



Krakow Poland Trip Notes **September 27 – October 7, 2017**

Overview for Kraków

- Why Kraków? It is interesting, it's a sweet town, full of sad history but also a history of survival. But it is not a Prague Czech Republic nor is it a Ljubljana Slovenia. I don't hear much about it but I would certainly put Tallinn Estonia ahead of it. Yet yes, I am glad to have visited.
- Polish jokes? I don't see where they ever deserved it unless it was just because we had so many immigrants.
- Warm and helpful? Not at all at first but they did ease up after knowing you.
- Language? Excellent English everywhere.
- Economy? Very good bargain pricing for us. Everyone seems to be comfortable. Mostly big new cars. Yet the majority of the buildings could use some tidying.
- Airport? Very close at about 20 minutes \$30 private limo ride. It is a small but modern and convenient airport. Excellent business class lounge with generous food and liquor offerings.
- Lufthansa airlines? Many European airports and airlines require lots of walking, stairs, bus to the plane, all uck that may be partly why the Europeans are thinner than we are. Their planes also more commonly have first class, then business-class, then economy. Thus our business class is not as elegant as we are used to. I guess that I booked Lufthansa for the pricing and because they were code share with United. If money were no object it would not be my choice. Lufthansa is famous for their strikes and strikes that might be called for 24 hours then extended another 24 then another 24 hours. I've been had before.
- Miles of walking. We wore out Tom from the Salt Mines and through the walking tours. There were a lot of miles with most days exceeding 4 miles.



Daily Notes and Pictures ***Into Krakow Poland***

We are here. The flight was on norm in that it was late, the Frankfurt airport is Third World without jetways but rather stairs and buses to the terminal, but everything worked out fine. We got into the hotel after 5 PM and pretty much crashed except for a hotel dinner.

Our first full day meant a leisurely long glorious breakfast buffet and not getting out until noon for a walking tour.

My initial reaction towards Krakow is a remembrance of the first time I was in Budapest; I suggested that once they get over their financial difficulties and tidy up it will be wonderful.

Walking for over five hours was a lot for Tom and I think he is giving up the evening food tour.

From the itinerary: Kraków's old town luckily survived the Second World War, and so you are able to feel the ambiance of the days when it used to be the capital of Europe's largest country. Stunning, magnificent, romantic, charming, fun, friendly and most of all cute... there are countless words to describe Kraków, but none of them entirely show its spirit. Come and join us for a tour around a city that hasn't changed much from the Middle Ages to find out why it was included on the first ever UNESCO Heritage List! It all begins long time ago... (Yes, it's like a fairy-tale, and we will guide you through it: sometimes joyful, sometimes sorrowful.) We will journey through the city's legendary beginnings and its development in the Middle Ages. We will show you where to look to find the city at the height of its power and glory in the 15th and 16th centuries where its streets were walked by Copernicus himself and the city was the capital of the biggest country in Europe, sometimes called United States of Europe. These were the times when the streets of Kraków were like the streets of London or New York today: reverberating with sounds of many different languages, colorful with clothes and exotic goods, and teeming with people from all around the world. The city itself hasn't changed much since those days. When Kraków experienced times of collapse and decline, there simply was no money to introduce big changes and necessary improvements. So Kraków remained as it was at that time: small, cute, and a bit provincial. The city experienced its decline in the 17th and 18th centuries, but rose like a phoenix from the ashes in the 19th century. Then, cultural life flourished and the city was full of artists such as Jan Matejko and Stanisław Wyspiański. From the 19th century, we just have to take a small step forward to enter the city's darkest hour: when the Main Market Square had its name changed to Adolf Hitler Platz. It was also during this time that Kraków became the home of a young man who later changed the fate of Poland. His name was Karol Wojtyła, better known as John Paul II. Like every story, Kraków's story should have a happy ending, right? And today's city will surely provide one! Be ready to watch, touch, listen, smell and taste. You will definitely need all of your senses to discover Kraków!

Art! Lady with Ermine. Here is an interesting surprise to find in Krakow; Artwork that has a lot of story and quite famous. Could the ermine really represent pregnancy and the woman be a mistress to a famous person? https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_with_an_Ermine#Subject_and_symbolism
Leonardo da Vinci's Masterpiece. Krakow is one of just six places in the world that can boast a painting by Leonardo da Vinci (born 1452, died 1519), the old masters' old master. And there are known only three his female portraits of which Krakow's *Lady with an Ermine* is arguably the most beautiful. It's also in the best shape after the 500-plus years that elapsed.

Pictures include the common horse and carriage for tourists, part of their old surrounding walls which mostly has been torn down to make way for a Planty, a wide Park that surrounds old town. A monk with a backpack which surprised me. He was outside of the market. Bubbleman was performing on the largest square in all of Europe. You will see Cloth Hall in the background. Fortunately much of Krakow and especially that square was not damaged in either World War I or World War II. Most of it exists from the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries. Inside the University with our tour guide who followed in the footsteps of ancient folks who went there. Then up the big, big hill to the castle and Cathedral. Though Tom got a little push going up there I'm sure the hill climb is what exhausted him. In between we saw various places where the last Pope who was Polish had lived and later visited.

Since then, we've learned that there is a newly found da Vinci and this rediscovered Leonardo da Vinci painting expected to fetch \$100M. It first went for \$60 at Christies Auction House. Hope it isn't like those rediscovered Vermeer that later turned to be fakes. <http://www.cnn.com/style/article/da-vinci-painting-auction/index.html>



Friday Evening Food Tour with Crazy Guides

I was picked up from the hotel and driven to the main square in a Trabant. Tom gave up the evening.
 History of the cardboard box called a car: <https://www.thoughtco.com/trabant-built-of-plastic-and-socialism-726030> .

Food tour with folk music. Very late night for a first day of jet lag. It turned out to be private because Tom was unable to attend. He later got a zip bag of samples, a photo tour, but missed the seven vodka samples. I made an honest attempt at drinking his too.

From the itinerary: "Savour the traditional, hearty Polish cuisine in our centrally located folk style restaurant. Try delicious bread with lard & pickles, Oscypek (smoked cheese), Zurek (sour rye soup), Pierogi (dumplings), Bigos (traditional stew) and grilled sausages accompanied by five different shots of Polish spirits including the famous Wyborowa rye vodka and Slivovitz plum brandy. Yummy!" They forgot the blood pudding. Looks awful but tastes great.

Additional entertainment included a big table of big boys who had started before with big drinking and continued "bigly." (Did you know that "bigly" was supposed to be Big League? Our leader slurred it into Bigly). One of those boys came to the mini dance floor in front of our table with his wooden chair in hand. He danced with it, dropped it and broke it, and carried on.

Misc tidbits:

Grandma still makes pierogi by the dozens and shares them around the family.

My 29 year old guide (turned out to be a private guide) cooks too.

She came from Warsaw, studied 6 years in London, got a degree in photography, returned to Warsaw, then was offered this job with Crazy Guides 4 years ago and stayed.

Tourism is up heavily in part because tourists got spooked about terrorism in other countries. If there was any here, it was hidden. The only act of terror I heard about was their president's wife declining Trump's handshake. Polish folks were said to be especially proud of her for that but I suspect it was only a mistake.

Birthdays? When they eat and party it's on Name Day which is celebrated more commonly than a birthday. I learned that a Polish calendar marks every day with someone's name day.

Milk Bars - they were communist supported and still government subsidized and plentiful. The Crazy Guide Communist Tour goes to them. Dirt cheap food.

