

Concentration Camps

A Traveler's Guide
to World War II Sites

Marc Terrance

About the Author

Marc Terrance has traveled extensively to the major concentration camps & holocaust sites of Europe over the past 20 years. He is not Jewish. Ever since he was a child he has been drawn to the subject of the Holocaust. After watching hours of the old black and white archival films on television, he felt compelled to start visiting these sites to learn more. It was during these trips that he found it very difficult to find exact directions, so in 1998 he decided to put all of his findings into a book, so that anyone who wishes to visit these places will be able to find them easily.

Having already visited many of these camps over the years, his next mission was to re-visit ALL of the major Holocaust sites in one research trip.

By himself, in the fall of 1998, Marc spent 155 Hours on Trains making over 80 Connections through 6 Countries to visit 39 Sites in 25 Days! (and they said it couldn't be done!). In most cases he walked from the nearest train station to the camps, hand-drawing maps, jotting down landmarks and street names and gathering information from every source. It was an exhausting experience, both physically and mentally, but one of the most rewarding journeys of his life. He plans to continue his studies and perhaps add more sites to this book for future editions.



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ISBN: 1-58112-839-8

Universal Publishers/UPUBLISH.COM
2003

www.upublish.com/books/terrance.htm

www.ConcentrationCampGuide.com

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks to:

Rudi Haunschmied, Martha Gammer and Siegi Witzany-Durda for their help in Austria and for their tireless work to keep the memory of Gusen camp alive.

Dr. Lucja Pawlicka-Nowak, Zdzislaw Lorek and Izabela Lorek for their kindness and help while I was visiting Chelmno camp in Poland.

Slawek Nowodworski for his guidance in Poland at the camps of Sobibór and Belzec.

Gaby Oelrichs of the House of the Wannsee Conference in Berlin for her help and encouragement.

Sherrie & Karl Meyers, Jim Bauman and Marty Billdt for their technical expertise in helping set up the formatting of this book.

Leslie Fawns, Teresa Hennessy, Rhonda Acosta, Emily Holley and David Mullett for their help with editing and proofreading.

To Kip for his incredible patience, understanding & help on this project.

And sincere thanks to the many wonderful people who work at the camps and museums for sending me the information I needed to make the journey and do the research for this book.

NOTE:

If you can only go to ONE Camp and can make the trip, I'd Suggest AUSCHWITZ. If you have never been to one of these memorials, be prepared. Of all the camps I've visited, this is the most horrendous, most vivid and exhausting to experience. I truly believe everyone NEEDS to see this, to experience what people can do to other human beings, and to learn from it so that it will never happen again.

Most of the camps have Free Admission.
Some are Closed on Mondays.

**Wherever Prices or Time Schedules are shown,
please use them only as a point of reference
as they are Subject to Change.**

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INTRODUCTION

During World War II the Nazi Government under Adolf Hitler perpetrated one of the most horrendous chapters in human history. There have been other crimes against humanity in other places and other times, but what happened in Europe from the early 1930's-1945 became known as the HOLOCAUST and showed "Mans Inhumanity to Man" in its many acts of cruelty, torture, imprisonment and murder. So that we may never forget, many of the Concentration Camps and other associated sites have been preserved as memorials.

I have visited many of these places over the years and decided to put my impressions into a book along with important information for Travelers. The purpose of this book is to guide those who wish to make these journeys.

These sites are not fun tourist theme parks, they are serious historical memorials dedicated to the memory of those who perished. Years ago when I first started traveling to the camps, I sometimes would find myself alone except for a handful of other visitors. Now, after a renewed interest in the Holocaust with movies like "Schindler's List" etc, many many people are visiting these sites. In some cases you will come across rows of tour buses, school children on field trips and large groups of tourists toting cameras and video equipment.

I try to think of this as a good thing as long as people respect what they are seeing and act accordingly. Too often youngsters can be seen in groups laughing and joking. They obviously have not been prepared beforehand about what it is they are witnessing.

It is important that we visit these sites and tell others about our experiences to help keep the memory alive. I HIGHLY recommend that anyone making these journeys study, read, see films and THINK about the Holocaust BEFORE going. What you will experience can change your life and your understanding of the Holocaust.

Hatred, bigotry and intolerance have been prevalent throughout history. When we cannot accept others who are different than ourselves, be it Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation or Ethnic Background, that's where the trouble begins.

