

Poland: The Hanseatic League, Teutonic Knights and Copernicus in Gdańsk, Pomerania and Warmia

<https://www.kudutravel.com/tours/gdansk-walking-tour>

24 August – 3 September 2020

The picture above exemplifies the resilience and the fascination of Northern Poland. Though 95% of Gdańsk was destroyed during the Second World War, the reconstruction has successfully replicated this historic Hanseatic town, famous for its waterways and amber artefacts. We also visit the Solidarity museum and view the starting point for the original uprising, featuring one of the world's most distinctive moustaches.

We visit castles built by the Teutonic Knights, who ruled a substantial area of Prussia and Pomerania for two centuries, until defeated by the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania, once the largest national entity in Europe.

Kudu's itinerary explores iconic sites in the life of Nicholas Copernicus, including his baptismal font and the town where he spent his last years and was buried. Great Brick Gothic churches and cathedrals, original and reconstructed, dominate the landscape of this verdant land and we take an extraordinary boat trip over water and field.

We learn about Kashubia and Warmia, one an ancient culture and the latter an important regional centre during the 15th and 16th centuries. The Kashubian language and its indigenous designs feature throughout the area formerly within Prussia.

We walk on forest trails and on the Elbląg Canal, we experience first-hand how boats travel on grass. Our second boat trip - weather permitting - takes us to the Hel Peninsula, the last redoubt of Polish forces at the beginning of World War II and of German troops at its end.

Intimate and comfortable hotels ensure that this tour meets the high standards of Kudu guests, with excellent local and international food accompanied by wines from around the world.

Itinerary

DAY 1

D included

After meeting at Gdańsk airport in the afternoon, we have a 2-hour road transfer. En route, we visit the remarkable Cistercian Abbey in Pelplin. Outside Toruń, we pause at a viewpoint on the Vistula river, the 1,000 km long source of Polish trade and history. From here we survey the well-preserved layout of this historic city, an important Hanseatic port, the birthplace of Nicolaus Copernicus and the home of gingerbread famed throughout Poland. Our resting place for 2 nights is a small 4-star hotel in the city centre.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

Today we explore Toruń's architectural treasures, ranging through Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque, on a guided city walking tour, starting at the riverside remains of the 13th century Teutonic Knights' Castle around which the Old Town developed. The Cathedral of John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, the Town Hall and the Church of St. James in the adjacent New Town are fine examples of the Brick Gothic style typical of the Baltic Sea region. In the

afternoon, we visit the museum dedicated to Nicolaus Copernicus, who, in the 16th century, stopped the Sun and moved the Earth.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

In the morning we follow an easy forest trail (8 km, 2.5 hrs) in a small nature reserve outside Toruń. Further north in Chełmno, we wander through the old town, centred on the market square and the late Renaissance town hall and surrounded by largely intact mediaeval fortifications. After a tavern lunch, we have a 2-hour drive to our overnight stop in Kartuzy, the heart of Kashubia, a minority language area.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

We visit the modest Kashubian museum, perhaps hearing a Kashubian nursery rhyme, before our walk (6 km, 2 hrs) takes us through the lake district of the Kashubian Landscape Park. We drive to Malbork (1.5 hrs) to explore the largest mediaeval fortified castle complex in the world, situated on the river Nogat, a branch of the Vistula delta. Established by the Teutonic Knights in the 13th century, the fortress later became a Polish royal residence. Our guided tour takes us through the Lower, Middle and High Castles, separated by moats and towers. Thirty minutes away is Elbląg, where we reside for 3 nights at a 4-star hotel in the partly rebuilt historic centre.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

In nearby Frombork, we visit the 14th century Cathedral and learn about the time Copernicus spent here in the services of his uncle, the Bishop of Warmia. Our walk takes us from its starting point on the Vistula Lagoon, past a former summer palace of Emperor Wilhelm II and through the Elbląg Upland Landscape Park (10 km, 3 hrs). In the afternoon, there is some free time to explore Elbląg, once an important port rivalling Gdańsk.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