From Milk bars <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/poland/articles/discovering-polish-food-the-best-milk-bars-in-krakow/> The first milk bar was set up in 1896, and the continued and flourishing existence of milk bars in the country's cities can perhaps be attributed to waves of Communism and depression which characterized the political and economical situation in Poland at multiple times throughout the 20th century.

Poland is NOT an Eastern European country as generally thought. The Polish people hate being thought of as being a middle eastern European country. It's nearly landlocked by a surprising number of countries. Clockwise: Russia. Lithuania. Belarus. Ukraine. Slovakia. Czech Republic. Germany. Baltic Sea.

Krakow is as close to Prague as it is to Warsaw. This is of interest to me because Kraków is on the edge of other countries and so far from its capital.



Krakow was the capital of Poland until a Crazy King practicing Alchemy blew up half the castle necessitating the move to Warsaw. Did I hear that he had the same accident in Warsaw but it was his final act.

And then I discovered the Polish after-dinner drink but I never learned what it was called. Probably a sweetened vodka. It was like a grappa or an eau de vie but slightly sweet and very powerful. Super!

And on that I think this is my final act for the day.



Saturday and into Sunday in Krakow

We find that taking an overview bus tour gives us a different feel for the city so that was our initial effort on Saturday followed by a long walk to review.

Sunday has us moving from a junior suite into their biggest and best suite which we have not seen yet but will offer a picture of each from the website.

Pictures include:

Hotel towel sculpture.

Street signs from old days for those who couldn't read.

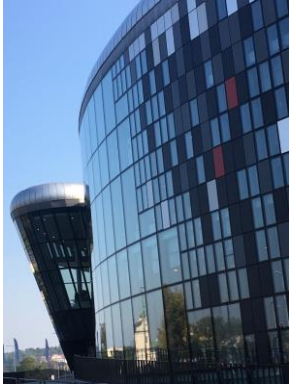
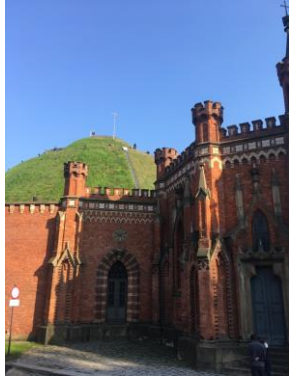
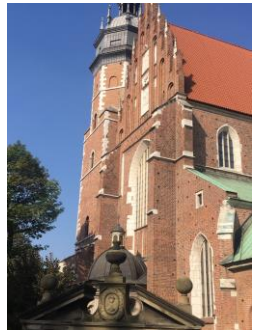
Larger than life empty chairs seen in the Jewish quarter.

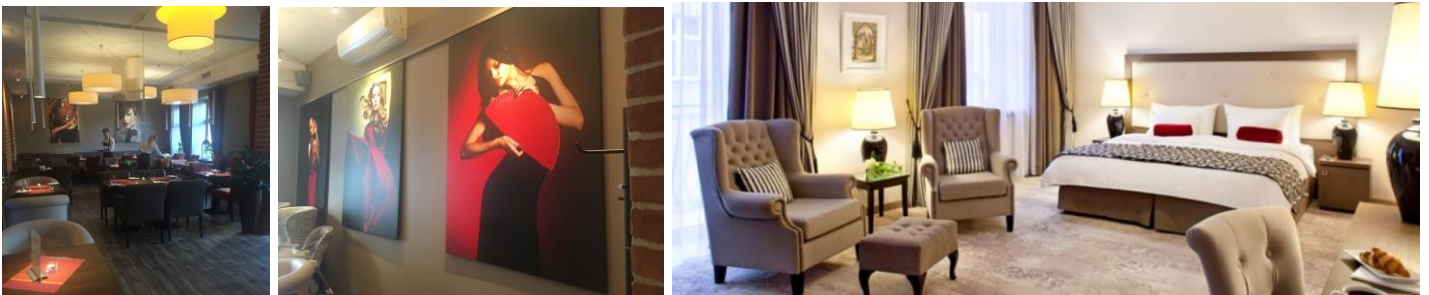
Craft stalls in the old historic cloth house.

The oldest café in Kraków.

The breakfast room in our hotel.
Our current junior suite and then the room we are to move into later Sunday.

We are off to a guided walking tour of the Jewish quarter.





Sunday walking tour of the Jewish quarter.

From the itinerary: A Jewish world without Kazimierz would be as empty as a body without a soul. In a different time, in a different Kazimierz, one of the greatest Jewish scholars to ever live said: “the aim of man is to search for the cause and the meaning of things”. Let’s follow his advice and go deeper into the history of the Jewish presence in Kraków.

Poland is a place where Polish Jews and Polish Catholics lived together side by side for generations. The Jews had been present in Poland and Kraków since the very beginning. Their population grew rapidly over time, thanks to the religious tolerance and social autonomy they were granted here. The Jews, who had been expelled from countries all around Europe, found their home in Poland.

Here, in Kazimierz, Jewish history quickened, both in terms of culture and learning. Up until the mid-16th century, there was no other place in the Jewish world more significant than Kazimierz. Even today, Jews from all over the world travel to Kazimierz and Poland to find roots of their spirituality. By the end of the 1930s, the Jewish community of Kraków constituted about 25% of the city’s population. This vibrant and diverse community was almost totally destroyed during the Second World War.

Today's Kazimierz is a very peculiar place. One can experience here many contradictory emotions at the same time: joy at discovering the rich history, culture and traditions of Polish Jews; sadness and nostalgia for the pre-war, lost world, and excitement while becoming a witness to the rebirth of Jewish life. It is here in Kazimierz where the biggest Jewish Festival in the world takes place being the best proof that life and culture is always stronger than death and destruction!

Let us take you to Kraków's Kazimierz and Kraków's ghetto. You will hear hair-raising stories, but you will also hear ones that are uplifting and offer comfort. Here you can also face and challenge some of the stereotypes about Poland, Polish Jews and Polish-Jewish relations.

The significance of Kazimierz can be measured by one more thing. After years of communism, when culture was suppressed and silenced, it was here where a cultural outburst took place. Today, Kazimierz continues to be a favourite place among artists and other free spirits.

Pictures include:

In an earlier report I gave you a picture of the Old Trabant car with its related history and stories. I learned that there was also a communist era minivan and some of them have been restored sufficiently to give tourist tours. This red one looks pretty modernize but I bet it's very bumpy like the Trabant.

Hey, I call selfie-taking folks "selfie twits" and I hate their intrusion at museums. But here we are with a two-for-selfie.

We have seen a lot of brides that look like they should be very cold. This gal in the Jewish quarter was smart enough to wear a jacket.

Why a picture of an old sewing machine? It was an outdoor bar in the Jewish quarter on a square noted for all their unique bars. Every table was a sewing machine.

We call this people-bridge the Cirque du Soleil Bridge. They call it the lover's bridge because of all the locks with keys having been thrown away. Our guide suggested that instead of a key, a combination lock might be more logical. It was on our way to the old Ghetto and Schindler's factory. Apparently the acrobatic figures did not appear at first and for a long time no one knew who had installed them. They appear to be changeable as I found one article with different acrobats.
<http://fossaert.be/2016/12/acrobats-on-krakows-loversbridge/>

Just after the bridge we saw the sushi taxi with a green round trailer on the back that said it was food from Thailand. It puts new meaning to food trucks.

I hope it is not sacrilegious to sit in these chair monuments to the lost Jewish people. But Tom managed about 4 miles today and deserved a sit-down. We don't know why one chair was covered with crochet.

<http://www.absolutetours.com/blog/lonely-chairs-in-the-centre-of-a-once-crowded-square-the-history-behind-the-ghetto-heroes-square/>

Whatever would you think about a monk giving a tour of the Schindler factory?

