



For alternative meanings of Gdańsk and Danzig, see [Gdańsk \(disambiguation\)](#) and [Danzig \(disambiguation\)](#).

Gdańsk, formerly known by its German name **Danzig** (see [Names](#) below), is a city on the [Baltic](#) coast in northern [Poland](#), at the centre of the country's fourth-largest [metropolitan area](#). ^[1]

Gdańsk is Poland's principal [seaport](#) as well as the capital of the [Pomeranian Voivodeship](#). It is also historically the largest city of the [Kashubian region](#). The city is close to the former boundary between [West Slavic](#) and [Germanic](#) lands and it has a complex [political history](#) with periods of Polish rule, periods of [German](#) rule, and two spells as a [free city](#). It has been part of modern Poland since 1945.

The city lies on the southern edge of [Gdańsk Bay](#) (of the [Baltic Sea](#)), in a [conurbation](#) with the [spa town](#) of [Sopot](#), the city of [Gdynia](#) and suburban communities, which together form a metropolitan area called the [Tricity](#) (*Trójmiasto*), with a population of over 800,000. ^[1] Gdańsk itself has a population of 455,830 (June 2009), making it the largest city in the [Pomerania](#) region of Northern Poland.

Gdańsk is situated at the mouth of the [Motława](#) River, connected to the [Leniwka](#), a branch in the delta of the nearby [Vistula River](#), whose waterway system supplies 60% of the area of Poland and connects Gdańsk to the [national capital](#) in [Warsaw](#). This gives the city a unique advantage as the centre of Poland's sea trade. Together with the nearby port of [Gdynia](#), Gdańsk is also an important industrial centre. Historically an important seaport and shipbuilding centre, Gdańsk was a member of the [Hanseatic League](#).

The city was the birthplace of the [Solidarity](#) movement which, under the leadership of Gdańsk [political activist](#) [Lech Wałęsa](#), played a major role in bringing an end to [Communist](#) rule across [Central Europe](#). It is also the home and birthplace of Polish [Prime Minister](#) [Donald Tusk](#), who is of [Kashubian](#) origin.

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Gdańsk



City Center, Centrum from Motława River, Lady from the Window, Neptun, Neptun and the apartment houses of Długi Targ street, Suspension bridge



[Coat of arms](#)

Motto: *Nec Temere, Nec Timide*
(Neither rashly, nor timidly)



Gdańsk

Coordinates: [/ 54.367°N 18.633°E](#)

Country [Poland](#)

Voivodeship [Pomeranian](#)

County	<i>city county</i>
Established	10th century
City rights	1263
Government	
 - Mayor	Paweł Adamowicz (PO)
Area	
 - City	262 km ² (101.2 sq mi)
Population (2009)	
 - City	455,830
 - Density	1,739.8/km ² (4,506.1/sq mi)
 - Metro	1,080,700
Time zone	CET (UTC+1)
 - Summer (DST)	CEST (UTC+2)
Postal code	80-008 to 80-958
Area code(s)	+48 58
Car plates	GD
Website	http://www.gdansk.pl

1. Names



Zwantepolc de Danceke, 1228

The city's name is thought to originate from the [Gdania River](#),^[2] the original name of the Motława branch on which the city is situated. Gdańsk and Gdania are considered to be derivations from the Gothic name of the area ([Gutiskandja](#)),^[3] however this has also been questioned.^[4] Like many other Central European

cities, Gdańsk has had many different names throughout its history.

The name of a settlement was recorded after St. Adalbert's death in 997 AD as *urbs Gyddanyzc* ^[5] and later was written as *Kdanzk* (1148), *Gdanzc* (1188), *Danceke* ^[6] (1228), *Gdansk* (1236, 1454, 1468, 1484, 1590), *Danzc* (1263), *Danczk* (1311, 1399, 1410, 1414-1438), *Danczik* (1399, 1410, 1414), ^[5] *Danczig* (1414), *Gdańsk* (1636). See also [Names of European cities in different languages](#).

