź.



The bridge over Żgierska Street in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto.

Source: Yad Vashem.

07 Church Square

This area is as old as the Old Town Market Square since it traces back to Łódź's medieval, preindustrial beginnings. However, as you can guess, there are currently no buildings which date back to these days. The symbol of this area is a late 19th-century Neo-Gothic church dedicated to the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which replaced the earlier wooden church in this location.