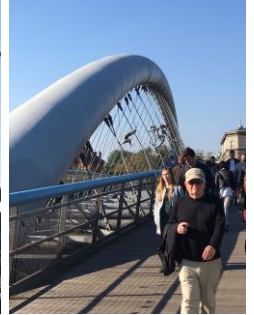
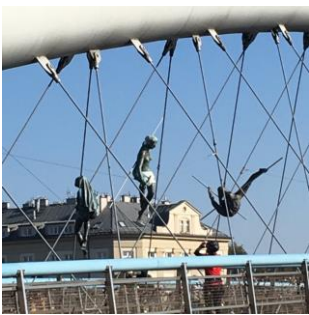
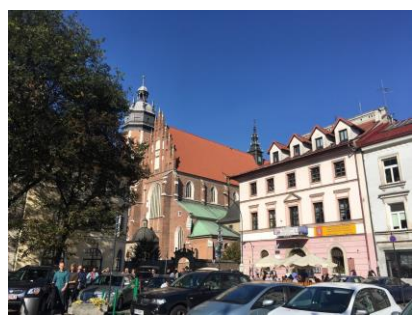
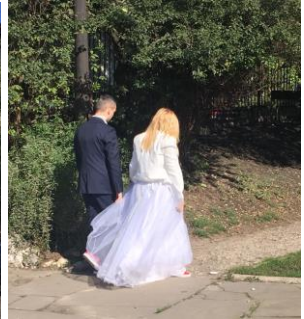
Some frivolous little statuary in a souvenir shop.

We returned to the first night in our lovely suite and found it to be quite nice so we celebrated with the hotel's champagne gift from our arrival. The price of this huge lovely suite is somewhere in the ballpark of a New York City junk hotel night. Which means to say that traveling in Poland so far appears to be quite the bargain.

We didn't go spend the money we saved on a big dinner but chose to use our little kitchenette for sandwiches and snack tidbits and finished the champagne.

Tomorrow we are off for a long day trip to the salt mines.

Seen on our walking tour of the Jewish sector of Kraków today (remember the awful stories of the Jewish ghettos in Poland set up by the Nazis after the German invasion?)





Monday to the Salt Mines!

From the itinerary of www.DiscoverCracow.com - You can expect - Enter the salt city! Salt Mine Krakow is an underground labyrinth stretched over 9 levels at 64 to 327 meters below the surface of the Earth. A labyrinth of nearly 2,400 chambers is connected with sidewalks with a total length of 245 km. It is an invaluable monument of material culture, inscribed in 1978 on the UNESCO Heritage List. "A must see. Totally amazing place" Highlights: Underground galleries, chambers and lakes, Positive influence on health, One of the oldest salt mines listed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.

Wieliczka Salt Mine is one of the most precious and fascinating Polish monuments. The first tourist trail in Wieliczka was established as early as at the turn of the 19th century. A couple of centuries later the salt mine was designated as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (1978). The underground trail leads through numerous drifts, galleries and chambers, where traces of mining activity have been preserved, as well as examples of sacred art, theme compositions relating to the history of the mine and legends. The microclimate of the mine has a beneficial impact on visitors who suffer from asthma and allergies. The tour starts with a descent down the stairs to the depth of 64 meters. Visitors are led through a number of chambers and shown underground lakes, shrines and salt monuments. The trip finishes at the level of 135 meters below the surface. Visitors return to the surface by lift. End.

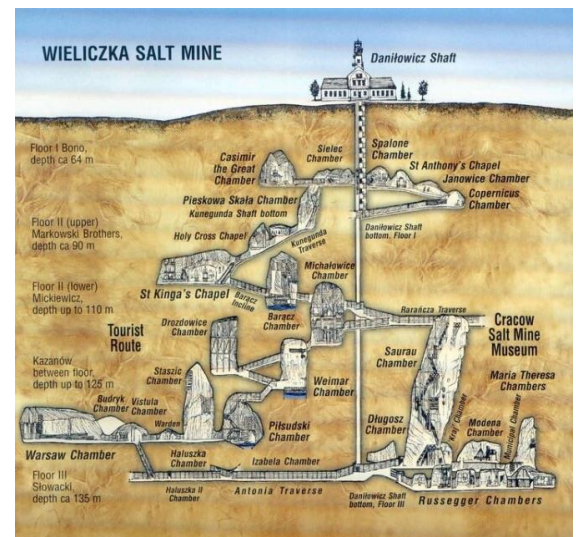
Learn more?

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wieliczka_Salt_Mine

Review. Poorly done as much because they had too many people. When I complained about not being able to hear, they chastised me by saying I was in off-season and it was small amount of people compared to the summer. Wow. It was a Sea of humanity. Lots of confusion and concerns of getting lost. Note to File: this trip requires a private guide. There are over 800 steps descending and they are more tiring than I expected. Tom guessed there were more like 8000 steps. He did well especially when I admit that I expect to be somewhat sore from the pounding of many rock steps. The darn "whisper" audios simply do not work in the back of the pack and much is left to be desired. Tom "desired" that he hadn't gone!

My complaints were treated with a sort of indifference like the attitude we encounter at the hotel. I'm more put off by it than Tom is. A service attitude has been scarce but I suspect it's something in the Polish psyche yet to be figured out. They've been through a lot and it doesn't take much learning about their repression to admire what they've now accomplished.

English language seems to be easier for the Polish people. There are little to no accents like we find in Italy or France as examples. Polish sounds rough, choppy and broken to us.



Taxi are or aren't on meters? They aren't outside Schindler's Factory but they are rude and on the take. We needed a taxi no matter the price.

This is the family home of John Paul II and there are numerous half-day and full-day tours following in his footsteps. Darned if I can figure out why but there is some kind of cream cake that each of the Tours offer on the Pope's tour. While I don't think I have much interest, when we are in Rome in late December Marie and I might go to the plaza to see the current Pope. Her custodial family is Catholic. (I say I have no interest but I have a series of books about the history of the popes. They are very colorful having sired a number of children and a number of wars).

Pictures include:

Lovely grounds at the Salt Mine.

Walls, floors, everything is salt.

Chapels, carvings, little recreated villages, and fanciful stories.

Even a Last Supper full wall carving of salt.

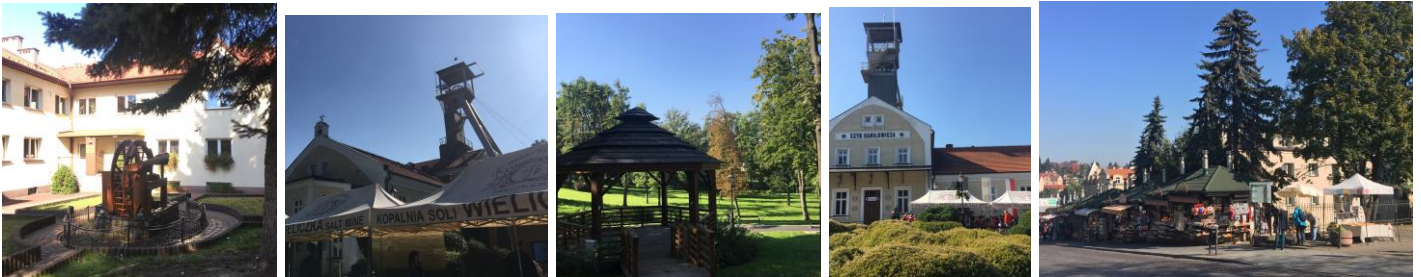
The last four pics are from the web.