In Polish the modern name of the city is pronounced [ˈɡdansk] (ⓘlisten). In English (where the [diacritic](#) over the "n" is frequently omitted) the usual pronunciation is /ɡəˈdænsk/ or /ɡəˈdɑːnsk/.

For much of its history, the majority of the city's inhabitants were [German-speakers](#), who called it *Danzig* [ˈdantsɪç] (ⓘlisten). This name was also used in English ^[7] until the end of [World War II](#), and is still used in historical contexts. Other former English spellings of the name include *Dantzic*, *Dantsic* and *Dantzic*.

In the [Kashubian language](#) the city is called *Gduńsk*. The city's [Latin](#) name may be given as either *Gedania*, *Gedanum* or *Dantiscum*; the variety of Latin names reflects the mixed influence of the city's Polish, German and Kashubian heritage.

1. 1. Ceremonial names



Regia Civitatis Gedanensis (Royal City of Gdańsk) coin of 1589, [Sigismund III Vasa](#) period.

On special occasions the city is also referred to as "The Royal Polish City of Gdańsk" (Polish *Królewskie Polskie Miasto Gdańsk*, Latin *Regia Civitas Polonica Gedanensis*, Kashubian *Królewsczi Polsczi Gard Gduńsk*). ^[8] ^[9] ^[10]

Kashubians also use the name "Our Capital City Gdańsk" (*Nasz Stołeczny Gard Gduńsk*) or "The Kashubian Capital City Gdańsk" (*Stołeczny Kaszëbsczi Gard Gduńsk*).

2. History

Main article: [History of Gdańsk](#)

See also: [History of Pomerania](#)

2. 1. Foundation and the Middle Ages

Early settlements are associated with the [Wielbark culture](#); after the [Great Migrations](#), they were replaced by a [Pomeranian](#) settlement that probably dates back to the 7th century. ^[11] In the 980s, a stronghold was built most probably by [Mieszko I of Poland](#) who thereby connected the [Piast](#) realm with the trade

^[12]

routes of the [Baltic Sea](#). The first written record of this stronghold is the *vita of Saint Adalbert*, written in 999 and describing events of 997. ^[12] This date is generally ^[citation needed] regarded as the founding of Gdańsk in Poland; in 1997 the city celebrated the millennial anniversary of the year 997 when Saint [Adalbert of Prague](#) baptized the inhabitants of the settlement on behalf of [Boleslaw the Brave](#) of Poland. In the 12th century, the settlement became part of the [Samborides' duchy](#) and consisted of a settlements at the modern Long Market, craftsmens' settlements along the *Altstädter Graben* ditch, German merchant settlements around the *St Nicolas* church and the old Piast stronghold. ^[11] In 1186, a [Cistercian](#) monastery was set up in nearby [Oliwa](#), which is now within the city limits. In 1215, the ducal stronghold became the centre of a [Pomerelian splinter duchy](#). In 1224/25, Germans in the course of the [Ostsiedlung](#) established a settlement in the area of the earlier fortress. ^[citation needed]

