

# Recollections of Poland ... 2009

## Meeting Our Newly Found Cousins

September 15<sup>th</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup>

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### Saturday, September 19<sup>th</sup>...

Again ... barking dogs and that damn rooster woke me up at 6 AM. The day looked promising, sunny but cool. Morning oblations did not include a shower or a bath ... wonder if I started to emit a pungent odor? Must remind myself that TONIGHT is bath time (of course, it's Saturday night.) House woke up by 7 AM ... breakfast followed shortly.

✱ ... Odd thing this breakfast and *obiad* (mid day dinner) at the Ruzulowicz house ... it was always Laurentiu, Tomasz and I. The girls ate much later (its summertime and they slept late until 10 or 11) and Danka was preoccupied in the kitchen, cooking, baking, and preparing the next two meals. I always felt ill at ease being served without the server joining me in my meal. Moreover, silence usually was the other table occupant ... as conversation, other than a comment or simple question, was not invited. I like quietness at my meals but here I was a guest and longed for table conversation.

Danka always outdid herself in setting a generous breakfast table ... this morning we had *kasza jaglana na mleku* (milk soup with millet groats), sandwiches with last night's cold cuts, bread and home-made jam, assorted cakes, and tea. Filling stuff one has to agree. Silence permeated the table. We finished by 8 and Tomasz told us that today we would walk the town of Koźuchów, visit a few museums and generally get a feel for the town.

We sat around until about 11 ... resting our weary bones, catching up on e-mail (yes, household did have Internet access) ... and re-reading the write-ups I brought with me on expected points of interest we would visit.



We left the house (Laurentiu, Tomasz and I) and made our way to town less than a 1/2-mile walk. Along the way, we encountered ...

.... historic manor houses ...



... delivered coal being stowed in cellar ...



... approaching commercial zone ...



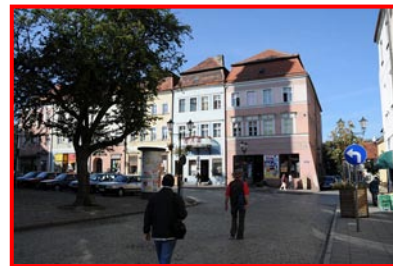
... approaching Rynek (central square) ...



... passing by a recent archaeological dig ...



... and setting foot at the heart of Koźuchów, Rynek and City Hall ...



... heading to *Izba Regionalna, Baszta Krośnieńska* (Regional Chamber, Bastion, museum-type) ... we have an appointment for a guided tour.

✱ ... Notice in above image, Tomasz is leading. A recurring situation ... he is always far ahead of our group. A natural born leader?



Along the path I happen to see medieval façade and building accoutrements ...

... like this 1569 engraving ...



... and a defending knight ...

Fascinating !!!!!

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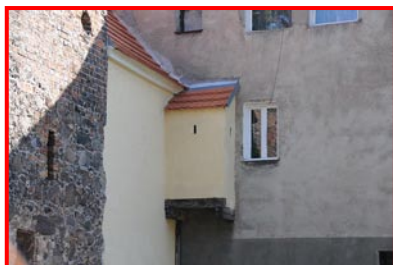
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*Izba Regionalna, Baszta Krośnieńska* (Krośnieńska Tower) - a tower of the medieval fortifications the north-west of Koźuchów city. Tower is the remnant of a (now) non-existent Krosno Gate, founded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century adapted into the system to defend the city fortifications and inner artillery.



The reader may notice in the top image a yellow protrusion between the round bastion and the building on the right (close up in lower image) ... this is an original **garderobe**.

In English a **garderobe** (or privy) has come to mean a primitive toilet in a castle or other medieval building, usually a simple hole discharging to the outside. A garderobe tower is tower specifically constructed to house such privies, usually projecting from the outer wall of a castle.

According to Frank Bottomley (renowned Medieval Architecture scholar and author of numerous books), Garderobes were ... "Properly, not a latrine or privy but a small room or large cupboard, usually adjoining the chamber or solar and providing safe-keeping for valuable clothes and other possessions of price: cloth, jewels, spices, plate, and money." This definition is upheld by the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary which states that the etymology of the word garderobe comes to us through Middle English originating from the Old French words *garder* (to watch, to guard) and *robe* (clothing). The entry provides three definitions for garderobe with the first being, "a wardrobe or its contents." The second definition names a garderobe as "a private room" or "bedroom," while the final definition in the entry for garderobe is "privy."