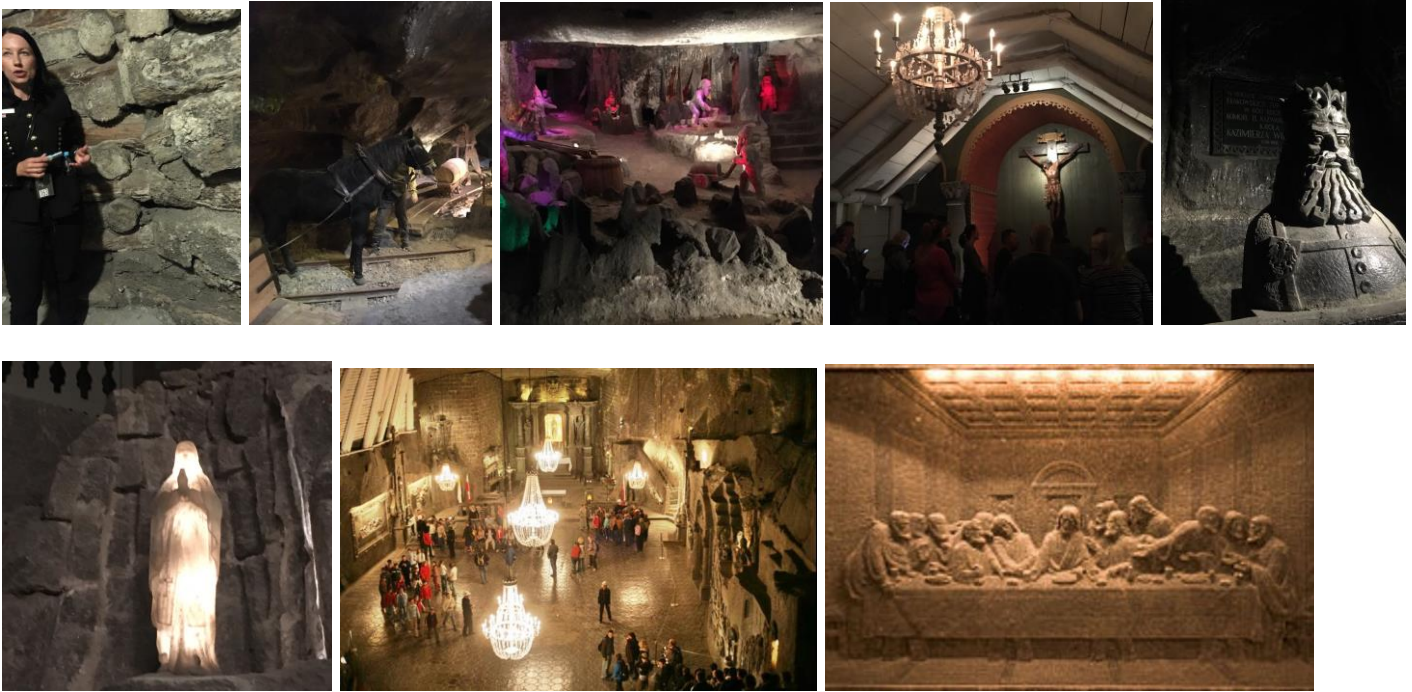


We ended our day with another walk through the Jewish Quarter main square and took in a very local restaurant and their cabbage, pork and potato dishes.

Tomorrow takes me to Auschwitz and Tom on a walking food tour in the Jewish Quarter.

PS. Just learned the Missing Bag left behind in Barcelona has now found its way to Middletown. I expect it's likely intact. It may now need a leash as it's not the first time it was lost. It's return speaks well of humanity and its loss brought about many sweet stories of other Good Samaritans.





Tuesday so it must be Belgium? Nope - a sad day spent at the concentration camps.

Tom wisely chose to skip this tour and is off on a 2:45 hour food tour in the Jewish Quarter known as a food haven. I expect he will collect dinner sites.

From the itinerary: Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial by www.Discovercracow.com - You can expect - Auschwitz Birkenau Tour reveals one of the best-known concentration camps in the world; it is a place of genocide where approximately 1.5 million people were killed during WWII. The tour includes a visit to Auschwitz I - the administrative centre of Auschwitz death camp and Auschwitz II, designed and constructed as an extermination facility. The place has remained a living monument of death. Documentary screening in the bus.

Every year, millions of people visit Auschwitz from around the world walk through the gate of Auschwitz Birkenau bearing a fallacious inscription: Arbeit macht frei – “Work sets one free”. Defeating the same route as prisoners for over half a century ago. The program of the visit comprises the introduction to the origins of the camp, its history and the everyday life of its prisoners. The complex was established in 1940 and throughout the five years of its inglorious operation over 1.5 million Jews, Poles, Italians and Frenchman perished here. It should be emphasized that the prisoners of Auschwitz originated from every country in Europe. The museum was founded in 1947, combining the area of KL Auschwitz I in Oświęcim and the Birkenau camp/Auschwitz II in Brzezinka; it comprises approximately 150 buildings and 300 ruins. The original roads, fences, watchtowers and railway ramps have been preserved. The buildings house the collection of original exhibits and documents. In 1979, the concentration camp was designated as one of the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. End.

Note to file: forget this tour company. They were again disorganized and pick up was over 30 minutes late. They blamed it once on traffic and once on hotel pick-ups. I'm cynical and suspect they consolidated tours. I did and will say more about the poor attitudes of too many Poles in the service industry - it's somewhere between aloofness and rudeness.

Drive time: 1:20 with documentary promised while on the bus. The movie didn't happen nor did the Wi-Fi work (until I requested it on the way home). Yet it was a lovely drive with lush greenery,

mountains, rich homes and small castles on the way. Unfortunately many traffic circles too which is like riding on small mountain roads.

Agriculture is their main export. Apples big business. We saw a lot of farmland on the drive. Plus in and out of new growth forests.

Weather: rain, dark and dreary, which is appropriate for such a tour. Made for a drenched raincoat despite the umbrella and soggy shoes. I added a \$2 plastic raincoat for the second half of the tour which was totally outdoors. It would be all wrong for the sun to shine on this area.

Friend in Belgium who had been in this camp; he had gruesome stories of how he was used for experiments. We still have an oil painting of our house in Erbisoeul Belgium that he painted despite the damage to his arms from camp doctors doing medical experiments. Dr Mengele ? was never found so allegedly never prosecuted. Surely he met his own fate in some way.

This was a tough day emotionally for me. The sadness of history that happened just about the time I was born. The sadness that I see things happening in our country that are much too similar to the start of these atrocities. The sadness that we are all worried about being politically correct and or accepting some very ugly leadership. The worry that I am being like so many during the concentration camp time and just being quiet for fear of causing upset. The white-supremacist movement grows like the plague.

Krakow observations:

Mostly new and larger cars. I'm told that when the communist regime ended they got rid of their little junk horrible cars and it was a new status symbol to have a big new car. I don't know if they're in debt but I know that the cars overall look better than most places in Europe where I travel.

Religion is important: Religion in Poland. I am told that there are a huge number of churches and they are full to the brim whenever there are services. <http://www.staypoland.com/poland-religion.htm>

Krakow safety. I am told that there is a general feeling of safety for the tourists and the residents alike. <http://www.krakowpost.com/5226/2012/06/10-tips-for-staying-safe-and-legal-in-poland-during-the-euros>

Why do Poles NOT want associated with Eastern Europe? Why do they insist they are Central Europe? (Look at the map as they are more western geographically than expected). Some say it's because Eastern Europe has been so poor. More say it's because they do NOT want associated with Russia - which is more easterly.

Pictures include:

The first two are from the Internet. It was not only a dark, dreary and wet day but it just seemed wrong to take pictures.

