

2011 - POLAND

20 April 2011

LEG 3
2 DAYS IN KRAKOW
STAYING AT DOM
POLONII

Keeping In Touch In Today's World With Technology

Everything is fine until there is no internet access

HOW DO WE DO IT?

We often get asked what technology we use on this trip. Two years ago we traveled around Central Europe for 3 months with similar gear. Armed with a GPS, a tiny net-book computer and a digital camera we are able to do most things we can do at home. What's more, these three devices are small enough to fit into Heather's handbag so we take all our tools with us everywhere for safekeeping.

GPS

Heather have learned to point this little sucker to very short distances. Point to a place a long distance away and it will quickly take you to a short cut and off the beaten track (which for Heather could be a good thing but for the driver could spell disaster) or alternatively it takes you on major freeway (which for Heather is a bad thing while for me too because Heather harps on and on about wanting to see more of the countryside). But the GSP is invaluable in other ways - we know how long the trip should take and we save the location when we park the van and then put it in our pocket when we go riding. Great in a big city. Once we are finished our tour we ask it to go "home" or back to the van without getting lost. We do get embarrassed when it calls out loudly "lost satellite reception" when you least expect it to in cathedral or a restaurant.



Mac Air tiny, thin and light - fits easily into Heather's handbag



Sig's entertainment machine



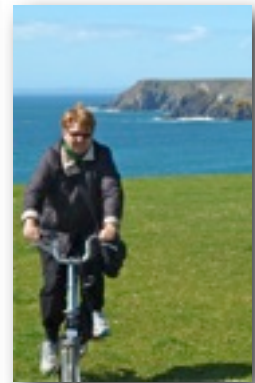
Our GPS from home



When we traveled with 2 young kids 30 years ago we were dependent upon map books to navigate and regional post offices to send and receive mail. Today we wonder how we did this without any bother.



Panasonic Lumix with GPS, 12mp and 12 digital zoom



Heather as a pack horse

DIGITAL CAMERA

Its amazing how cameras are now both smaller and more powerful - both video and still shots out of the same device. Ours also has a GPS built in - we always know where a photo is taken. It takes only a minute to transfer the photos to the computer each night (also acts as a backup) so we can then select the best ones and share them with friends and relatives over the internet.

COMPUTER

Our little MacAir computer is a real gem. It does so many things. It has a built in camera and can even play DVD videos. With internet access we can communicate with the world. We run Windows and Mac software and also have a spare USB stick and another SD card to backing up our files. Here are only some of the things we actually use it for:

- listen to local Brisbane radio
- read the local news on ABC
- check Brisbane weather reports
- watch missed TV episodes
- phone any number in the world
- have a video conference
- check out/book caravan parks

- book hotel accommodation
- store/show photos from home
- store and listen to music
- make backups of photos taken
- put together/share newsletters
- check out/trade stocks & shares
- pay bills online
- transfer money between accounts
- email friends/family/clients
- update client web sites
- solve client MYOB problems
- check out attractions
- get specific directions to travel
- translate any language

We purchased a three month wireless mobile internet package that covers UK and EU Europe. We have had good access even in quite remote places so far. In some locations there has been free internet access using the caravan park or internet cafe's wireless network.

We have a 12v car charger for the computer so that we do not run out of power when we free camp. Likewise we have a battery powered shaver and toothbrush so we are not dependent upon 240v (except for the camera but it only needs a recharge every 2-3 days.)

Heather says she feels like a pack horse because she has a handbag that holds everything - computer, GPS, passports and all her female accessories. Her bag has many pockets and she is able to sling the bag over her shoulder when she is riding for added security.

I carry my credit cards, cash and the camera.





Our dining room - one of 5 huge rooms in our apartment



Siggy will eat anything Polish

BEAUTIFUL KRAKOW

Blimey, you should see our apartment! It's got 5 huge rooms. 5!!! Its quite opulent with old period furniture and even a large chandelier over a table for 6. We still can't believe it. It even has its own entrance hall. And its location? - slap bang right in the centre of the old city. We step outside and we are right in the thick of it - everything within walking distance. There is one major downside though and we felt very sad for the porter who carried both our 20kg bike bags up the 9 flights of stairs to our room(s). Climbing the stairs - even without bags - was exhausting.

We freshened up and jumped on our bikes for a quick ride around to familiarise ourselves with the city. The crush of people was oppressive but we did not care at all. We food shopped and had a late snack (our flight was delayed for an hour so we kinda missed lunch).

Krakow is considered to be one of Europe's most beautiful cities. Its old open market centre is the largest in Europe and we can now understand why it has this reputation - very much enhanced by the large number of

people who make the place buzz. The evening was the best - the spotlighted buildings, the music, so many people lingering in sidewalk cafe's drinking beer while others browsed the many and varied night stalls and shops that remained open. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves and finished off our evening with a late Polish dinner. Heather particularly enjoyed mushroom soup and polish sausage while I loved the cucumber with vinegar salad, sour cabbage and grilled chicken. Yum yum.

Tomorrow early morning we plan to ride around the centre perimeter before the crowds and then see two attractions in the afternoon - Schindler's factory (of "Schindler's List" movie fame) and Krakow's famous underground museum.

