

A Visit to Poland

As a distraction from the serious matters contained in The Pilot, may I use your column to say a big thank you to our pilot colleagues in Poland.

At the back end of the summer holidays I had the pleasure to accompany my daughter Beth to Puck in Poland where she competed in the European Windsurfing Championships. My second daughter Meg also accompanied us for the trip and was rewarded with a more than normal diet of horse riding for her patience during the week.

Puck is a small Polish holiday resort situated on the Baltic coast in the Bay of Gdansk, some 30km west of Gdynia and the major port of Gdansk, which many will know.

Needing to find accommodation for myself and two daughters I was seriously lacking in 'local knowledge'. Who better then to call upon but a local pilot. Following an email enquiry to the pilot office in Gdynia, I was soon contacted by Richard Wrobel. Many from the European scene will recognise Richard as the Polish pilots' representative both nationally and with EMPA.

It was with some trepidation that I pondered the accommodation details for two teenage females, but with Richard's "local knowledge" my fears were dispelled.

We booked in to the Jan III Sobieski (www.zameksobieski.pl), a castellated manor house belonging to a long gone second cousin of some Tsar from bygone days. Refurbished from near total dilapidation, the three restaurants offered the highest standards of cuisine with a wine cellar to match. In our spare time we made use of the gym, tennis courts, horse riding and the private walks on the beach and through pine forests. Value for money is an understatement. Wines and horse riding included, eight days all in cost a little over £600 for the three of us! It goes to show how valuable 'local knowledge'



The pilot launch jetty in Gdynia where Richard Wrobel serves

really is and what it can save you.

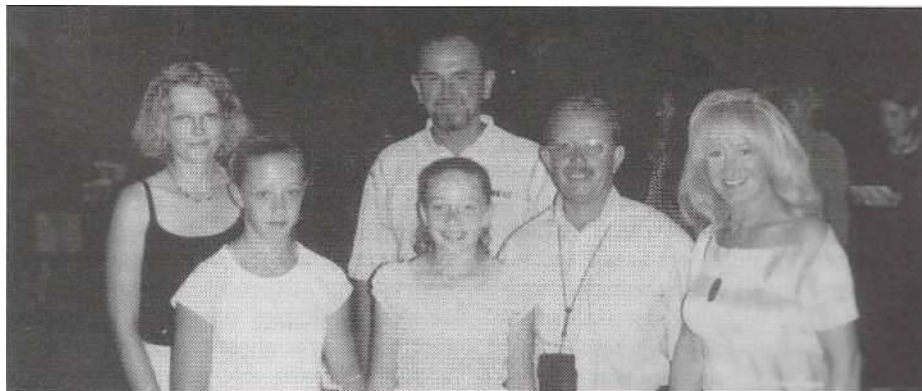
Poland does not rate number one on the tourist destinations and I am sure many would view it with 'curiosity' but if you don't mind a drive and enjoy local culture at a reasonable price, I would highly recommend a visit to Poland.

Richard's hospitality did not stop with arranging our accommodation. Despite having just returned from a week of negotiations for pilots from another port he very kindly took us for a tour of the three cities of Sopot, Gdynia and Gdansk. It was not what I expected. Poland has obviously prospered somewhat since independence but in doing so has managed to keep its culture and identity. The old town in Gdansk is a must.

Thank you Richard, my regards to your wife, your son and his fiance. I wish them the best of luck in their computing and law

*David
Williamson
Liverpool Pilot*

PS. Unfortunately, Beth did not do as well as had been hoped due to stronger than seasonal winds (+25kts) and was placed 21 of 25 at the end of the week. On the day when winds were seasonal (10-14kts) she came 11th & 14th which was more in line with expectations. However, in September she won the British National Junior Championships (U17s) which has qualified her for the British Junior Team for 2004, so it was a good end to the season.



This group picture was taken in the old town of Gdansk. From left to right: Iza, (Richard's future daughter-in-law), Beth, Meg with Richard behind, myself, Richard's wife Rosa and behind the camera Richard's son Michal.