I did take a picture of the mock-up of the ovens. People were kept calm by telling lies. They were given towels and soap bars and told they were going to the showers. Millions.

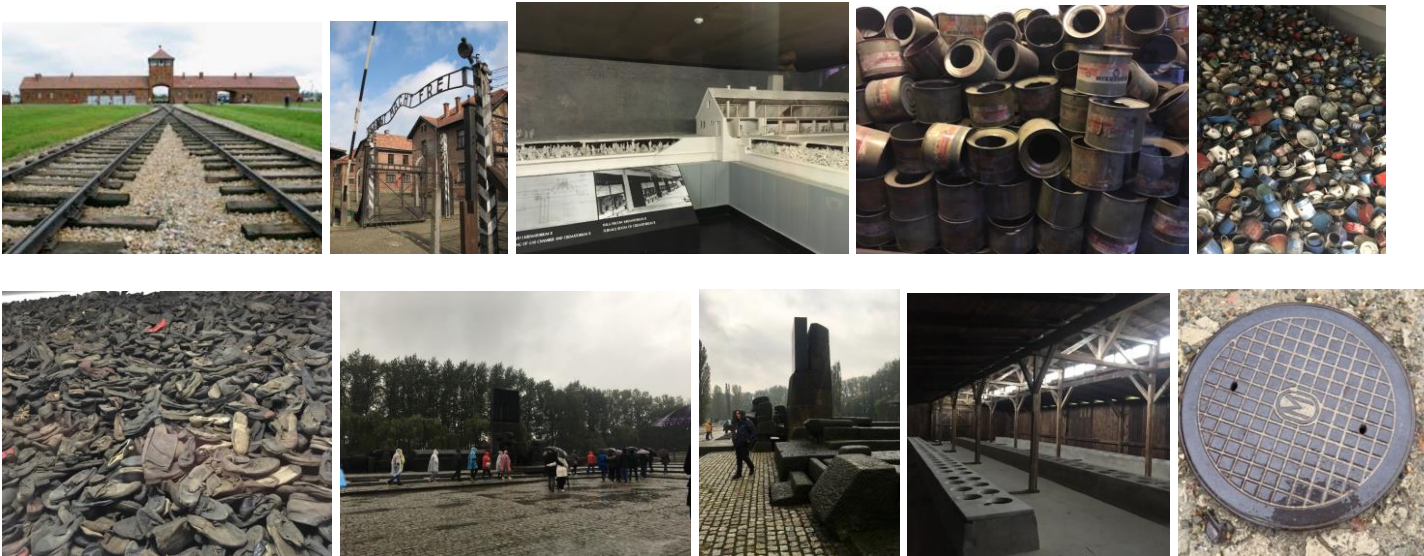
One room was filled with empty canisters of the chemical used. One room was filled to the brim with collected shoes, another room filled with human hair.

Women brought with them pots and pans thinking they would be needed.

For a long time there were no latrines and only a big ditch with a rope to hold on but many slipped down anyway to be drowned in feces.

Later these rows of toilets were built and prisoners were allowed a moment or two twice a day into the latrines.

The manhole cover would have come much later.



Wednesday - still another food tour! Honest! One learns a lot about a country through its food.

Yesterday afternoon while I was off feeling sick if not lousy at the concentration camp, Tom was enjoying a food tour in the Jewish quarter.

He very much enjoyed his tour guide whose name was Maciek and pronounced as "magic". He reports having had the sour rye soup; a ham, sausage, kielbasa, and country cheese on a skewer; breads, fresh vegetables of a root family at the local market; two kinds of pierogies with fried onions; tasting of 4 types of vodka; and finished up with a visit to a pastry shop with samples of a poppy cake, chocolates and some candies.

So I went on a food tour the first night without him. And he went on a food tour last night without me. Then today we went on one together. There were similarities with all of them, but all guides were different with different stories, and always lots of vodka. Always the feeling that we were a bit of a part of Poland.

Today - Itinerary from www.discovercracow.com - You can expect - Can you imagine getting to know Polish culture by any way better than its food? Food is an important part of every culture. Highlights

- Wander through Cracow's Streets to discover a real taste of the city. Sample traditional Polish dishes and learn how to prepare them by yourself
- Get to know Polish culture through its traditional food: dumplings, pickled cucumber, sour rye soup, a shot of homemade liquor and much more!
- Wander through Cracow's Streets to discover a real taste of the city
- A small group tour assures the personal attention of your local guide (a culinary specialist)

Our Street Food walking tour involves all your senses and shows you places you will not find by yourself! Our local inhabitant and food lover will straightaway lead you through the most important food places in Cracow. On the way is the oldest food market, a restaurant with homemade food usually visited by locals, and a cafe with homemade liquours. Apart from tasting, you will get a full commentary as to why particular dishes are on Polish menus and a lot of anecdotes. So don't hesitate and join us, your stomach will thank you! During the tour we will try: bagels, sausage, pickled cucumber and cabbage, cheese, dumplings, sour rye soup, cake with coffee and a shot of homemade liquor. End.

I will give you a bunch of pictures of our food tour with a cute little Russian gal from St. Petersburg who lead us and finally our stop in the vodka shop where we remained much longer than the rest of

the tour. We remained with one of the weirdest kooks we have ever met and also with one of the loveliest guys from San Francisco that we have ever met. Of course he was gay, of course he was gorgeous, and very conversational. We enjoyed that he and his partner were on a six-month extravaganza tour through Europe and Asia. Gay boys know how to live.

The Best? Plum Vodka. Sandalwood and Herb Vodka. And for Tom the raspberry vodka. I think I drank all of my sample, all of Tom's that he didn't like, and purchased still another one. I floated home.

Today is our anniversary which legally was from 1970 but we have been together since 1968. We will have a special reserved dinner in commemoration tomorrow night. Tonight we were unsuccessful at working off all of the calories we consumed on her food tour.

Later we took a walk along the Planty. That used to be their city wall or ramparts but is now about 3 kilometer circle of Park lands. We were searching for and found an old Parisien restaurant but since changed to a bar and art exhibition location. Close by was the theater that we saw on an earlier walking tour but much more gorgeous at night.

Pictures include:

Next-door to our lovely boutique hotel is a "goodbye Lenin" hostel.

The market Square of Kraków is the largest in Europe. The panoramic picture given to you is only one half of it. The other half is on the other side of the historic cloth house.

Our little Russian tour guide is showing us how you can purchase the fermented syrup to make the usual Polish sour rye soup.

That was in the local market where we purchased a number of items of snacks to include sauerkraut, pickles, sausages, and the cheap sheep cheese which looks rather naughty.

Note that there seems to be no problem with purchasing a half or a quarter of a chicken with all innards included.

Those lovely purple flowers? They are artichokes.

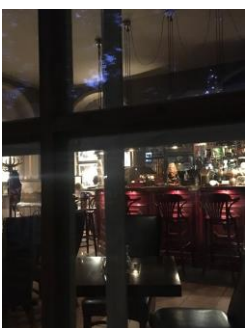
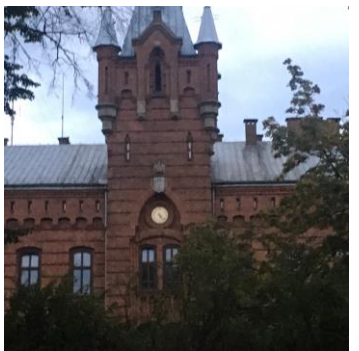
Tom especially enjoyed the name of our sit-down restaurant which was something like "chopsticks". There we have the typical lard and pork chitterlings that you spread on bread, with pickles, the sour rye soup, and pierogies.