About 1235, the town was granted city rights under [Lübeck law](#) by [Pomerelian](#) duke [Swantopolk II](#), an [autonomy charter](#) similar to that of [Lübeck](#) which was also the primary origin of many settlers. ^[11] In 1300, the town had an estimated population of 2,000. ^[13] While overall the town was not that an important trade centre at that time, it had some relevance in the trade with [Eastern Europe](#). ^[13] In 1308, the town was in rebellion and the [Teutonic Knights](#) were sent to restore order. Subsequently, they [took over control the town](#). ^[14] Medieval massacre records of 10,000 inhabitants are perceived divergently in modern literature: ^[15] while sources state it as a fact, ^[16] other sources discard it as a medieval exaggeration. ^[15] The alleged massacre was used as evidence by the Polish crown in a subsequent papal lawsuit. ^[15] ^[17] The knights colonized the area, replacing local Kashubians with German settlers. ^[16] In 1308, they founded *Hakelwerk* near the town, initially as a Slavic fishing settlement. ^[14] In 1340, the Teutonic Knights built a large fortress, which became the seat of the knights' [Komtur](#). ^[18] In 1343, they founded *Rechtstadt*, which in contrast to the pre-existing town (thence *Altstadt*, "Old Town" or *Stare Miasto*) was chartered with [Kulm Law](#). ^[14] In 1358, Danzig joined the [Hanseatic League](#), and became an active member in 1361. ^[19] It maintained relations with the trade centres [Brügge](#), [Novgorod](#), [Lisboa](#) and [Sevilla](#). ^[19] In 1377, the *Old Town's* city limits were expanded. ^[14] In 1380, *Neustadt* ("New Town" or "Nowe Miasto") was founded as the fourth, independent settlement. ^[14]



The medieval port crane, called *Żuraw* over [Motława](#) river.

After a series of [Polish-Teutonic Wars](#), in the [Treaty of Kalisz \(1343\)](#) the Order had to acknowledge that it would hold Pomerelia as an [alm](#) from the [Polish Crown](#). Although it left the legal basis of the Order's possession of the province in some doubt, the city thrived as a result of increased exports of grain (especially wheat), timber, potas, tar, and other goods of forestry from Prussia and Poland via the [Vistula River trading routes](#), despite the fact that after its capture, the Teutonic Knights tried to actively reduce the economic significance of the town. While under the control of [the Teutonic Order](#) German migration increased. A new war broke out in 1409, ending with the [Battle of Grunwald](#) (1410), and the city came under the control of the [Kingdom of Poland](#). A year later, with the first [First Peace of Thorn](#), it returned to the Teutonic Order. In 1440, the city participated in the foundation of the [Prussian Confederation](#) which was an organization opposed to the rule of the Teutonic Knights. This led to the [Thirteen Years' War](#) of independence from the [Teutonic Monastic State of Prussia](#) (1454-1466). This intermittent warfare ended on May 25, 1457, when the city - jointly with [Royal Prussia](#) - became part of the [Crown of Poland](#) while maintaining its rights and independence as an autonomous city. ^[20] ^[21]

2. 2. Modern Ages



[Green Gate](#) inspired by the [Antwerp City Hall](#),^[22] was built to serve as the formal residence of the [Polish monarchs](#).^[23]

On 15 May 1457, [Casimir IV of Poland](#) granted Danzig the *Great Privilege* ([German](#): *Großes Privileg*), after he had been invited by the town's council and had already stayed in town for five weeks.

^[24] With the *Great Privilege*, the town was granted autonomy from Poland.^[25] The privilege confirmed to the town independent jurisdiction, legislation and administration of her territory, and the rights of the Polish crown were limited to the following: The Polish king was allowed to stay in town for three days a year, he was further allowed to choose a permanent envoy from eight councilmen proposed to him by the town, and received an annual payment, the *Gefälle*.^[24] Furthermore, the privilege united *Old Town*, *Hakelwerk* and *Rechtstadt*, and legalized the demolition of *New Town*, which had sided with the [Teutonic Knights](#).^[24] Already in 1457, *New Town* was demolished completely, no buildings remained.^[14]



Entry of Queen [Marie Louise of Poland](#) into Gdańsk, February 11, 1646.

Gaining free and privileged access for the first time to Polish markets, the seaport prospered while simultaneously trading with the other Hanseatic cities. After the [Second Peace of Thorn \(1466\)](#) with the Teutonic Monastic State of Prussia the warfare between the latter and the Polish crown ended permanently. After the incorporation of [Royal Prussia](#) by the [Kingdom of Poland](#) in 1569, the city continued to enjoy a large degree of internal autonomy (cf. [Danzig Law](#)).