We are all human beings and we all need to learn to celebrate our differences and live in peace. When you visit these memorials realize that all it took was the hatred of a few high ranking individuals to ignite the fear and anger in thousands of people. This led normally intelligent citizens to either go along with or turn their heads and ignore one of histories most brutal times.

We cannot afford to let the ignorance or intolerance of any group today or in the future, lead our citizens down the road to ruin by trying to discriminate against ANYONE.

The Nazis set up camps all over Europe. Although the most infamous of those, Auschwitz & Dachau received the most notoriety, there were hundreds of other camps & sub-camps.

Most of the "Death Camps" were set up in the East, in Poland. But the crimes against humanity were carried out in all of these places. Even Today, it comes as a shock to some people that not all those who were persecuted under the Nazis were Jewish.

It is true, make no mistake about it, that the majority of those who suffered, were, indeed Jewish, but the Nazis also targeted a great many others in their plan to annihilate those whom they considered inferior and not part of the perfect Aryan race. Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gay people, just to name a few. Resistance Fighters or anyone caught helping the Jews or those fleeing for their lives were also arrested and sent to prison camps where many of them also died from being over-worked or starved or murdered.

The mentally ill, retarded, dimwitted & alcoholics were also targeted and referred to as "Useless Eaters". These people were sent to institutions that from the outside appeared to be hospitals, but inside, these poor unfortunates, many of them non-Jews, were gassed all in the name of making the Perfect German Aryan Race. Let the visions you will see during your travels open your eyes to what can happen and open your hearts to your fellow man.

I dedicate this book to the millions who perished.
To all those who make the journey to see these sites,
I say, spread these words – NEVER AGAIN!

Recommended Viewing: **Memory of the Camps**
Frontline – TV Broadcast
www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/camp/

Recommended Reading: **Historical Atlas
of the Holocaust**
United States Holocaust
Memorial Museum
1996 Macmillan Publishing,
Simon & Schuster

**According to regulation No 10
of the Ministry of Education
dated March 6, 1963, children
under the age of 13 are not
allowed in museums of
Martyrdom in Poland.
(Those I asked, said this is
Not strictly enforced).**



Look for these symbols
leading to
Concentration Camps in Poland

POLAND

Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oswiecim-Brzezinka)

Address: Panstwowe Muzeum Oswiecim-Brzezinka
ul. Wiezniow Oswiecimia 20
32-620 Oswiecim, Poland

Phone: 48 + 33 + 843 20 22

Fax: 48 + 33 + 843 19 34

E-mail: muzeum@auschwitz.org.pl

Website(s): www.auschwitz-muzeum.oswiecim.pl
www.spectacle.org/695/ausch.html

Hours: Open **DAILY**
8:00am-3:00pm December 16 thru end of February
8:00am-4:00pm March 1 to March 31 &
November 1 to December 15
8:00am-5:00pm April 1 to April 30 and
October 1 to October 31
8:00am-6:00pm May 1 to May 31 and
September 1 to September 30
8:00am-7:00pm June 1 to August 31
CLOSED: January 1, December 25, Easter Sunday

Entrance: Free

Schedule: Plan on spending most of the day to see both parts of this sight: Auschwitz Main Camp & Birkenau. At the very Least you need 4 hours.

Location: Southern Poland near Krakow

Approx Train Travel Time to Krakow (Glowny Station):

From:	Berlin	10:07
	Lublin	4:25
	Vienna (Wien)	9:05
	Prague (Praha)	12:54
	Auschwitz (Oswiecim)	1:25

By Train: I've always traveled from Berlin to Krakow Poland and then on to the camp. There are overnight trains from Berlin & Vienna (Wien) that arrive in Krakow around 6am.

Auschwitz is approximately 54 km (33 miles) west of Krakow and is easily reached by train in about 1 hour & 25 minutes.

From Krakow Glowny Station (Main Station) there are several trains daily. Get a train ticket to OSWIECIM (pronounced *OWS VEE ENCH EM*) (Auschwitz is the German spelling)

Since you will find that English is not readily understood in Poland, unlike most other Western European Countries where it's usually not a problem, it will be helpful to be able to say OSWIECIM when getting your ticket.

Baggage: Krakow Glowny station has Baggage Lockers, or inside the station there is a Baggage Check Window where you can store your bags if you are only staying the day for sightseeing.

There is a Baggage window outside, but that is not open. Go INSIDE the station.

Baggage storage in most Polish stations is marked **“Przechowalnia Bagazu”**

If nobody is attending the counter, RING THE BELL and they will come out.