**Description** ... There were often holes in the outer walls of large structures and castles that led to cesspits or moats (depending on the structure of the building involved.) These holes were in wooden seats most often placed inside a small, private chamber that led to the use of the term garderobe to describe them, when in fact privy is more appropriate. Many of these privy holes can still be seen (from the inside and out) in Norman and Medieval castles and fortifications. They became obsolete with the demise of castles generally, and chamber pots were then generally used until the invention and introduction of the toilet. Given their exposed location, they must have been rather uncomfortable to use, especially in high winds, and toilet paper was just a handful of hay or a linen rag. Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garderobe>

I trust the reader appreciates these little "nuggets of knowledge." Our journals are meant not only to describe our travel experiences but also to impart some unique knowledge.



Anyway, we arrive at the Izba and look for its Director ... **Zdzisław Szukielowicz**. Finding him in his office, we were introduced to this amiable man (left) ... and Tomasz gave him a cap that I sent, embroidered with *Historyczne Koźuchów* (Historic Koźuchów.)

Pan Szukielowicz, in his high-level educated language proceeded to give us a private 1-hour tour of the history of the bastion, the town, the fortifications, and the towns' progressive growth to the present. I have to admit, that with my limited Polish language skills, I was able to understand barely half of what he mentioned ... however, even then I was able to digest the gist of what he meant.

✿ ... The reader may have noticed that I addressed the man as **Pan**. What in the world does this mean?

**Pan / Pani / Państwo** ... *Pan* and *Pani* are the basic honorific styles used in Polish to refer to a man or woman, respectively. In the past, these styles were reserved to hereditary nobles and played more or less the same roles as "Lord" or "Sir" and "Lady" or "Madame" in English. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they have come to be used in all strata of society and may be considered equivalent to the English "Mr." and "Ms." There used to be a separate style, *Panna* ("Miss"), applied to an unmarried woman, but this is outdated and mostly replaced by *Pani*.

"**Państwo**" is widely used when referred to a married couple (instead of using separately *Pan* and *Pani*) or even the whole family.

Examples:

- Pan Kowalski + Pani Kowalska = Państwo Kowalscy
- Pan Nowak + Pani Nowak = Państwo Nowakowie

**Titles** ... Scientific and other titles are always used together with "Pan" and "Pani".

Examples:

- Pan profesor Jan Nowak
- Pani doktor Maria Kowalska

During a conversation with another person often the names are dropped and only the first two words are used like "Panie Profesorze" or "Pani Doktor".

**Informal language** ... Informal forms of address are normally used only by relatives, close friends, and co-workers. In such situations, diminutives are generally preferred to the standard forms of given names. At an intermediate level of familiarity (e.g. among co-workers) a diminutive given name may be preceded by formal *Pan* or *Pani*.

Examples:

- Pan Włodek (but also standard form "Pan Włodzimierz")
- Pani Jadzia (but also "Pani Jadwiga")

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Using the honorific style only with a surname is sometimes perceived as rude if used to refer to a given person directly (e.g. "Panie Kowalski"). In such a case it is more polite to avoid this form and when referring to the person use just the form "Pan", without given or family name.

It is very rude not to refer to someone unknown with "Pan" or "Pani." The act of changing from this form to a friendly "you" must be acknowledged by both parties and it is a mark of a close friendly relationship between the two people. Only the older or more respected person can propose this, as otherwise it can be perceived as very arrogant.

There is a clear distinction between the "friends" and "colleagues." For example, co-workers will be very rarely referred to as friends - most likely only after the titling was mutually agreed to be changed from "Pan/Pani" to "you." Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish\\_name](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polish_name)

Yes, reader ... even after all these years of being American, I still abide by the above rules when visiting Poland. Manners are critical when one deals with individuals from another culture (or in my case, out of respect for my culture.)

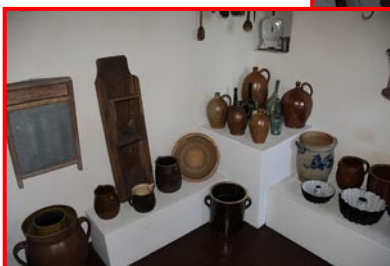


Returning to the tour, what did we discover?