I don't know why the cute little hedgehogs were in the window of the pastry shop but we certainly enjoyed the pastry which was made famous by the last Pope who was Polish.

Most of the pictures to include the female body of a glass bottle and the huge containers of various types of vodka were in our favorite spot – the vodka shop.

The 6'3" good looking fellow was the San Francisco gay boy who so impressed us. Next to him the little short fat semi balding fellow from New Mexico was as weird as they could possibly be. He was writing a story about the spiritual influence of alienswe enjoyed his weirdness for a while but the more he drank the more we knew we had to get away from him.





Thursday - World War II walking tour

Itinerary: The time of the German occupation of Krakow is considered to be the most difficult period in the history of the city. It was a time of darkness but also a time of true heroes. A time of courage, fear and betrayal, when even the simplest decision could have grave consequences. A time that lives in us thanks to the stories of our parents and grandparents. On this tour we will learn about the Nazi plans towards the Poles and understand how they repressed their victims. We will also talk about the citizens of Krakow and their attitudes towards the Germans. That's true – Kraków didn't have an uprising and the city wasn't demolished, but resistance movement still had its part during WWII. End.

We started near the castle and ended far away on the opposite side of town at the old Gestapo headquarters. It was a lot of new territory for me and also went through some student quarters. At the end I was wet, cold and shivering so stopped at a pub for a warm-up before returning to the hotel. Then backwards toward city center with Tom for dinner.

Weather: It was cold and wet once again like the day I went to the concentration camp but at least it wasn't pouring rain.

A note on our hotel: It is lovely, well rated, and certainly deserves its four or five stars. I'm reasonably sure that the bathroom is larger than the room we will have on our next trip's river cruise ship. Plus we have a second toilet room which is very helpful and which I find civilized since we live at home with two bathrooms. All this for a price of a cheapo hotel in New York City.

Yet the hotel has a disadvantage that it is not on or within the Planty ringed park. It means either hunting for the rare taxi or wearing out Tom by the time we get to Center City. So today he sent me off on a walking tour by myself. I was into 4 miles by the time I started the walking tour. My iPhone pedometer showed about 9 miles by the end of the day.

The Planty has lots of park benches, lots of chestnut trees with children picking them up at this time of the year, children's playgrounds, and plenty of unique sculptures.

We have arranged our official 47th anniversary dinner for 6:00 PM. It would have been yesterday but we ate and drank so much on our food tour. Next year will be our 50th anniversary of meeting and being together. At <http://kogel-mogel> we had Duck Pate with a plum sauce, a bottle of Malbec, Beef cheeks for me and Duck leg with plum sauce for Tom who finished with a dessert of profiteroles.

Piano. I really liked it but Tom tried to move our table. Nice and soft and American type music that all felt good. Isn't it interesting how American music has engulfed the world? And often times educated it too.

Special cities: Kraków Poland versus Ljubljana Slovenia versus Prague Czech republic. We are here because when we were in Ljubljana, we were told that Kraków is another Prague. A wonderful tour guide in Austria also told us that Krakow was another Prague. I don't totally disagree but I would probably put Tallinn Estonia ahead of Krakow. Kraków however has a lot more sites to offer and much more variety than Tallinn. Tallinn is only a two hour ferry ride to Helsinki which is an advantage.

Pictures include:

On my wet early morning walk.

One of the oldest cafés in the city.

A café with cute seating but not exactly our style.

Back streets around the castle which were new to me.

Inside the Bishop's home where our last Pope worked.

Inside one of the older university buildings where during the occupation they kept educating though illegal and a large number of people even earned their PhD's during occupation.

Far across town in the old German quarter and near to the Gestapo headquarters, were a number of old signs for bomb shelters. Remember that the Polish people had both in German and the Russian occupation.

The face of the Gestapo headquarters which is now a museum and which I just didn't have the stomach to go into.

Then onto pictures of better things - a big extreme for the day being our big dinner. Ending with the END of the duck leg.





Friday and Leonardo in Kraków Poland

This is our last full day in Kraków. We had near 10 days and it was probably sufficient. What we did might well have been accomplished in six days but not by us. It is full of history, sadness, and now for a little art.

We all know the Mona Lisa in Paris but maybe didn't realize there are barely a handful of these type paintings in the world.

Finding the Leonardo da Vinci "Lady with an Ermine" can be a challenge. The tourist book said that the museum was under renovation and would open mid-2016. Not. Some brochures said that it was temporarily housed in the Castle Museum. Not. Since late 2016 it has been at the National Museum. I thought that would be a place Tom would enjoy, it needs a taxi to get there anyway, so I saved that for Friday. Our last day.

History from the web: In Puławy, it was erroneously considered to be a portrait alluding to the beloved mistress of King Francis I of France, referred to as the 'Belle Ferronière'. We now know that the subject of the portrait is Cecilia Gallerani (ca.1473-1536), a reputed mistress of Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, also known as 'il Moro' (the Moor). The ermine in the portrait commissioned by him is an allusion to Duke Sforza himself, who was also referred to as the White Ermine (Ermellino Bianco). The portrait embodies the Renaissance idea of an image as an illusion of natural vitality. The artist managed to achieve this thanks to his knowledge of anatomy and his lighting skills, which enabled him to create a three-dimensional human figure on the image plane. The original background, which was overpainted with black in the 19th century, was also modelled with light just like the figure, which must have given the impression of the model emerging from the shadows. The portrait became the property of the Republic of Poland in 2016. End.

We took a taxi to the national Museum. It is a big ugly horrible looking building started before the communist but looks like the communist type buildings and was not finished until 1989.

Everything is inexpensive in Krakow. Even the taxi that the hotel thought was a bit far and expensive was between six and seven dollars. Think about entry for the two of us it somewhere in the three or four dollar range.

The Leonardo da Vinci exhibit had nothing but the one painting. There were a few bits of information that we read but no other drawings by him. It was in a big dark room with a guard.

There wasn't a lot of other things of interest in the museum as evidenced by Tom finding himself in the café and having a long nap. Very long.

By the time we left it was pouring rain like the monsoons. But we found a lovely little Italian restaurant with a mom and pop and kids atmosphere. There was no grandma's meatballs like we found in Florence but it was an equally nice experience. My full menu and Tom's dinner and two big glasses of wine and a dessert came to somewhere in the range of \$23. Across the street was a family run sweet jewelry store where we were equally successful.

Since it wasn't very far away we couldn't resist revisiting the Vodka shop. I'll add some pictures again.

Pictures include:

A little gal in all pink and pink umbrella in front of our hotel.

The museum had a huge exhibit or sculpture on the outside that we fail to understand but appears to be related to their communist occupation.

One of the pictures is the legs on a desk. Person on the top an animal on the bottom.

We enjoyed looking at the old glassware, porcelains, clothing if the day, and marquetry furniture.

The artwork is from the vodka shop. Some of the drunks look like how I felt. But I walked on through the night time market Square no matter and we stopped at a music festival.

