
Poland (A Travel Guide) by many contributors (2001), 384 pages.



DK Eyewitness Travel Guides, which is a British publisher of many guides dealing with travel, has come out with its first American edition of this guide to Poland. It is an excellent product, presented in such

an attractive format that you may want to buy it for some friend who knows very little about the country and whether he or she actually intends to visit it or not; or perhaps you may wish to get this book for yourself. In our library you will now find it in the reference section where you can peruse it at leisure.

Here are some reasons for this enthusiastic review. The guide is most informative, and it was written by talented writers who have found the right approach to attract the reader's interest.

It starts with a sensible introduction that is actually a portrait of Poland in capsule form: her population, shifting borders, cultural varieties, democratic changes, and economics. It tells us about fauna (with due attention to the largest flocks of storks in Europe), reviews architecture, literature, music, old and new social conditions, sports, attractive seasonal events, and the weather. A truly outstanding essay about the 1,000-year history completes this part.

The fun begins with systematic visits to every corner of the country. Three cities are singled out for special attention: Warsaw, Kraków, and Gdańsk, with instructive proposals for a visit and bearing in mind expected time limitations. As one wanders through these cities, only carefully selected landmarks are featured. Each spot is given an exquisite description with enough detail to catch the traveler's attention. It is a model of how a city should be shown to a stranger.

Then there are the photographs, over 1,000 of them of various sizes, all in color. Those that cover one or two pages are absolutely stunning, and scores of others seem to cry out to be enlarged. Virtually every landmark described is accompanied by a photo, and thus sends a warm invitation to come and see it for yourself. The major part of the guide is devoted to principal regions such as Mazovia (Mazowsze, with the Lublin district), Małopolska, Wielkopolska, Silesia (Śląsk), Pomerania (Pomorze) and the Lakes area. There are fine maps and a rarity in guide books: cutouts and diagrams of outstanding cathedrals or palaces. All of them are drawn by hand and painted in vivid colors by gifted illustrators. They are really works of art.

Finally, the book includes 100 pages devoted to the practical needs of the visitor e.g. information where to stay or dine, shopping suggestions, places of entertainment, as well as hints about flights, trains, buses, car rentals, taxis, local transport, and personal safety. One hopes that eventually this book will come out in a lightweight pocket edition which the visitor could easily carry on his person.

Lastly, one even finds a little dictionary with useful phrases. Here, admittedly, the Polish language when rendered phonetically seems to be as puzzling as the language of distant Tibet. For example, a simple cold becomes "pshef-y-EM-yen-yeh" (could this be *beprzeziębienie*?), and half-board at the hotel appears as "dva posheewukhee jen-yeh" (maybe it means *dwa posiłki dziennie*?) Probably it would be simpler to point to your throat while making a miserable expression, and for food to show two fingers in the direction of your mouth and ask "Yes?"

George E. Suboczewski