

# HAVE CLUBS WILL TRAVEL POLAND

After a highly successful golf day held at Foxhills Golf Resort sponsored by the Polish Tourist Board, the camaraderie was firmly established among those present and invitations were issued to the fortunate participants, to visit Poland. I for one, did not imagine that the invite would come so quickly, but within the month we were heading for Gdansk for a wonderful visit to Poland.

Gdansk is a fascinating city, though that is in itself a misnomer, for the location on the Baltic Sea is now called Tri City, and it is made up of three distinct conurbations, Gdansk itself, Sotop where we were based and the definite entertainment centre, and the newest segment called Gdenia. Together they form a marvellous base to experience the history, majesty and beauty of Poland.

Gdansk is the old part of the city, with a wonderful array of buildings, churches and hansard architecture, both in the town and on the waterfront. It is almost impossible to believe that this part of Gdansk was almost totally destroyed when the Russians defeated and drove out the occupying German forces in World War II, and then had to be painstakingly rebuilt.

The Russian invasion gave birth to many years of communist oppression. There are so many stories of heroism from that era, in keeping with much of it's past. World War II was started as a result of the unprovoked invasion of Poland by the German Army, starting with bombing and naval bombardments of the city on 1st September 1939. The Westerplatte base, a peninsula, was manned by 190 Polish troops under the command of Major Sucharski. This small garrison held off 3500 German troops for a week before running out of supplies and ammunition. Bravery of the highest level, which is commemorated with a monument on the hill overlooking the site, now a National museum.

The waterfront is a delight, rows of excellent restaurants and bistros, punctuated by jewellers specialising in the craft of amber polishing, the windows aglow with burnished gold light from the amber gems.

Add a fantastic array of churches and civic buildings with wide avenues and squares, and you have a tourist paradise. The basilica of St Mary is treasure trove of stories and



artifacts, including the famous astrological clock made by Hans Durlinger. The shipyard become famous with the birth of Solidarity, and Lek Walensa, who was the catalyst for the fall of communism in Europe. A graphic monument commemorates the courage of those who lost their lives in the struggle.

If Gdansk is the old centre then Sotop is the playground of Tri City, with the famous beaches and the long picturesque pier stretching out into the bay.

The most important thoroughfare is Montecasino, named after the battle site in Italy where the Polish regiment fought so well in the advance of the allies in World War II. A street of clubs, pubs, bistros and restaurants that act like a honey pot in the summer season and at weekends.

Our exceedingly comfortable base, the Hotel Rezydent was ideally located at the top of the street, making the nightlife a mere stroll away.

If golf is your passion, then there are two important golf courses in the region, and both welcome visitors. The first that we sampled was the Sierra Golf Country Club at Petkowice, about forty kilometres from the centre of Sotop. This is a parkland course in a very picturesque location, in fine condition, and on which over 11000 trees have been planted, it was designed by British architect Cameron Sinclair. He has made excellent use of the rolling landscape and incorporated the six lakes so that they have maximum impact on the playing of the holes on which they are located. In particular the 13th, 15th and 17th holes with attractive

bridges to cross over. British professional Nigel Waring has made quite an impact at the club, and was the perfect host. The fact that it has hosted EDP European Events and Omega Tournaments is a measure of the quality of the course.

The second club that we visited was Gdansk Golf & Country Club at Postolowo, the oldest, and this is a real monster, the longest par 72 in Europe, measuring over 7100 metres, it was designed by Jeremy Turner and opened in 1997. Ranked one of the best in Poland and in the top 100 in Europe. It is typical heathland course, with several lakes that add to the challenge of the length. The course welcomes many golfers from Scandinavia and Germany, and with wide fairways and huge greens in excellent condition, it is easy to see why.

Two first class courses that will satisfy the most discerning golfer, each providing a very different test and ambience, but both enjoyable to play. For the golfer looking for that little something different, with a new set of challenges, Poland is perhaps the next venue to try, with easy access from Luton airport by Wizzair. You can be sure of a welcome and a very enjoyable stay, perhaps tied in with a trip to take in the European football championships in 2012.



For more information on Gdansk or Poland in general, please contact the Polish National Tourist Office on **0300 303 1813** or on **www.poland.travel**, or by email on **london@poland.travel**.