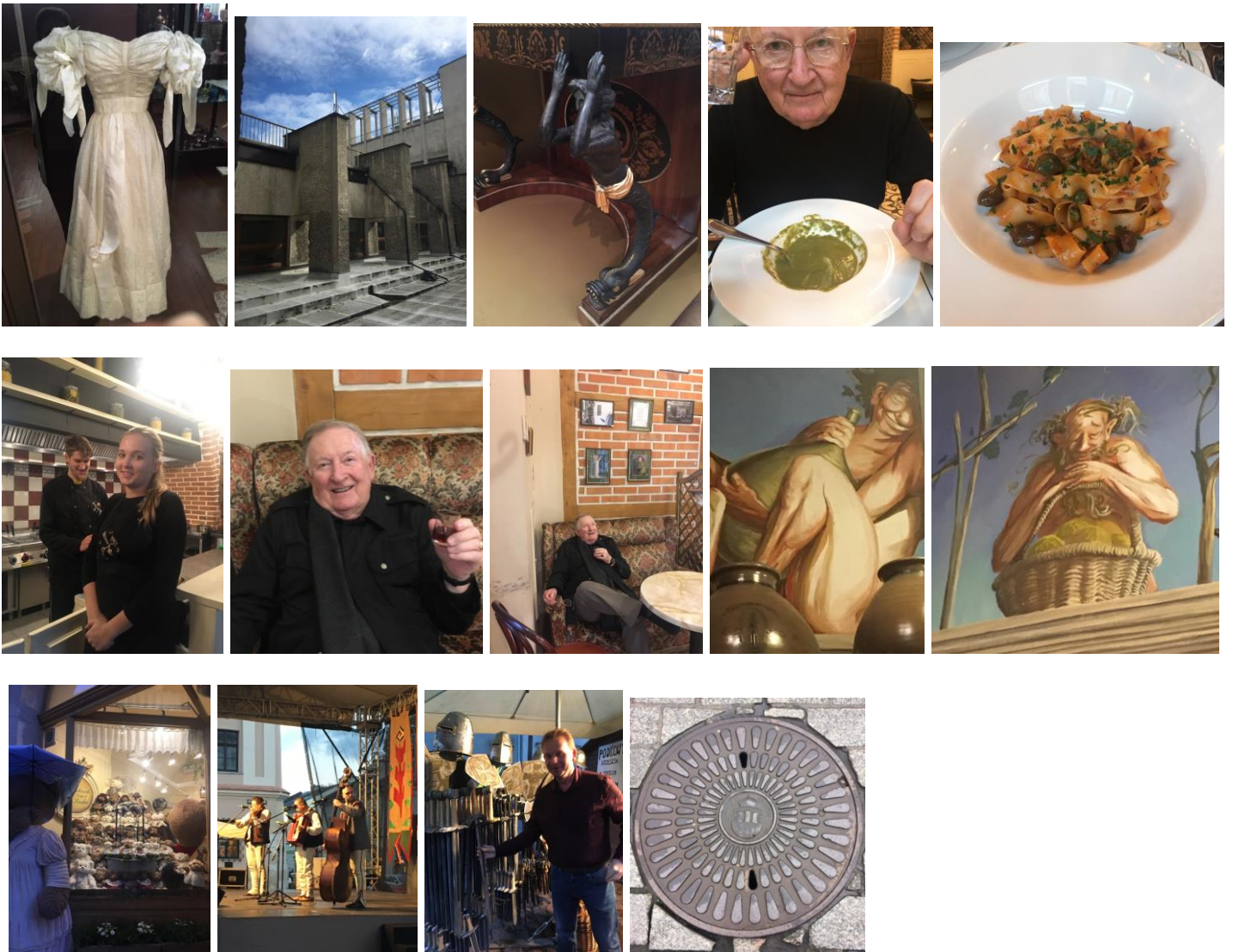
After checking out a teddy bear shop. Big teddy bear outside was sporting an umbrella which everyone needed today.

The music festival was filled full of craft shops of renaissance knives and outfits and candles.

The last manhole cover might be truly THE END as we have a car and leave tomorrow morning heading to New Jersey.

We will be home for about a week before we head to Bucharest and then a river cruise on the Danube and then Budapest.





Thanks to Nola for the link - **The Lessons of Leonardo: How to Be a Creative Genius** - The Wall Street Journal - History's most creative genius, Leonardo da Vinci, was not superhuman, writes Walter Isaacson—and following his methods can bring great intellectual rewards to anyone. [Read the full story](https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-lessons-of-leonardo-how-to-be-a-creative-genius-1506690180) Or: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-lessons-of-leonardo-how-to-be-a-creative-genius-1506690180>

Next up? We are home for a long week before leaving to Bucharest Romania for 5 days, then a river cruise on the Danube for 11 days, followed by 5 days in Budapest. With the hope that we can just keep moving.

Itinerary

Wed Sep 27

7:40pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#960

Thu Sep 28

9:20am Arrive Frankfurt FRA for plane change

12:30pm Depart Frankfurt FRA via UA9231 (operated by Lufthansa) - check in with Lufthansa

2:00pm Arrive Krakow Poland KRK

Transport to hotel arranged by hotel

Hotel Metropolitan Boutique Hotel – 9 nights prepaid
ul. Berka Joselewicza 19, 31-031, Kraków Tele: +48 12 442 75 00
E-mail: hotel@hotelmetropolitan.pl www.hotelmetropolitan.pl
WiFi yes; Mini Bar yes; Coffee yes; Breakfast yes

Fri Sep 29

Late am <https://freewalkingtour.com/krakow/>

OLD TOWN KRAKOW – Everyday at 10.00 AM & 2.00 PM & 4.00 PM – about 2 ½ hours
Kraków's old town luckily survived the Second World War, and so you are able to feel the ambiance of the days when it used to be the capital of Europe's largest country. Stunning, magnificent, romantic, charming, fun, friendly and most of all cute... there are countless words to describe Kraków, but none of them entire show its spirit. Come and join us for a tour around a city that hasn't changed much from the Middle Ages to find out why it was included on the first ever UNESCO Heritage List! It all begins long time ago... (Yes, it's like a fairy-tale, and we will guide you through it: sometimes joyful, sometimes sorrowful.) We will journey through the city's legendary beginnings and its development in the Middle Ages. We will show you where to look to find the city at the height of its power and glory in the 15th and 16th centuries where its streets were walked by Copernicus himself and the city was the capital of the biggest country in Europe, sometimes called United States of Europe. These were the times when the streets of Kraków were like the streets of London or New York today: reverberating with sounds of many different languages, colorful with clothes and exotic goods, and teeming with people from all around the world. The city itself hasn't changed much since those days. When Kraków experienced times of collapse and decline, there simply was no money to introduce big changes and necessary improvements. So Kraków remained as it was at that time: small, cute, and a bit provincial. The city experienced its decline in the 17th and 18th centuries, but rose like a phoenix from the ashes in the 19th century. Then, cultural life flourished and the city was full of artists such as Jan Matejko and Stanisław Wyspiański. From the 19th century, we just have to take a small step forward to enter the city's darkest hour: when the Main Market Square had its name changed to Adolf Hitler Platz. It was also during this time that Kraków became the home of a young man who later changed the fate of Poland. His name was Karol Wojtyła, better known as John Paul II. Like every story, Kraków's story should have a happy ending, right? And today's city will surely provide one! Be ready to watch, touch, listen, smell and taste. You will definitely need all of your senses to discover Kraków!

7:00pm Food Tour through Crazy Guides

http://crazyguides.com/krakow_tours/polish_food_vodka.html

Savour the traditional, hearty Polish cuisine in our centrally located folk style restaurant. Try delicious bread with lard & pickles, Oscypek (smoked cheese), Zurek (sour rye soup), Pierogi (dumplings), Bigos (traditional stew) and grilled sausages accompanied by five different shots of Polish spirits including the famous Wyborowa rye vodka and Slivovitz plum brandy.