NOTE:

Upon arrival at Oswiecim Be sure to time your stay accordingly:

CHECK YOUR RETURN TRAIN SCHEDULE

when you ARRIVE in the Morning. Otherwise you might end up taking a Taxi back to Krakow!
Trains Back to Krakow Główny are **NOT** hourly.



There are 2 parts to Auschwitz:

Auschwitz Main Camp & Birkenau. I highly suggest going to the Main Camp first and then Birkenau on the way back & therefore the following directions reflect that route.

This will give you a better perspective on what you are seeing.

By Bus: Stops in front of the train station. Times Posted.

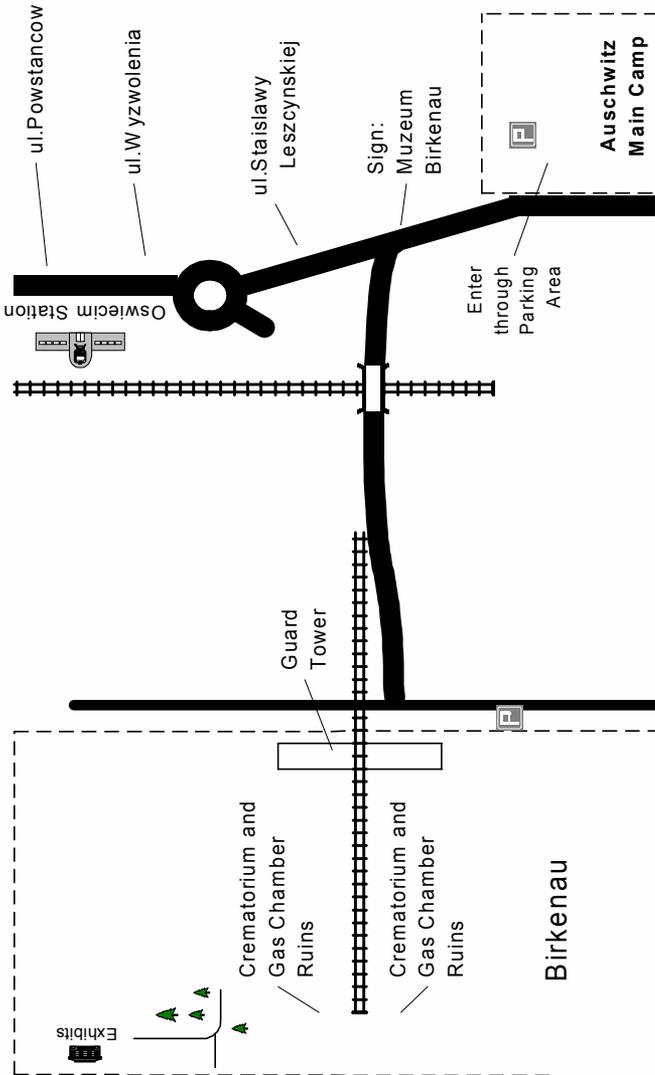
To Walk: **20 Minutes to Auschwitz Main Camp.**

Walk out the Front of Oswiecim station, you will be on **ul.Powstancow**. Cross the street and turn right. After a short distance the name of the street changes to **Wyzwolenia**.

Auschwitz is on the same street as the train station (it just changes names)

When you come to a Round-a-Bout you will keep to the left (there is a sign over on the right side of the street. Here the street name changes to **ul.Stanislawy Leszcynskiej**

The camp is about 10 minutes walk from this point. As you walk along you will notice a street that veers off to the right and curves up and over a bridge. That is the way to Birkenau which you will be taking on the way back. It is **NOT** marked on signs that you can see walking in this direction, but as you pass that street and turn around, you will notice a small sign on the side you are walking down directing you there. It can only be seen coming from the other way. (I think they want to be **SURE** people visit the Main Camp first because there used to be signs in both directions)



AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

You will come up to the camp on the Left side of the street.

You'll first walk through the parking area (most likely past a lot of tour buses). Then you'll see the large brick buildings that make up most of Auschwitz Main camp. (main entrance Below)



What Remains:

There is much to see at this site, more so than any other camp. There is a 15 minute movie (small fee). Buy tickets & check times for the language of choice at window in the entrance hall.

It will take you several hours to walk through and see all the buildings, past barbed wire fences and the familiar Nazi lie over the gate entrance:

ARBEIT MACHT FREI

(Work Makes Freedom)



As you walk down each row of "Blocks" and through each building, you will be shown many different countries memorials to those killed. Be sure to go through each building that is open to the public if you can, as each one is filled with pictures and exhibits.

