

Wieliczka salt mine: UNESCO World Heritage Site; Krakow, Poland (A behind the scene tour)

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42nd Annual New Mexico Mineral Symposium
November 11-13, 2022, Socorro, NM
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The annual [New Mexico Mineral Symposium](#) provides a forum for both professionals and amateurs interested in mineralogy. The meeting allows all to share their cumulative knowledge of mineral occurrences and provides stimulus for mineralogical studies and new mineral discoveries. In addition, the informal atmosphere encourages intimate discussions among all interested in mineralogy and associated fields.

The symposium is organized each year by the [Mineral Museum](#) at the [New Mexico Bureau of Geology & Mineral Resources](#).



Abstracts from all prior symposiums are also available: <https://geoinfo.nmt.edu/museum/minsymp/abstracts>

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WIELICZKA SALT MINE: UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE; KRAKOW, POLAND (A BEHIND THE SCENE TOUR)

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The Wieliczka Mine is the 5th largest salt mine in the world. Founded in the 13th century by Polish King Casimir the Great, it is now 700 years old. Commercial mining was discontinued in 1996 after mining 40 million tons of rock and salt (halite). The mine covers over 5,000 acres to a depth of 1100' with 188 miles of tunnels and 25 vertical shafts. It became a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) site in 1978. It is now one of Europe's major tourist attractions with 1.9 million visitors per year. Much of the tourist route views amazing religious and cultural carvings in the salt walls. Tourist visitors see less than 2% of the mine, whereas the presentation

will include the authors behind the scenes tour of amazing halite crystals, "crystal caverns" and halite/sediment deformation structures.

Wieliczka halite is of Miocene age and was deposited 13 million years ago with a thickness up to 400 feet. It can be tied into the "great Miocene salinity crisis of Europe and the Mediterranean (5000' thickness of halite)." The halite was later deformed by the south to north directed uplift of the Carpathian Mountain front. The halite became mobile, forming spectacular small scale deformation structures seldom seen by the public in the subsurface mine.



Halite carving of Joseph and Mary and halite carved tile floors.



Halite crystals (2 foot photo width). David Stoudt photograph.



Halite carving of Pope John Paul II (Polish pope).



Halite and halite bearing gray shale in a faulted deformation structure (8 foot photo width). David Stoudt photograph.