King [Stephen Báthory's](#) attempt to subject the city, which had supported [Maximilian II](#) in the prior election of the king, failed. The city, encouraged by its immense wealth and almost impregnable fortifications, as well as by the secret support of [Denmark](#) and [Emperor Maximilian](#), shut its gates against Stephen. After the [Siege of Danzig \(1577\)](#), lasting six months, the city's army of 5,000 mercenaries was utterly defeated in a field battle on December 16, 1577. However, since Stephen's armies were unable to take the city by force, a compromise was reached: [Stephen Báthory](#) confirmed the city's special status and her [Danzig Law](#) privileges granted by earlier [Polish kings](#). The city recognised him as ruler of Poland and paid the enormous sum of 200,000 [guldens](#) in gold as payoff ("apology").



Danzig in XVII century, painting by [Wojciech Gerson](#)

Beside the German-speaking majority, whose elites sometimes distinguished their German dialect as [Pomerelian](#),^[26] the city was home to a large number of Polish-speaking Poles, [Jewish Poles](#), and [Dutch](#). In addition, a number of [Scotsmen](#) took refuge or immigrated to and received citizenship in the city. During the [Protestant Reformation](#), most German-speaking inhabitants adopted [Lutheranism](#).



The Town Hall spire, with a gilded statue of King [Sigismund II Augustus of Poland](#) on its pinnacle (installed in 1561), dominates Long Market skyline. [27]

The city suffered a slow economic decline due to the wars of the 18th century, when it was taken by the Russians after the [Siege of Danzig](#) in 1734. Danzig was [annexed](#) by the [Kingdom of Prussia](#) in 1793, only to be broken off by Napoleon as a pseudo-independent [free city](#) from 1807-1814. Returned to Prussia after [France's](#) defeat in the [Napoleonic Wars](#), the city became the capital of [Regierungsbezirk Danzig](#) within the province of [West Prussia](#) from 1815. The city's longest serving Regierungspräsident was [Robert von Blumenthal](#), who held office from 1841, through the [revolutions of 1848](#), until 1863. The city became part of the [German Empire](#) in 1871.

Throughout its long history Gdańsk/Danzig faced various periods of rule from different states before 1945 (in brackets the language of the majority of its inhabitants during that time):

- 997-1308: as part of Poland (Polish)
- 1308-1454: as part of the territory of the Teutonic Order (German)
- 1454-1466: Thirteen Years' War (German)
- 1466-1793: as part of Poland (German)
- 1793-1805: as part of Prussia (German)
- 1807-1814: as a free city (German)
- 1815-1871: as part of Prussia (German)
- 1871-1918: as part of Imperial Germany (German)
- 1918-1939: as a free city (German)
- 1939-1945: as part of Nazi Germany (German)
- 1945-present: as part of Poland (Polish)

2. 3. The inter-war years, and World War II



Monument to the defenders of Polish Gdańsk

When Poland regained its independence after [World War I](#) with access to the sea as promised by the [Allies](#) on the basis of [Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points"](#) (point 13 called for "an independent Polish state", "which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea"), the Poles hoped the city's harbour would also become part of Poland. However, since a 1919 census determined that the city's population was 98% German,^[28] it rather failed to have an "indisputably Polish population" and was not placed under Polish sovereignty, but, in accordance with the terms of the [Versailles Treaty](#), became the [Free City of Danzig](#), an independent quasi-state under the auspices of the [League of Nations](#) with its external affairs largely under Polish control. This led to a large degree of tension between the city and the surrounding [Republic of Poland](#). The Free City had its own constitution, [national anthem](#), parliament ([Volkstag](#)), and government ([Senat](#)). It issued its own stamps as well as

currency.



German Nazi propaganda poster: "[Danzig](#) is German".