One has a room full of Human Hair shaved from prisoners heads.

One has a room full of Crutches and Wooden Legs

One has a room full of Shoes, Suitcases, Eyeglasses etc.

There is the original small gas chamber in the basement of one building
(Block 11)

It was here in the cellar of Block 11 on September 3, 1941 that they carried out the first attempt of mass extermination with gas (Zyclon B)

In the yard next to Block 11 is the "**Wall of Death**" where at least 20,000 prisoners were executed by shooting.

After visiting the various "Blocks" follow the signs to the
Crematorium and a temporary **Gas Chamber** (below)



You will walk into a huge cement room that was once the mortuary, then converted into a gas chamber. Hundreds could be gassed at a time. Exit into a room where the crematorium ovens are located. Many visitors put flowers and light candles in remembrance.

There are gift shops if you want to purchase videos or picture books. There is also a small cafeteria on the premises.

After visiting Auschwitz main camp, you should then go to Birkenau (3km – 2 miles) which is a 25 minute walk, or from April 15 to October 31 they have a **Bus** that goes between Auschwitz & Birkenau (small fee) It leaves hourly from 10:30am-4:30pm from outside the Cafeteria entrance facing the parking area.

To Walk:

25 Minutes to Birkenau.

Leave Auschwitz the way you came in and walk back toward the train station, but cross the street and walk down the left side now.

When you get to that side street marked Muzeum Birkenau (Brzezinka) which goes slightly uphill and over a small bridge, make a left and walk toward Birkenau about 15 minutes. You will soon see the familiar Watch Tower seen on TV and in movies.



This is where the trains came into the camp for the “*Selections*“.



Birkenau is HUGE! As far as the eye can see are row after row of smoke stacks on foundations which used to be buildings for prisoners. You can walk upstairs in the front Tower Building and look out the windows (good for pictures and to see the vastness of the place)

Walk in to the camp and turn right and go into the first few buildings that are remaining. (see below)



Some show the bunks where people were crammed together to sleep. One building has long rows of holes in cement, (these were the toilets) Imagine, thousands of people rushing in there. They only had a few minutes, no privacy, no toilet paper.



Walk back to the middle and continue down the tracks or path and try to imagine what it was like as the trains pulled in, and people like Dr. Josef Mengele pointed to the left or right and sentenced prisoners to work or be gassed at his whim.



Straight ahead at the very end are the remains of the crematorium and gas chambers. It is a mess of rubble. You can walk down stairs into one of the undressing areas that lead into the gas chambers (no roof)

The Nazis destroyed all this as Soviet troops approached to try and hide what they were doing.



If you continue down a small path to your right and through the woods you will see huge tanks. (The Nazis tried to make gasoline with human excrement in these tanks). Continue and you'll come across another building used to store articles stolen from prisoners, and delousing rooms. There are some exhibits (opened in April 2001) in this building. Further on, more crematorium ruins one of which was blown up by the prisoners themselves during a revolt. (they were executed for this)

Because of the sheer SIZE of Birkenau, you can spend several hours wandering, walking and just soaking it all in. As I recommended earlier, go to Auschwitz MAIN Camp first. The pictures, exhibits & dioramas shown in the extensive exhibits there will help you to better visualize what these ruins looked like when they were in operation.



When finished, you can walk back to the train station in about 20 minutes or take the bus back to the Main Camp and walk from there. It's about the same walking distance either way.

Camp Opened: 1940
Date Liberated: January 27, 1945 by the Red Army

Background:
Auschwitz is the most infamous of all the concentration camps mainly because of all the killing centers the Nazis set up, the largest number of deaths occurred here.

Oskar Schindler's Factory:

Address: ul. Lipowa 4 (Lipowa Street)
Krakow, Poland

E-mail: None Available

Website: www.geocities.com/Pentagon/7087/uk009.htm

Hours: This is NOT a museum and is NOT open to the public. It is currently an electronic parts manufacturing plant. Walk by, take a picture if you wish, but there is nothing more to see here.



This is where Oskar Schindler (Schindler's List) had his enamel factory. The Jewish prisoners stayed at nearby Plaszow Concentration Camp and worked here.

