

Post



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# G'day, Gdańsk! - August 25, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

Today we had a great tour of Gdańsk, Poland. We went to one of the older parts of the city which was incredibly picturesque. According to our guide, 90% of what we saw was rebuilt in its original style (largely Dutch renaissance) after being destroyed during World War II. Apparently between the Germans and then the Russians, not much was left. We visited an old granary which had been turned into a museum, walked the old quarter and visited the world's largest brick church. With free time midday we grabbed a good lunch at a restaurant in the pedestrian section then went with the group for a beer tasting at a local brewery. Dinner back on the ship then we

were bussed back to the old quarter for a performance at the Baltic Philharmonic Concert Hall with an awesome pianist and violinist performing Chopin and works inspired by him. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

Today we add another country to our list: Poland. We're in Gdańsk. The land of Lech Wałęsa, solidarity and the shipyards. That's about all we know. It's grey when we wake up but it may improve. Fingers crossed.

Our tour is called "Tour Medieval Gdańsk". Our guide, Łucas (with a slash through the L) explains there's an Old Town (which is from the 1400s) and a Main Town (which is from the 1200s). When a tourist ask to see the old town, they mean the main town.

On the drive we pass what looks like a huge Russian hat, but amber colored. This is their soccer stadium. It's supposed to look like a huge piece of Amber. Supposedly it won "best looking soccer stadium in Poland". It was also the site of quite a few of the Euro Games (soccer) matches recently.

We drive past the famous Gdansk shipyards and see the monument to the protesters. We're told that Gdansk is considered to be part of the tri-cities, by which they mean nine cities, but a bunch of them are just tourist cities, so they don't really count.

There are a pair of very large (6' across) silver pipes. They run parallel to the road and occasionally go up in the air to let traffic pass underneath. We're told this is extremely hot water (steam?), a byproduct of power generation. It's piped to much of the city's buildings and homes. They're heated with it. It's very efficient and effective. You pay your utility bills, e.g. electricity, gas, phone, internet, and... hot water.

We learn that since medieval times Gdansk was a city of traders. A big thing the area had to trade was grain, so they built granaries. Like 300 of them. Big ones. The storage and sale of grain involves grain dust which is highly flammable so these buildings had lots of open windows. They even built these granaries on a separate island that they built specifically for this purpose. They did this 1) to discourage thieves and 2) so that if it caught fire the whole town wouldn't burn.

In the 16th to the 18th century Gdansk was Poland's biggest city. There were local religious folk and then also people of other religions who came to trade. The locals invited these people of other religions to come then they get rid of all the pesky pegans. They did, but then these people of these other faiths didn't want to leave. "We like it here." What a mess.

In World War II the whole place, pretty much, was leveled. The town has since been rebuilt, amazingly, in the old style. They did an incredible job, the place looks great and it's a huge tourist draw. Who knew?? In cleaning up they found these granaries and started refurbishing them. The deeper they dug the more treasure (historical artifacts) they found. They've now created an astounding museum showing what life back then looked (and in theory smelled) like. It's really well done. The human figurines look like they're out of Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean.

One of the new things they have is a bridge that pivots in the middle of the channel to allow really big ships to pass. We got to see it do its thing. It's open to pedestrians for 30 minutes, and then opens to boats for 30 minutes. Back and forth.

Another of the old things they have is a big double crane for 1) hoisting goods off the ships and 2) erecting masts into place on ships. It's incredibly old and the way it works is that each of the two cranes has, essentially, a giant hamster wheel. It's like 18' tall and humans take the place of the hamsters.

The old houses were tall and narrow, like those in Holland, and go back all the way to the house behind them. There is one big wide street, with a park in the middle, where they didn't rebuild the houses after WWII. Bingo a park/really wide street.

We see where Copernicus's girlfriend lived. We see an amazing astronomical clock that tells the time and all kinds of things about where the sun/moon/stars are. The city fathers were so proud of their clock they didn't want any other city to have such an amazing clock. What to do? They blinded the clockmaker. A bit harsh, wouldn't you say? He was pissed and so he climbed up the clock and destroyed some of the mechanism after which he threw himself to his death. Or maybe not. Maybe after destroying part of the clock he snuck off, went to another town, they cured his blindness (with herbs) and he made them an even better clock that hadn't been sabotaged. Take that!

Karen and I have a great lunch there, halfway through the tour. We see the original thermometer of a local, one Mr. Fahrenheit, maybe you've heard of his "better system" for telling how warm it is? Grrrr.

