

# EUROPE 2023

4 months | 6 countries | 8 house swaps | 10 journey legs | 2 grand-boys

## How many litres?

Blayze knows his cars. He quickly corrected me when I suggested the Polski Fiat had a .5l engine - "its .65l pop."

## Sunburn

Amazing to see many locals showing lots of skin in the heat here today. You would think they would burn burn burn but no - they do not. We witnessed this when the family visited us in Australia many years ago. We spent the day at the beach and kept warning them about the consequences. We thought they would be red raw the next day but no - no sunburn.

## Free food/drink/ music

Unbelievable! The afternoon was spent eating, drinking and listening to traditional songs and music. Anywhere else it would attract a hefty entry cost - but not here. The Farmers Ladies Auxiliary put this yearly show on - fresh food and even wine was on full display and available to be consumed. Supposedly a tasting session to promote local produce. Tuck in, don't wait!



## National Holiday

We thought we were late to rise — 8ish — and went down to breakfast to a feast of pheasant/chook eggs. Vlodec's hobby is breeding pheasants. He has a large range of them in pens out the back of the house. After a lovely commune over breakfast with the assistance of Michel to interpret, we were then driven into Makow by Pawel and Magda to see the parade that preceded the main church service for the day that aimed to bless the harvest. The whole country has a public holiday for this. The parade was preceded by the fire truck (a little version of ours) and followed by a large number of people who were dressed in national costume and carried flowers and what looked like offerings. We did not stay for the church service and then went up to see what the rest of the family was doing. Blayze was up and entertaining the family at their breakfast table, but Maddie and Deakin slept in till about 11.30.

At 12 we all gathered for a lunch put on by Dorota — a lovely array of meats and vegetables. Great conversation around the table again.



The afternoon saw us all transported about 40km away to a village that was holding a festival to celebrate the harvest. Slawek was the major organiser of the music. We missed his segment of playing but heard quite a number of local groups do their thing. The local equivalent of the Country Women's Association, supplied a very large array of free food and drink. We tried so much of it in fact, that we did not require any other evening meal. We were introduced to the locals and shown to cool places to stand. It was extremely hot unfortunately. By 5pm we were all baking, so headed home to pack and prepare for our departure tomorrow.

Oh, I forgot about the most excitement for the day. A small number of old cars were on display and to the younger ones delight, they and we, were offered a ride in a little Polish Fiat. Apparently it is quite a treasured thing today. You felt as if you were riding on a fully enclosed motor bike.

We heard a great noise downstairs and realised that Maddie and Deakin and Blayze had come over to say goodbye to this household. They were racaus and happy. It has been such a happy time here.

We have an extremely early start to the day tomorrow to catch our flight to London for our next leg of this adventure. There was competition as to which drivers would take us to the airport. Such a wonderful family.







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## Godson

Slawek and Dorota are god parents to Blayze. He presented them with a personalised gift this morning. The tears flowed.



## Technology

Information and histories are stored on smart phones - Deakin sharing family and work photos and stories with Dorota while Maddi looks on.



## Deakin's log for the day

Wow, just wow. Today will definitely be stuck in my brain for a long time. Today's experience was equal to flying for the first time. I could go on for hours about today. I could talk about how amazed I was regarding the different architecture Poland has to offer. I could perhaps talk about the very engaging and informative Polish Uprising Museum, that has so many pieces of history that I could stay for a whole day, and still find something intriguing to read or learn about. The fact that almost a century ago, the city I visited today, Warsaw was pretty much all destroyed. What about Poland's beautiful forests and examples of classic and modern looking public transport and buildings.

Even better, I could tell you that Polish ice cream is as delicious as Australian ice cream. Either way what I completely understand is that Warsaw definitely has another tourist absolutely begging to come back and see more.

So thank you so much for touring us around, Natalia and Michal. It was a blast.

## Tombstone

Part of my father Zygmunt's ashes are in the grave of his brother Czeslaw. I bought them here in 2009. The grave stone, created by my Polish family reads: "Man of Poland who called Australia home."



## Father's birthplace

My dad was born in a small town I could barely spell. Wola Makowska, I was first told, was the common land of Makow settled by soldiers - hence my grandfather was referred to as Nowak - or "new man of the village". Further research shows that there may be another interpretation, namely, that Vola means land bequeathed by the local lord at that time (his stately mansion located across from the cemetery was recently bulldozed to build a supermarket) and released to the local farmers to increase food production. Hence "Makowska!"

I am not sure which one to believe - both seem plausible.

## Day Two in Poland



The oldies spent a quiet day in Makow. Together with Marissa and Waclaw we were driven to the cemetery by Pawel. We wanted to again view the graves of Sig's ancestors, in particular, the final resting place of his uncle, his father's cousin, and his grandparents on his father's side.

It was most interesting listening to the words of Waclaw as interpreted by Pawel. We spent more than an hour locating the various graves and reading their inscriptions and reflecting on each ancestor. Waclaw made lots of comments about various aspects of their lives which we did not know about. We then walked back to the town centre and were treated to locally made ice creams. The sun was quite oppressive so we were chaperoned back to the house where we spent the rest of the day relaxing during the heat. The weather has been quite hot — mid 30s — but seems to be even hotter than the effects of a similar temperature at home.

In the evening we were driven to a local fish restaurant built to look like a pirate ship where we caught up with the Warsaw trippers and had a meal of fresh fish. The atmosphere, as we stood around after the meal, by the side of a beautiful lake filled with swimmers and rowing boats and surrounded by a bike track, was so friendly and enjoyable.

Our aim of intertwining some of the next generation has been achieved.

## Maddi's New World

The Nowak family are some of the most warm and welcoming people I have ever met. When we were getting picked up at the airport by Dorota, Natalia and Magda, they were so excited to see the family again of course. It made me smile to see a lovely reunion - but then they came over to me and welcomed me with excitement the same way. It was quite unexpected but so lovely to feel so genuinely welcomed. And that is just this family in a nutshell - and apparently typical Polish tradition - Poles are family people. It was lovely meeting the rest of the family down the road and having that so called "Polish feast". Very different food but so interesting to see and to taste! And it just didn't stop coming! And again I was welcomed with warm arms as if I was part of the family again.

When Deakin and I have our own house one day, I really aspire to be as welcoming and loving as this family.

Today Natalia and Michael took us into Warsaw to see the new and old parts of the city. Safe to say we were all worn out after walking for hours but it was well worth it! You just don't experience the world the same way if you are driving and when walking, there is more adventures to be found.

I haven't written in a long time and I'm not really good at this kind of thing, but to sum it up, this family is gorgeous, I want to be like them and I want to join them! I can't thank them enough for allowing me, a stranger, into their home and making me feel at home for my first time in a foreign country.