Today, a plaque on the factory grounds says in broken English:

*"The Workplace over 1000 Jewish
Nationality Persons. During Second
World War - Saved their life by
Oskar Schindler"*

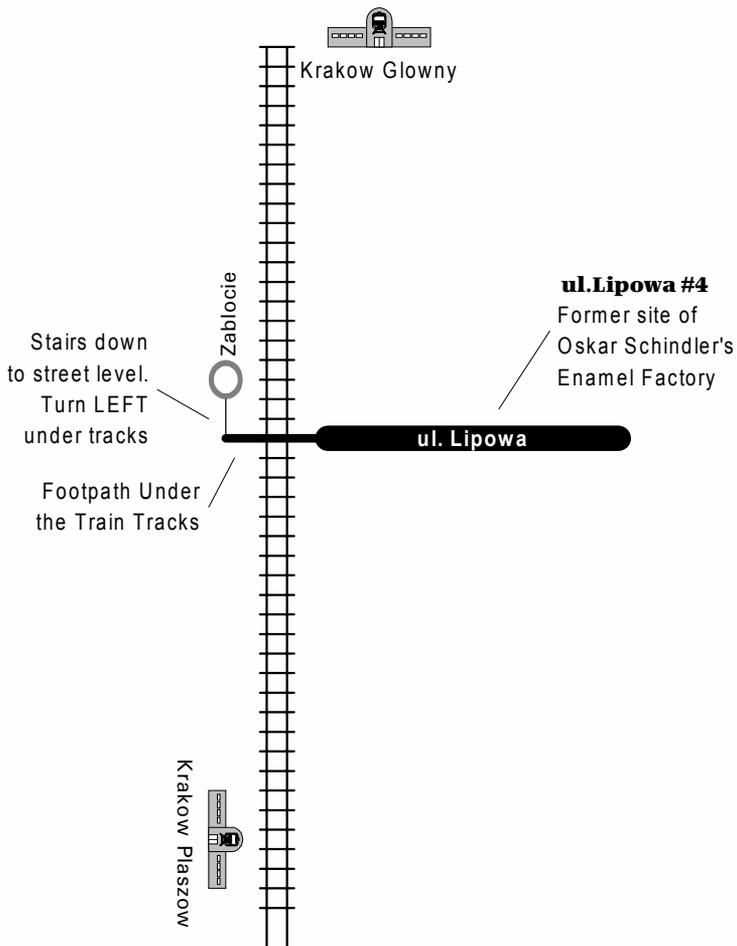
To Walk: **5 Minutes.** From Krakow Glowny take the train in the direction of Wieliczka. The first stop (4 minutes from Glowny) is Krakow Zablocie train platform (*not well marked*, just be aware it's the First stop, 4 minutes out). Exit the train and walk Left down the platform to the stairs down to street level. Turn Left and walk through the tunnel under the tracks and down a small path to the street straight ahead. This is ul.Lipowa (Lipowa Street). Halfway down on the Left side is #4

Recommended

Reading: **Schindler's List**
by Thomas Keneally

Recommended

Viewing: **Schindler's List (1993)** B/W 3 hrs. 17 min.
Steven Spielberg – Director
Liam Neeson as Oskar Schindler
Available on Video. MCA Universal Pictures



SCHINDLER'S FACTORY

Plaszow

Address: Located in a Field. SEE MAP

Hours: There is No Museum, just a couple of monuments, so you may visit at ANY time

Website(s):

www.jewishgen.org/ForgottenCamps/Camps/MainCampsEng.html
www.scrapbookpages.com/Poland/Plaszow/Plaszow01.html

