

Richard Schmidt's Travel Tips for Poland

PROUD POLAND HAS BEEN CRUSHED FLAT SO MANY TIMES IT'S BECOME INDESTRUCTIBLE.

Overrun countless times by marauding aggressors, subjugated to overbearing foreign rule for centuries, and now told their beloved vodka can be made from anything, the Polish nation has endured a lot. Yet Poland is shaking off the last vestiges of forced slumber to warmly welcome the 21st century.

Despite the country's push towards the future, its past cannot be ignored - confronting you at every turn. Warsaw may be embracing new world cuisine, cafe culture, and clubs that never close, but you'll still encounter peasant women selling flowers in its beautifully reconstructed Old Town...



WEATHER: Poland has a temperate climate with mild summers with frequent showers and thundershowers. Spring and summer days can be hot during the day and cool in the evenings. In May and June, the fields are overrun by wildflowers: poppies, cornflowers and daisies. Watch your allergies! A good website to visit is: <http://weatherspark.com>

CLOTHING: Don't over pack! Casual clothing is appropriate for our tour. One thing to keep in mind is that on days that we visit religious sites, the wearing of shorts and sleeveless tank tops is frowned upon and in some cases you will not be admitted unless you are wearing long slacks/skirt and have your shoulders covered. (Having said that, feel free to pack shorts as it can get hot) Bring your bathing suit for the pool and the beach – An umbrella for the rainy moments and a sweater and jacket for the evenings. Sidewalks and streets are often made of cobblestones so flat comfortable shoes are best for walking and don't forget your dancing shoes. Hat, sunglasses and a good lotion for those sunny days are always a good idea. Also keep in mind that the bus is air-conditioned.

MONEY: The Polish unit of currency is the zloty ("zł" or "PLN"). One zloty is equivalent to one hundred groszy (similar to 1\$ = 100.). You can exchange your money in banks (M-F 8AM – 4PM) and foreign exchange offices. ATMs are available throughout the country and credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, big stores, and shopping malls. Cash is needed to buy from local artists in the marketplace and at flea markets and kiosques where we will definitely stop to find bargains. Never carry lots of cash, but rather make withdrawals from ATMs as the need arises. I personally never bring money with me but use my debit card at the ATM when I arrive at the airport and have a credit card as a backup. The zloty has remained steady with an approximate value of 3 to 1 (300 zloty = 100\$), which makes it easy for quick calculations when buying something.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS: Poland is part of the European Union so NO visa is required. Always make a copy of your passport (and credit cards) in your suitcase in case of loss. Keep the originals with you at all times.

LUGGAGE: We are never in one place for too long so you don't want to be dragging tons of bags across the country. One suitcase is best along with a carry-on bag with a name tag on each. Pack shopping bags – Stores rarely have plastic bags.

MEDICINE: Keep your medication with you and not in checked luggage

FOOD: Local foods include bigos (hunter's stew made with meat and cabbage), barszcz (beetroot soup), pierogi (dumplings stuffed with potato/cheese or meat), kielbasa (Polish sausage). Poland is not immune to Westernisation so you will find MacDonald's, KFC and Pizza joints if that is your fancy.

TIPPING: Service charges are usually included in most bills, but leaving change is welcomed.

COMMON WORDS AND PHRASES:

Hello Cześć (CHE-shch)

Good Day Dzień Dobry (JEN-doh-bryh)

Good Evening Dobry Wieczór (doh-bryh VYEH-choor)

Goodbye Do widzenia (doh-VEE-dzen-ya)

Yes Tak (tahk)

No Nie (nyeh)

Thank you Dziękuję (Jen-koo-yeh)

How are you? Jak się masz? (Yak Sheh Mash?)

How much does this cost? Ile to kosztuje? (EEE-leh toh koshtwo-yeh?)

Where is...? Gdzie jest...? (GaJEH Yest...?)

Złoty ZWOH-tyh

WHEN NATURE CALLS:

WC – Water Closet

TOALETA - Toilet

♀- Damski (Ladies) ♂- Męski (Gents)

ELECTRICAL PLUGS

The information below is just a general guideline, and it may or may not be correct for your specific brand and model. The only way to know for your specific appliance is to check. **Laptop / Digital camera / PDA / Blackberry:** Usually 100-240V, 50/60Hz, auto-switching. A travel plug adapter works just fine all by itself.

Cell phone: Usually comes with a charger that is 100-240V compatible, but that is by no means always the case. It's very important to check the charger. If it says "100-240V" then a plug adapter will work fine. If not, the easiest solution is probably to contact your cell phone provider and buy a new charger which is multi-voltage compatible, and attach the appropriate plug adapter to the multi-voltage charger. **Hair dryer:** Most U.S. and Canadian hair care appliances are only compatible with 110-120V, though some higher-end models can be switched between voltages. If your brand/model has a voltage switch, then a plug adapter is sufficient. Otherwise, the appliance will require that the voltage be changed.

Electric shaver: Most U.S. and Canadian corded electric shavers are only compatible with 110-120V. Cordless/rechargeable shavers often come with chargers that are 100-240V compatible.

iPod: You'll have to check the iPod's charger. There are so many different versions, it's impossible to keep up with what kind of charger ships with any particular model. If the iPod's charger says "100-240V" then a plug adapter is sufficient. Otherwise, if it says "120V" then you'll need a voltage transformer. Or you'll need to replace the iPod's charger with one that is 100-240V compatible.

IN CASE WE LOSE YOU...or you lose us

Keep my mobile number handy **011-44-7525-548725**