Sat Sep 30

Late am? Hop on/hop off bus tour with City Sightseeing? - Schedule is 9:30am to 5pm running every 30 Minutes. Stops at 1 Wawel Castle, 2 Blonia, 3 Kazimierz District, 4 Kazimierz, Museum, 5 Schindler's Factory, 6 Main Train Station, 7 Barbakan, 8 Wawel Castle, 9 Kosciuszko Mound, 10 Salwator

Sun Oct 1

Late am? Wawel Royal Castle Guided Tour – **not yet booked** – daily except Monday
www.DiscoverCracow.com - You can expect: *The Wawel is the city's number one tourist attraction and Europe's most spectacular medieval castle. The monument simply cannot be overlooked in Cracow. Highlights: Admire an impressive courtyard and castle's interiors, Discover Wawel Royal Castle with a knowledgeable local guide; Explore the staterooms where the royals once lived. Perched on top of the hill above the Vistula River, south of the Old Town, the Wawel is the crown jewel of the city's architectural treasures. It is by far the most important collection of buildings in Poland. Its historical and artistic value - dating from the 14th century - places it amongst the gems of the UNESCO World Heritage list. A vast complex of great halls, churches, state apartments and courtyards have their own stories to tell, the atmosphere and a world view of the imperial era. Strolling through the royal chambers, our expert guide will bring the castle to life by explaining the turbulent history surrounding the various buildings and their royal and presidential connections.*

Mon Oct 2

10:30am Wieliczka Salt Mine Tour for 2 – Hotel pick up - about 4 hours - Booked
www.DiscoverCracow.com - You can expect - *Enter the salt city! Salt Mine Krakow is an underground labyrinth stretched over 9 levels at 64 to 327 meters below the surface of the Earth. A labyrinth of nearly 2,400 chambers is connected with sidewalks with a total length of 245 km. It is an invaluable monument of material culture, inscribed in 1978 on the UNESCO Heritage List. "A must see. Totally amazing place" Highlights: Underground galleries, chambers and lakes, Positive influence on health, One of the oldest salt mines listed on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List.*

Wieliczka Salt Mine is one of the most precious and fascinating Polish monuments. The first tourist trail in Wieliczka was established as early as at the turn of the 19th century. A couple of centuries later the salt mine was designated as one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (1978). The underground trail leads through numerous drifts, galleries and chambers, where traces of mining activity have been preserved, as well as examples of sacred art, theme compositions relating to the history of the mine and legends. The microclimate of the mine has a beneficial impact on visitors who suffer from asthma and allergies. The tour starts with a descent down the stairs to the depth of 64 meters. Visitors are led through a number of chambers and shown underground lakes, shrines and salt monuments. The trip finishes at the level of 135 meters below the surface. Visitors return to the surface by lift.

Tue Oct 3

11:25am Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum and Memorial for 1 – Hotel pick up – 7 hours long – BOOKED www.Discovercracow.com - You can expect - *Auschwitz Birkenau Tour reveals one of the best-known concentration camps in the world; it is a place of genocide where approximately 1.5 million people were killed during WWII. The tour includes a visit to Auschwitz I - the administrative centre of Auschwitz death camp and Auschwitz II, designed and constructed as an extermination facility. The place has remained a living monument of death. Highlights: English-speaking tour leader, Documentary screening in the bus.*

Every year, millions of people visit Auschwitz from around the world walk through the gate of Auschwitz Birkenau bearing a fallacious inscription: Arbeit macht frei – "Work sets one free". Defeating the same route as prisoners for over half a century ago. The program of the visit

comprises the introduction to the origins of the camp, its history and the everyday life of its prisoners. The complex was established in 1940 and throughout the five years of its inglorious operation over 1.5 million Jews, Poles, Italians and Frenchman perished here. It should be emphasized that the prisoners of Auschwitz originated from every country in Europe. The museum was founded in 1947, combining the area of KL Auschwitz I in Oświęcim and the Birkenau camp/Auschwitz II in Brzezinka; it comprises approximately 150 buildings and 300 ruins. The original roads, fences, watchtowers and railway ramps have been preserved. The buildings house the collection of original exhibits and documents. In 1979, the concentration camp was designated as one of the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.

Wed Oct 4

2:30pm Food tour: Taste of Poland – booked and paid

Meet at Plac Szczepanski 8, Krakow - www.DiscoverCracow.com - You can expect: Can you imagine getting to know Polish culture by any way better than its food? Food is an important part of every culture. Highlights: Wander through Cracow's Streets to discover a real taste of the city. Sample traditional Polish dishes and learn how to prepare them by yourself. Get to know Polish culture through its traditional food: dumplings, pickled cucumber, sour rye soup, a shot of homemade liquor and much more! Wander through Cracow's Streets to discover a real taste of the city. A small group tour assures the personal attention of your local guide (a culinary specialist). Our Street Food walking tour involves all your senses and shows you places you will not find by yourself! Our local inhabitant and food lover will straightaway lead you through the most important food places in Cracow. On the way is the oldest food market, a restaurant with homemade food usually visited by locals, and a cafe with homemade liquours. Apart from tasting, you will get a full commentary as to why particular dishes are on Polish menus and a lot of anecdotes. So don't hesitate and join us, your stomach will thank you! During the tour we will try: bagels, sausage, pickled cucumber and cabbage, cheese, dumplings, sour rye soup, cake with coffee and a shot of homemade liquor.

Other tour ideas:

EatPolska.com 1:00 Food Tour for 4 hours at 290 zł

EatPolska.com 5:00 Vodka Tour for 3 ½ hours

See <https://community.ricksteves.com/travel-forum/poland/delicious-food-tour-with-eat-warsaw-krakow>

Zakopane and Tatra Mountains – 2 hour drive one way? - Monastery? Polish Castles (3) and Trail of Eagles Nest - Nowa Huta district - Morskie Oko Lake - Dunajec River Gorge

Sat Oct 7

12:45am Depart Krakow PL KRK via UA #9403 (Operated by Lufthansa)

2:00pm Arrive Munich MUC for plane change

3:40pm Depart Munich MUC via Lufthansa UA#9255

6:40pm Arrive Newark EWR

Car pick up arranged

Emergency:

U.S. Consulate General in Kraków

Ulica Stolarska 9, 31-043 Tele: +48-12- 424-5100 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and 1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. After-hours emergency number for U.S. Citizens is +48-601-483-348.

Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

Emergency Assistance

Emergency Assistance Plus Program – 24/7

United Mileage Plus member #0186014 (card in file and D's wallet)

Tele: 866 816 2073 or 60 328 1752 collect

Tour Ideas:

See "Crazy Guides" at www.crazyguides.com. Some use the old Trabant cars. Also a Communist Tour.

Day Tour including castle: https://www.tripadvisor.com/AttractionProductDetail-g274772-d11446700-Krakow_in_One_Day_Sightseeing_Tour-Krakow_Lesser_Poland_Province_Southern_Poland.html

Private city tour with Schindler's Factory: https://www.tripadvisor.com/AttractionProductDetail-g274772-d11487233-Krakow_Private_Walking_Tour_with_Schindler_s_Factory-Krakow_Lesser_Poland_Province_Southern_Poland.html

The Real Krakow in 4 hours, by a local, not pure history, through Crazy Guides:
http://crazyguides.com/krakow_tours/the_real_krakow_tour

140 Things to do in Krakow Poland – Emily's Guide to Krakow
<https://emilysguidetokrakow.com/2016/02/28/things-to-do-in-krakow/>

Miscellaneous

Poland once sent the U.S. a birthday card. With 5 million signatures. - The Washington Post

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/07/03/americas-standing-may-be-tumbling-now-but-once-upon-a-time-poland-sent-the-u-s-a-birthday-card-with-5-million-signatures/?utm_term=.5295889eb9a0&wpisrc=nl_rainbow&wpmm=1

Currency:

Use Zloty, referred to as zł or PLN. 1 PLN = \$0.28.