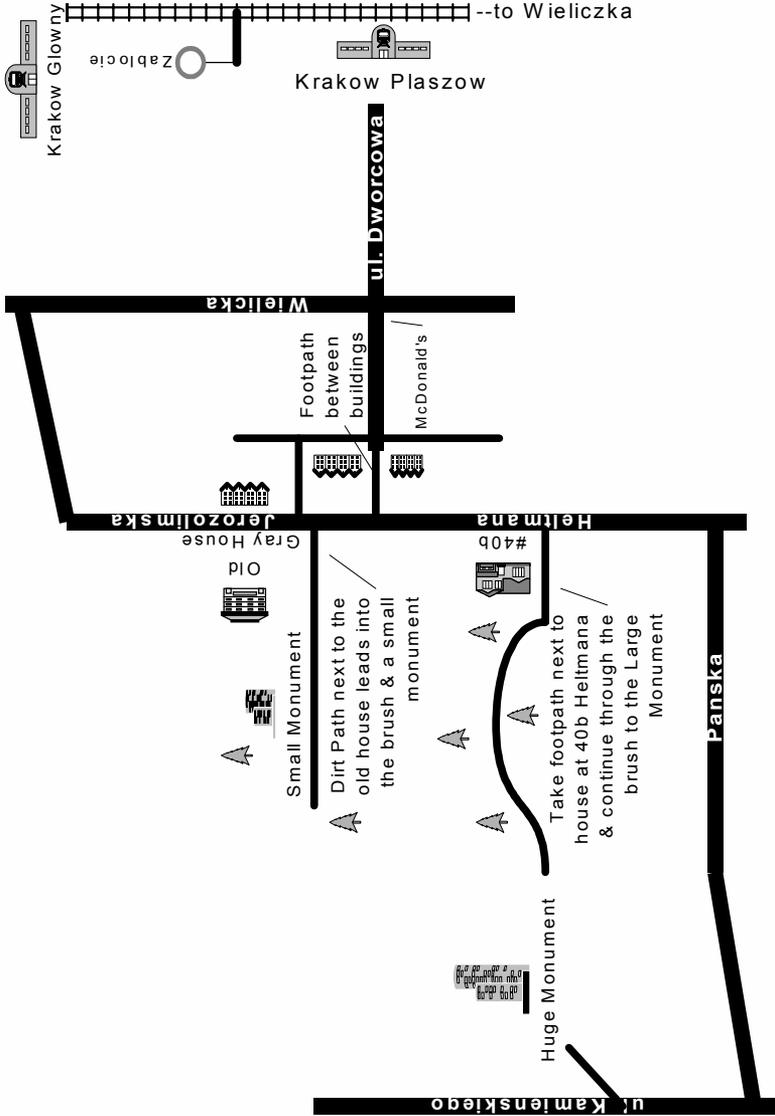
Schedule: Plan on about a half hour to walk around the paths finding the monuments and taking a few pictures.

Approx Train Travel Time to : Krakow Plaszow

From:	Lublin	6:30
	Krakow (Zablocie)	0:02 minutes
	Krakow (Glowny)	0:05 minutes
	Warsaw (Warszawa)	3:00



To Walk: **15 Minutes.** Plaszow station is 2 minutes further down the same line after Zablocie station where Schindler's Factory was.
From Krakow Plaszow station exit the front of the train station, the camp site is about a half mile straight ahead down **ul.Dworcowa**.
The first major intersection is **ul.Wielicka**.
Across the street on the left is a McDonald's!
Cross over ul.Wielicka and continue straight ahead walking slightly uphill up a footpath to **ul.Heltmana** .
Turn right, the street becomes **ul.Jerozolimska**.



PLASZOW

There is a big gray house a few steps down **ul.Jerozolimska** on the Left side of the street.

This house was used as the Plaszow Commandant Amon Goeth's home in the film Schindler's list. His actual house is nearby on the same street.



Take a left down the trail next to the driveway on the left side of this house.

A few steps into the brush area is a very small monument on the Right side of the path.

Litter and garbage is cluttered around.

*As a Memorial
It's a Disgrace.*

You can continue along this path to find your way to the larger monument or walk back the way you came and continue down Heltmana (see Map)

When you get to the house marked **40b** on the Right side of Heltmana, turn Right. Walk ahead and you will see another dirt path that runs behind the house and into the brush

Follow this path for about 5 minutes and you will come to a HUGE monument.

It faces **ul.H.Kamienskigo** which is a main street, but taking the path is faster to reach the monument.



Walk around the FRONT of the monument. **It's Very Dramatic.**



**A huge monument at the former site of the
Plaszow Concentration Camp in Krakow, Poland**

By Bus/Tram: From the City Center: Bus #'s 124, 164, 173
or Tram #'s 3, 43

NOTE: Of all the camp memorials I've been to, this is one of the most neglected and hard to find sites. There are NO signs or markers leading the way to the monuments and there is garbage, broken bottles. and graffiti.

Camp Opened: October 1942

Date Liberated: January 15, 1945 by the Soviets

What Remains:

Absolutely Nothing remains of this camp (depicted in the 1993 movie SCHINDLER'S LIST) but a large hill and field and the Monuments mentioned above. If you saw the movie, you'll remember Kommandant Amon Goeth (pronounced Gert, and portrayed by actor Ralph Fiennes) would shoot prisoners from his balcony. This is the site of the camp that he ran. Many of Oskar Schindler's Jews lived in this camp and worked in his factory during the day. At the end of the war, Goeth was arrested & hanged by the Poles at Plaszow on Sept. 13, 1945.