It's recommended that we visit more of Gdansk (which we want to do) and also Kraków, which wasn't hurt in the war. Warsaw? Not really necessary.

After an early dinner everyone on the ship (who cares to go) is bussed to the Baltic philharmonic Symphony Hall (something like that) where a virtuoso pianist and a very accomplished violinist give a wonderful and very entertaining performance. Woof, very full day.

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## Photos



Their soccer stadium, designed to look like a big piece of amber.



The monument to the protesters in the Gdansk shipyards



One of the many 'real life' dioramas showing what life looked (and smelled) like way, way back when.



One of maybe 300 granaries that were in the town at one time. So much anthropological artifacts have been (and remain to be) dug up. It's astounding. Fun to check out.



The canal separating the island for the granaries and the city. So if one burns they don't lose everything.



A local tourist boat. For those of us alive in the time of Chappaquiddick, this seems to be a bit too "on the nose"!



Each bridge (and there are many) had a gate and teach shares the same name. The buildings were amaze-balls.



In the foreground is the turn-bridge that pivots in the middle to open for boats. In the background is the double human-powered cranes.



The hamster, er, human-wheels for powering the two cranes. see the guy there for scale.



A model of the double crane building.



Some of the detail for the rebuilt buildings. This was done about when Russia was, supposedly, putting a vehicle on the moon. That didn't work out so these artists added a Russian vehicle on this moon to thumb their noses at a not favorite neighboring country.



Gargoyles, to route the rainwater down from the roofs



Copernicus. So proud of him (even though it was only his girlfriend who (may have) lived here.



A truly amazing astronomical clock.



At the hour the apostles (?) all march out and turn to face the faithful and then turn again and head back out.



And at the end, death reminds us of this presence.



The organ in the massive church. It was originally in another church. Does that make this one of the earliest organ transplants?



Such a beautiful city! In the distance is the gate through which the King (who didn't live here) always came through. All lions on any crest? All are looking in the direction of that gate. They must be looking AT the king.



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Great lunch!



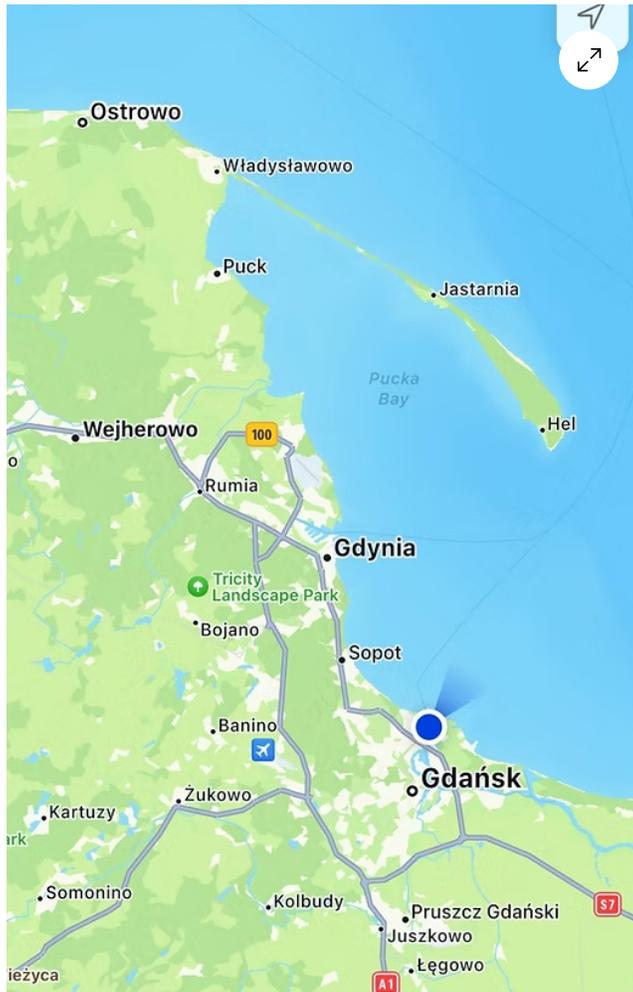
One (of few) buildings not destroyed in WWII



Fahrenheit's original clock. Grrrr



A big diesel motor boat we saw a lot, motoring around around with tourists



Gdańsk and nearby is Hel. The bus to Hel? It's number? That's right. 666. Brother-in-law Don's mother, by the way, is from Ostrowo!



A well rounded building



An awesome evening performance.

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