The German population of the [Free City of Danzig](#) favored reincorporation into Germany. In the early 1930s the local [Nazi Party](#) capitalized on these pro-German sentiments and in 1933 garnered 50% of vote in the parliament. Thereafter, the Nazis under [Gauleiter Albert Forster](#) achieved dominance in the city government, which was still nominally overseen by the League of Nations' [High Commissioner](#). [The Nazis](#) demanded the return of Danzig to Germany along with an extraterritorial (meaning under German [jurisdiction](#)) highway through the area of the [Polish Corridor](#) for land-based access between the parts of Germany which had become physically separated after World War I. ^[29]

The [Polish government](#) in principle agreed to this proposal until the [Anglo-Polish military alliance](#) in March 1939 effectively canceled the [German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact](#) of 1934 and ended Polish willingness to negotiate concessions. German-Polish relations deteriorated rapidly afterwards, even [escalating](#) into border skirmishes. The German Nazi Government, knowing that its [military strength](#) was inferior to the combined British, French, Polish, and Soviet forces, [invaded Poland](#) on September 1 only after having secured [Soviet approval](#) in late August, hoping to negotiate a peace solution with Britain and France after the end of hostilities. ^[30] This invasion of Poland is regarded as the beginning of World War II.

World War II began in Danzig, with a bombardment of Polish positions at [Westerplatte](#) by the German battleship [Schleswig-Holstein](#), and the landing of German infantry on the peninsula. Outnumbered Polish defenders at Westerplatte resisted for seven days before running out of ammunition. Meanwhile, after a fierce day-long fight (1 September 1939), defenders of the Polish [Post office](#) were murdered and buried on the spot in the Danzig quarter of [Zaspa](#) in October 1939. To celebrate the surrender of Westerplatte, the NSDAP organized a night parade on Sep 7th along Adolf-Hitlerstrasse that was inadvertently attacked by a Polish hydroplane taking off from [Hel Peninsula](#). The city was officially annexed by [Nazi Germany](#) and incorporated into the [Reichsgau Danzig-West Prussia](#).



"Danzig is German". Postage stamp issued by Nazi Germany to celebrate the incorporation of Danzig into [Germany](#) after the [invasion of Poland](#). ^[31]

Most of the [Jewish community](#) in Danzig were able to escape from the Nazis shortly before the outbreak of war. [Nazi secret police](#) had been observing Polish communities since 1936, compiling information, which in 1939 served to prepare lists of Poles to be captured in [Operation Tannenberg](#). On the first day of the war, approximately 1,500 [ethnic Poles](#) were arrested, some because of their participation in social and economic life, others because they were activists and members of various Polish organizations. On September 2, 1939, 150 of them were deported to the [Stutthof concentration camp](#) some 30 miles from Danzig, and murdered. ^[32] Many Poles living in Danzig were deported to Stutthof or executed in the [Piaśnica](#) forest.

In 1941, the Nazi Regime ordered the [invasion of the Soviet Union](#), eventually causing the fortunes of war to turn against it. As the [Soviet Army](#) advanced in 1944, German populations in Central and Eastern Europe took flight, resulting in the beginning of a great population shift. After the final Soviet offensive began in January, 1945, hundreds of thousands of German refugees, many of whom had fled to Danzig on foot from [East Prussia](#) (see [evacuation of East Prussia](#)), tried to escape through the city's port in a large-scale evacuation involving hundreds of German cargo and passenger ships. Some of the ships were sunk by the Soviets, including the *[Wilhelm Gustloff](#)* after an evacuation was attempted at neighboring Gdynia. In the process, tens of thousands of refugees were killed.

The city also endured heavy Allied and Soviet bombardment by air. Those who survived and could not escape encountered the Soviet Army, which captured the city on March 30, 1945. The city was heavily damaged. ^[33] In line with the decisions made by the Allies at the [Yalta](#) and [Potsdam](#) conferences, the city became part of Poland. The remaining German residents of the city who had survived the war [fled or were forcibly expelled](#) to postwar Germany, and the city was repopulated with ethnic Poles, many of whom had been [deported by the Soviets](#) in [two major waves](#) from [Polish areas annexed by the Soviet Union](#), i.e. from the [eastern portion of pre-war Poland](#).

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