

Incredible events in Wieliczka

In “Wieliczka”, things happen that exceed the imagination, unique and admirable, and sometimes even seemingly mad. Here are three breath-taking events, all of which took place underground:

Balloon flight

A balloon flight in the Mine underground? Such a proposition sounded like a fairy tale at first. But Mirek Rękas, paraglider and balloon pilot, along with the members of the Tarnów Aviation Association, knew exactly what to do and how to make their dreams come true.

The preparations for the flight lasted almost two years – that’s how long it took to prepare the documentation and expert opinions. The highest chamber on the Tourist Route – the Stanisław Staszic Chamber – was chosen as the location for the action. With a height of up to 36 metres, it was ideally suited for this purpose.

The balloon had a diameter of 14 meters and a height of 18 metres. Initially, it was filled with cold air. Then, electric blowers came into play, bringing the air inside the balloon shell to a temperature of 65°C. The pilot ultimately raised the balloon to the considerable height of 213 cm and kept it there for a whole four minutes. Thanks to this achievement, the Mine became part of the Guinness Book of Records.

Underground windsurfing

“I always dreamed of sailing somewhere, where no one else sailed before”, said Mateusz Kusznierevicz, multiple world and European champion in Finn class. When the TVP2 crew, who were making the programme *Mój pierwszy raz* [My First Time], heard about this, they immediately set out in search of such a place. They Found it underground in the picturesque “Wieliczka” Salt Mine. Kusznierevicz stood on a Starboard Formula 158, the racing board of Formula Windsurfing, on the surface of a 9-metre deep saline lake, located 104 metres underground.

“I’m a little short on space here, and that worries me. But the view of the water calms me”, the Olympic medallist described his experiences as he went. The water, it is worth adding, was very particular – only 8°C warm and with such a high salinity that nothing can drown in it. A huge blower placed on the shore amply made up for the absence of the winds raging on the surface. Mateusz Kusznierevicz himself ultimately proved he was up to the task and that an underground saline lake is a perfect place for a true sailor.

Underground bungee jump

Bungee jumping is one of the most popular extreme sports. Every year, thousands of people take up the challenge to feel the incredible rush of adrenaline and test their nerves. It is said that this sport has been practised for over 2,000 years. It was originally intended to be a ritual custom of the young inhabitants of Pentecost Island, who could demonstrate their adulthood by taking the leap. Legend has it that the first person to bungee jump was a woman.

Today, it is a way to spend time in a pleasant, very exciting way. Jumps are done practically everywhere – from skyscrapers, bridges, special cranes – why not do it underground? This was the thinking of Bogdan Kopka, the founder of an extreme sports centre.

As witnesses describe it, the sight of the daredevil who jumped head first from a height of 36 metres in the underground surroundings of the Stanisław Staszic Chamber was breath-taking.