



Top 10- Poland: Culture Shocks

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1. *Traveling!*

When in Poland, traveling was super easy and fun!

Traveling Seminar: (with your cohort and Juliet)

- Poland, Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic

Independent Travel:

During weekends/breaks there are many opportunities to travel.

A few of us travelled to Munich and Amsterdam over break.



Traveling Seminar: Your entire cohort travels around Poland for 2-3 weeks at the beginning of the semester abroad. You visit Gdansk and Sejny, two very different towns, one a small coastal “city” and the other a more suburban town with lots of history. You will also get to spend some time in Wroclaw the capitol of Poland.

My parents had the opportunity to come and visit me while I was abroad, we decided to meet up in London and explore the city, try new food, and see the sights! It was a quick flight, and an easy metro ride and I was able to go from Poland and be in London in just a few hours.

2. Public Transport

The trolleys are used by everyone, professors, students, working professionals, and kids.

You can use google maps, trolley apps, or at each trolley stop there is a map, list of stops, and the timing for the trolleys that on the way.



There can be a learning curve if you're not from somewhere that has a strong public transportation system. Be sure to understand the different numbers on the trolleys and the possible routes that could be taken to reach your destination. At least once, you'll get on the wrong trolley, don't freak out, get off as soon as you realize, and then find the nearest route back, there will be at least a couple of options.

You'll be given a transportation pass at the beginning of the semester; it works on everything and it is so handy. Make sure to have it on you and to tap it on the little electronic screen whenever you get onto the trolleys and buses.

3. Outside Markets

Flower Stands and Shops!

There are many different markets in town squares and community centers, while the weather is nice these markets are a must!

There are also little food stands where bakery items, fresh fruits and vegetables, and handmade trinkets are sold .



Shopping local is so easy in Europe, Poland specifically. There is a strong force of community in the city, supporting local businesses, and forming relationships, are almost requirements of living in the city. Immersion into the community and the culture is an essential part of the Exploring Central Europe abroad program.

4. Christmas Market!

I wish we celebrated Christmas with public markets!

What we bought:

- Warm drinks
- Good food, and yummy treats
- Pottery
- Souvenirs



Our cohort organized a Secret Santa, we all picked names out of a hat and then went to the Christmas Market to buy some fun presents! There were hats, candles, fuzzy socks, and snacks exchanged. The Markets themselves felt like an occasion, people got dressed up, drank fancy drinks, ate good food, and went shopping for their loved ones, or for themselves. Sometimes when there was music and it was a warm enough night there would be dancing in the squares.

5. Zabka “Little Frog”

Zabka's are practically on every street block and open every day!

There are some food options, premade sandwiches (kosher) , salads, and snack options (apples, yogurt, chips, crackers, donuts etc.).

Read the labels! Google translator (or some other app preference) will become your best friend at all the stores that sell food, the grocery store, bakery, local street markets, etc.



This tip is possibly the most important... Make SURE you know the translations of the water, sparkling water is very common and if you aren't paying attention and take a big drink of sparkling water when you're expecting still, well it won't be fun.

6. Public expectations

Smiling as you pass a stranger, "curtesy smile", is not part of Polish culture.

No loudly talking on the phone or playing music (without headphones) on the trolleys.

When riding the trolleys, you will be expected to move if someone needs the seat more than yourself (maybe some light muttering / judgmental looks if you stay seated).

7. Food

A Heads Up: Lays Chips have so many more flavors than you think, and you will not find ranch anywhere in Poland.

There are many kinds of food, some will be new, some won't be, my best advice is to try it all.

Prepackaged foods will be Kosher, which means there will be sandwiches with meat on them, and there will be sandwiches with cheese, there will not be sandwiches with both.

The food somehow always tastes better when it's bought from a market stand.



Pierogies are now very easily one of my all-time favorite foods! I didn't eat a single meal that I didn't enjoy!

This picture was taken during the one of the festivals that was happening during the fall.

8. Gnomes!



Orange Alternative, an anti-Soviet resistance movement that helped bring down Poland's oppressive communist regime in the 1980s.

They are all over the city, with more showing up every year.

Armed with spray cans and led by an artist at the University of Wroclaw named Waldemar 'Major' Fidrych, the group peacefully protested the government's censorship of free speech and public gatherings during the period of martial law from 1981 to 1983 by defacing communist propaganda with surrealist-inspired street art – specifically, paintings of mischievous little gnomes.

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20171017-the-truth-behind-wrocaws-cheeky-gnomes>

9. Sundays

Do not save your grocery shopping for Sunday, most places will be closed!

Zabka (convenience store/small food options) remains open, and smaller local stores may remain open with limited hours.

Sundays are great days for studying, enjoying nature, resting and doing laundry.

My very first day in Poland, my phone got smashed in a taxi door, Anita was my saving grace! We ran around to find a phone store on Saturday, knowing that by Sunday most stores, would be closed. We ran around and managed to find a store that was still open on Saturday, I bought a new phone and then had to call my parents to help me set it up.

10. The Little Things

Take Pictures, hold on to memories, try to spend as much time living in the present.

Having a quiet study session in a café, trying a new food or snack, appreciating new ways of life and hobbies, or trying mystery chili from a street market, they make not be the memories that get written or talked about. Those days and memories were the days that helped me feel comfortable and somewhat at home while I was so far away.



In the end, my time abroad was filled with brand new adventures and learning a lot about what life looks like in different areas of the world. My advice: remember the little things,

“Never Again”



Creating a Top 10 list of culture shocks was easy, it was my first time living in another country! Trying to decide how to include the reality of living among a shared collective identity of remorse, was not even a little bit easy. Spending months learning about one of humanities failures isn't fun. The monuments of the murdered, they didn't leave us with a feeling of lightheartedness. Spending my semester abroad was a decision that I will never forget, nor regret, it was among the experiences that would shape my future. Rest in Peace the Fallen



Thank you