We spend the day on the Elbląg Canal, built in the late 19th century in order to connect a series of lakes, using an imaginative system of slipways on which barges are hauled overland. We experience first-hand how boats travel on grass during our 4.5-hour tour to Buczyniec, as did Michael Palin in an episode of his BBC travel programme 'New Europe - From Pole to Pole'. We return to Elbląg by minibuss (40 mins) and have an option to stretch our legs on a short walk (5 km, 1.5 hrs) in the popular Bażantarnia forest park outside the city.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

We head for the Vistula Spit, using small country roads through the maze of rivers and channels forming the Vistula delta (1 hr). We take a forest trail walk (6 km, 2 hrs) on the spit before learning about the local fishing and shipbuilding traditions in the Vistula Lagoon Museum. In the afternoon, we visit the Westerplatte Memorial, where Germany launched their attack on Poland, thus starting WWII on 1 September 1939. In Gdańsk, we settle into our home for the next 4 nights, a 4-star hotel on the River Motława.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

We start our exploration of Gdańsk, fittingly for this important Baltic port and trading place, at the emblematic 15th century Crane. Across the river is the Maritime Museum, housed in three adjacent mediaeval granaries. This extensive collection covers Poland's and the Poles' maritime history from the Middle Ages until now. In the afternoon, we visit the vast Brick

Gothic St. Mary's Basilica and later walk along the Royal Way, lined with fine Renaissance and Baroque houses. All these historic buildings have been meticulously restored after the city was largely destroyed at the end of WWII.

DAY 9

B, L, D included

A 2.5-hour boat trip takes us across the Bay of Puck to the southern tip of the Hel Peninsula, a 35 km long narrow sandbank formed over centuries by sea currents. On arrival, we walk to the active lighthouse and explore the surrounding area on foot. We expect to dock back in Gdańsk at 18.00.

DAY 10

B, L, D included

This morning, we walk to the state-of-the-art European Solidarity Centre. It is dedicated to the history of the Solidarity Movement and located next to Gdańsk shipyards, where the movement was founded in 1980 following the shipyard workers' strike. In complete contrast, we travel out of the city to the leafy suburb of Oliwa to visit the three nave 14th century Cathedral, formerly part of a Cistercian monastery complex.

DAY 11

B included

Our journey concludes today with a transfer to the airport. You may also consider a side trip to Warsaw, which can be reached by train in 3 hours.

Activity Level

Relaxed

6 walking days, 1.5 to 3 hours daily, on forest trails with minimal ascents and descents. Waterproof walking shoes are recommended.

Temperatures

In late August/early September average high temperatures in Gdańsk range between 19° and 23°C and average low temperatures between 10° and 13°C.

Accommodation

- 2 nights in Toruń, in a small 4-star hotel in the city centre
- 1 night in Kartuzy, in a modern 3-star hotel
- 3 nights in Elbląg, in a 4-star hotel in the historic centre
- 4 nights in Gdańsk, in a 4-star hotel on the River Motława

Trip Price, per person sharing:

£2,765.75 until 23rd November 2019

£2,915.25 until 23rd May 2020

£2,840.50 until 23rd February 2020

£2,990 after 23rd May 2020

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£400 deposit per person

£440 single room supplement

Please note that the single room supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable. We endeavour to obtain double rooms for single occupancy, whenever possible.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for Days 1 through 11, on a twin shared basis

- Meals, with wine and beer at dinners and restaurant lunches, as listed in the daily notation
- Land transportation in a private vehicle as described, except during free periods
- Boat and train transportation, as described
- Entrance and sightseeing fees as described, except during free periods
- Gratuities for hotel and restaurant staff and the driver (appreciation for your Kudu tour guides is at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Gdansk airport
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides wine and beer with group meals, free time activities, etc.)
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage
- Poland departure taxes, if any

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday.

We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Visa and Health Requirements

Visitors from the EU, USA, Australia, Canada and New Zealand currently require a valid passport, but not a visa, for entry to Poland. If you are a national of any other country, please check visa regulations with your nearest Embassy of Poland.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Poland. Residents of countries in the EU can claim free (emergency) medical treatment in Poland by presenting their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). You may also wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (<https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/healthcare-when-travelling-abroad/>) and the FCO (<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book a trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see our website.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.