

EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 2 grand boys

Maxi-taxi anyone?

Transport to the airport becomes problematic with 5 humans, 2 very large bags with bicycles inside, 3 cases and 5 pieces of hand luggage. Deakin is almost 6'4" so we know we have an extra pair of hands available if we need to lift heavy things.

Maxi-taxi rolling

The bags were all packed into the back of the large van but because they were all on wheels our ride to the airport was punctuated by the full complement of bags rolling forward and back in unison. Worse than having unruly kids in the back!!!

14 hours cramping

Only those who fly in planes know and appreciate how debilitating long flights are. The limited seat you are forced to squeeze into, the fact that your body does not sleep well sitting upright and the annoyance that you have to climb other passengers when you need to go to the toilet is a real pain. Eating a meal in a cramped space is also something everyone has to put up with. Just don't drop your phone!!



A Family Journey

Well, we are into a journey again. Day two of a four month trip through seven countries. We will have eight house-swaps three internal flights and two lovely long train journeys. This will be quite different to our earlier trips where we arrived, jumped into a motor home and just drove where the fancy took us. This time too we are not alone. We have Deakin and Blayze (grandsons) and Maddi (Deakin's partner) with us for company for the first three weeks.

The flight over via Emirates was the usual uncomfortable long journey of 14 hours that has to be endured to get to the good bits! Luckily our four hour layover in Dubai coincided with the Womens World Cup quarter final game between France and Australia. The game was played in Brisbane!

We spied an eatery (Sports Bar) with large screens and spent our entire time there cheering on our Matildas. By the end of the game, a large crowd had assembled and there was considerable cheering from the majority when Australia won the penalty shootout. It was lovely to let the crowd know that we were proud Australians. It was an exciting finish and we had only a couple of minutes left to board our plane.

The second leg of the flight was both wonderful and awful. Wonderful for us oldies because we were upgraded to Business Class AND truly awful for Deakin in Cattle Class where the seats were even smaller than on the first leg. He literally could not even pull his tray table out and putting the seat back meant less availability of leg room. For us it was just pure comfort where a table cloth was even applied to our table before our food and wine was served. We even got to sleep in a bed!! Wow. Glad we got to experience that once in our lives.

On arrival at the airport we were met by the Nowak family in two cars to drive us the 70 km to their home village of Makow. We stayed with cousin Waclaw while the younger three stayed with Slawek just up the road. We had an early night, but the other household evidently talked on for hours. Blayze was, however, glowing when we saw him in the morning. He was in the home of his god parents and loving it

Today, we woke late, fairly well refreshed and spent time communing with family (Waclaw and Marissa, their daughter Beata and husband Vlodek, and son's Michael and Machev) via Google translator, although Michael was a great help as he speaks very good English. We met up with the others at Slawek and Dorota's house and enjoyed more catch-up time. Sig's cousin's grandchildren, who are in their early twenties, have been wonderful with Deakin, Blayze and Maddi and took them for a walking tour to Makow village and the cemetery where the kids saw the family graves. Their great, great grandparents are buried in this cemetery.

The rest of the day was taken up with eating and talking - as is the Polish way. We sat around a very large table and all chatted, laughed and happily interacted. It was then time to take a walk in the nearby forest and return for even more eating and vodka. A lovely day.



Why we travel?

This trip started out as a short one-month trip to Spain and France in Sept to take up two house swaps with people who had already been to our house a couple of years ago. A great opportunity yes, but we declared this would be our last trip to Europe.

We wanted to take Blayze to make up for an aborted journey due to Putin's inane desire to dominate the world - Deakin and Maddi took up the offer also and that meant that they could all fly home together after three weeks. So with more house swaps on offer and a walking football tournament in UK (first mooted in Nov and then delayed til early Dec) our one-month trip quickly turned into four.

This trip is essentially to introduce our grandsons to family in Poland as well as giving them a taste of UK. It is a trip steeped in football too because literally in every place we stay in (usually for 2 weeks) there is a chance for me to play walking football. It will also be great to build some WF linkages. The Winter Nations Cup in Dec will be a natural culmination of my year in sport.

And finally, one of the core reasons why we are taking the trip is that we are both getting to "an age" and know our travel time is not unlimited. Its getting more expensive to travel and that includes travel insurance and car hire costs for being over 75. "Go now, while you can!"



Go The Matildas



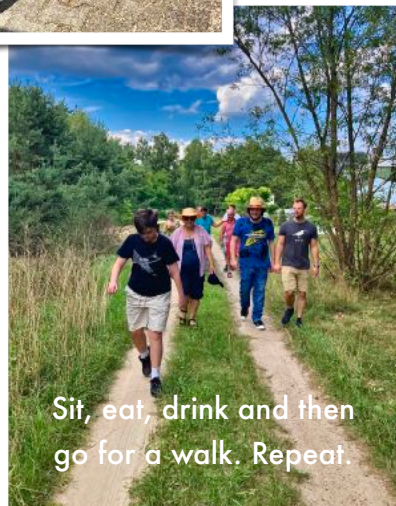
My extended Polish family



Slawek and Dorota's House



Tuck in to delicious Polish food



Sit, eat, drink and then go for a walk. Repeat.



Playing around at Slaweks



A stroll in the nearby woods

