

# Trails of Hope. The Odyssey of Freedom

<https://szlakinadziei.ipn.gov.pl/sne/exposures/9512,Johannesburg.html>  
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## JOHANNESBURG

JOHANNESBURG, 181 W.  
DUNDEE ROAD, WHEELING, IL  
60090

26.04.2022 - 25.05.2022

SOUTH AFRICA

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## Exposures

Johannesburg is the largest city of the Republic of South Africa and one of the biggest on the continent. It is commonly referred to as “the Gateway to Africa”. Since 1994, it has been the provincial capital city of Gauteng in the Witwatersrand mining area. It is where the oldest organisation of Poles in Africa was founded - the Association of Polish Settlers in South Africa (currently called “The Polish Association in Johannesburg”). The establishment of an organisation for the Polish emigré community in Johannesburg was dictated by the needs of Poles who – after World War II – settled in the then Union of South Africa, and for various reasons (usually political) could not return to their homeland.

After the outbreak of World War II, the number of Poles going to southern Africa increased steadily, due initially to refugees from the Soviet Union, and later soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces. The provision of aid to compatriots was the responsibility of the Polish Relief Fund. In the first years of the war, about 3,500 Polish officers and soldiers were placed in military camps and hospitals within the territory of the Union of South Africa, and their number later increased to about 12,000. Moreover, the government of the Union of South Africa took in a group of about 500 Polish children, mostly orphans, who were deported as victims of Soviet transportations to Siberia from the Eastern Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic in the early 1940s.

After the end of hostilities in Europe, not all the Poles decided to return to their homeland, which was then under Communist rule. Among those who remained abroad was Franciszek Socha-Paprocki, a captain in the Polish Army, who settled permanently in the Union of South Africa. In 1948, he became the President of the Association of Polish Settlers and became involved in the activities of the Polish emigré community (he was awarded the Cross of Independence for his). He died on 18 April 1963.

At West Park Cemetery in Johannesburg, there is a Polish Garden of Remembrance, and its military section includes five graves of Polish soldiers who died in the local field hospital (now called Baragwanath) as a result of wounds suffered in the campaign in West Africa in 1942. The James & Ethel Gray Park meanwhile, contains the only Katyń Monument in Africa, unveiled in 1981 with two additional plaques placed on it in 1989. The first commemorates the 69 South African airmen who lost their lives in 1944 while helping the Warsaw Uprising, and the second commemorates the struggle of the soldiers of the Home Army, the Polish underground army operating during World War II. All the inscriptions on the monument are in three languages: Polish, English and Afrikaans.

It is estimated that the Polish community in southern Africa currently numbers from 10,000 to as many as 30,000 people. In Johannesburg, as well as in other South African cities such as Cape Town or Vanderbijlpark, there are Polish parishes

and schools which form the centre of Polish community life.

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## PRETORIA

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PRETORIA, CORNER KOCH AND 7TH AVENUE

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