

# Surprising things about Poland

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*Today we have a very special guest on our blog. Our fellow blogger, Sara, wrote a post about the most surprising things about Poland .*

Bonjour! I'm Sara from [Simply Sara Travel](#), my blog where I write about life in Paris as well as my European travels.

I am honored to share a little of my travel experiences in Poland on Karolina & Patryk's blog. Since they are certainly the experts on [where to travel](#) to in their home country, I won't detail my own itinerary. Instead, I would love to reflect back on my first (and only) visit to [Poland](#) this May and **reveal what surprised me along the way on my journey.**



**So to start, we were thankfully able to get by with English and the kindness of strangers.**

One thing I appreciated in Poland was the amount of English spoken as well as the willingness and eagerness to do so. I really try to make an effort to learn a few phrases or polite words to be able to mind my manners in foreign countries, but

for some reason my mind just couldn't grasp Polish. And although I felt badly not being able to make much effort on my part to communicate, those who didn't speak much English were apologizing *to us* - and it certainly should have been the other way around! Not everyone spoke English well but there was certainly an overall friendliness and warmth that allowed us to get around the country without a problem.

### **Though our trip raised some eyebrows.**

Getting to meet local Polish people was wonderful - and many times we would be asked at some point in conversation, "How long are you traveling through Poland?" "16 days," we would reply. Often this was followed by shock, surprise, and undoubtedly confusion. "But why so long? What are you doing here? Where are you going?" So many questions were raised! (We even did a little impromptu interview in Gdańsk on our travel plans and such while in Poland.)

I was used to people asking us these questions prior to embarking on our journey. I must admit that Poland usually isn't a vacation destination you hear people talking about, and we certainly overextended the "acceptable" few days in Krakow weekend venture. My interest in Poland has always been personally fueled, as I have a lot of Polish heritage and have desired to connect on some level to my ancestry. And after spending a few days in Prague almost two years ago, I couldn't shake the desire to see more of the surrounding countries.

But for native Poles to be confused why we would want to travel through their country really surprised me. Perhaps because not many tourists make it out this way? Or maybe because there are so many wonderful things to see and experience that they're keeping under the radar?

Like...

**Did you know that Poland has some significant castles?** I had no idea for example that the largest brick castle in the world can be found within Poland. Construction began in the late 1200's to build the Teutonic Knights' fortress and headquarters, Malbork Castle. It is absolutely massive to tour and quite a castle to grasp.



**Were you aware that Poland has some beautiful white sand beaches?** One of Michael's co-workers, who is Polish and is always extolling the wonders of Poland, famously said that the best beaches in Europe are in Poland. I certainly didn't believe it until I went on a day trip to Sopot, a beach town on the coast of the Baltic Sea. It was a bit too chilly in the beginning of May to take advantage of such a lovely-looking beach, but I still enjoyed a windy stroll down the Molo, which happens to be the longest pier in Europe.

**Another thing made to clear to me on my travels: Polish people love ice cream.**

I would have just thought it was the result of being in the beach town of Sopot, but I had been traveling in Poland long enough by that point to know better. Truth be told, I love soft serves, gelato, Italian ice, and frozen yogurt all without discrimination. But I was surprised to find the commitment with which the people of Poland have to a frozen treat. Cold weather and rain do not deter the Poles from enjoying a nice cone of ice cream, at any time of day. I have always associated pierogi with the country, but now every time I see soft serve ice cream, I think back to my time in Poland.



While we're on the topic of food (it's never too long before I bring it up), I was overwhelmed by the delicious food I ate during the trip. I mentioned pierogi, and it goes without saying that I ate the best I've ever had on this trip. **But there were some foods that were exceptionally, and unexpectedly, memorable.**

For example, I had no idea they that I was traveling through a place that produces such good doughnuts. I loved the pączki with the traditional rose hip jelly filling. So, so delicious.



And what really surprised me was some of the fantastic international food I had in Warsaw. The capital may get a bad rapt with travelers for not being a pretty face

like Krakow, but let me tell you, I'm still thinking about some of our epic discoveries. Most notably is all the hummus we found. I had it with breakfast at SAM as part of a Moroccan eggs dish with avocado, and for dinner at Beirut. I would go back to Warsaw in a heartbeat to enjoy its wonderful food scene, and to see the Museum of the History of Polish Jews that just opened its doors a few months after my visit.

**All I can say is that to my surprise, this trip gave us a collection of European favorites that we didn't see coming.** Best science museum ever? That distinction goes to the Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw (and my engineer of a husband has dragged me to a fair share of them so we would know). Most beautiful main square? My husband has awarded this title to Krakow's Rynek Glowny. Best bagels I've eaten in Europe? Bagel Mama in Krakow. (And that is a very important category for this New Jersey girl!) Most intense scavenger hunt opportunity? This could only go to Wroclaw, which provided the fuel for a very intense gnome-spotting competition.



In the end, I had a feeling that I was going to thoroughly enjoy my trip to Poland. After all, many members of my extended family came from this country and I can only assume I come from a line of reasonably cool people. But the surprise? Just how much I fell in love with Poland, so much so that it is one of my favorite European trips I've taken. **So my overall take-away is book a trip to Poland before the secret gets out!**

Bio:

*Sara traded her New Jersey bagels for French baguettes when she moved to Paris two and a half years ago. Since the big move she's learned a bit of French, has eaten more cheese in two years than the previous 25, and can now tie a scarf in 10 different ways. Follow her experiences in Paris, adventures in France, and travels throughout Europe on her blog, [Simply Sara Travel](#), and on Instagram, Facebook, Google+, and Pinterest.*