... Medieval armor and weaponry ...



... household items ...



... as well as documented artifacts and documents attesting to the towns' history.



Satisfied visitors ...



... acknowledging the personal opportunity by signing the guest register and posting positive comments.



Leaving the Izba, Pan Szukielowicz walked with us to the next item on our exploration of the historic elements of Koźuchów ... the Lapidarium. Along the way, he pointed out several notable town high points:



The town walled fortifications.

Reconstructed bridge over the moat.



The old cemetery.

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Lapidarium of Koźuchów - founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Within its perimeter walls are located over 200 historic tombstones from the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

This lapidary, representing an evangelical cemetery, is considered the most beautiful in Poland.



Among the many, many tombstone headstones, markers, and mausoleums ... images below attest to the sheer variety contained in this well-preserved cemetery. It is no wonder it is considered a Polish jewel.



Nothing creates an emotion as the reverence for death. We spend an hour walking the grounds ... reading the headstones (Latin and German inscriptions) ... marveling at some recent burials ... noting some wreaths laid in an empty mausoleum (300-year remembrance of sorts) ... before we depart and head to our next attraction ... the **Zamek** (castle.)



The castle, although historical, essentially did not look like a castle. More like a large official building. We were given a brief walk-through ...

... however, because there was ongoing renovation inside were able only to explore the cellar and the large banquet hall. We left for the house at the tours end.



We took a circuitous route back to the house ... deciding to walk the perimeter of 'old town' to look closely at the

medieval fortifications.



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By 1:30 PM, we get back to the house ... just in time for *obiad* (dinner). Danka outdid herself this afternoon ...

... home made *barszcz* (clear beet soup)



... *pierogi* (Polish dumplings, Russian-style), with Polish Zwiwiec® beer

(over 4 dozen made for 3 people ... I stopped after consuming 11)



... and *ciasto* (cake) and fresh table grapes just picked.



✱ ... In English, the word pierogi and its variants (perogi, perogy, pirohi, piroghi, pirogi, pirogen, pierogy, pirohy, pyrohy) are pronounced with a stress on the letter "o". The origins of pierogi are difficult to trace. While dumplings as such are found throughout Eurasia, the specific name pierogi, with its Proto-Slavic root "pir" (festivity) and its various cognates in the West and East Slavic languages, shows the name's common Slavic origins, predating the modern nation states and their standardized languages, although in most of these languages the word means pie. The East Slavic Belarusians, Russians and Ukrainians, the West Slavic Poles and Slovaks, and the Baltic Latvians and Lithuanians all consume this dish, although sometimes under a different name.

Pierogi (are half circular dumplings of unleavened dough, stuffed (singularly or in various combinations) with mashed potatoes, cheese, farmer's cheese, bryndza, cabbage, sauerkraut, meat, mushrooms, or other ingredients depending on the cook's personal preferences. Dessert versions of the dumpling can be stuffed with a fresh fruit filling, such as cherry, strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, peach, or apple; stoned prunes are sometimes used. Mashed potatoes mixed with farmer's cheese and fried onions are a popular filling in Poland and Ukraine. In Poland, this variety is called Ruskie (Russian or Rutherian) pierogi. A popular filling for pierogi in Canada is mashed potatoes mixed with grated cheddar cheese.

Pierogi were traditionally peasant food, but eventually spread in popularity throughout all social classes, including nobles. They are served at many festivals, playing an important role as a cultural Polish dish. At the 2007 Pierogi Festival in Kraków, 30,000 pierogis were consumed daily. Poles traditionally serve two types of pierogi for Christmas Eve supper (*Wigilia*). One kind is filled with sauerkraut and dried mushrooms, another – small – *uszka* (little ears) filled only with dried wild mushrooms – are served in clear *barszcz*.

The meal was exceptionally delicious and filling ... although I mentioned to Danka that my memory recalls that we added a little bit of *ocet* (vinegar) to the *barszcz* to make it more tart. As fast as I could blink, some vinegar was brought out ... I added just enough to my cup of soup ... voila, a perfect cup.



We lingered over *obiad* for quite a while ... conversation was mainly with Danka, talking about the early days (Communist era) and the difficulty of basic survival under the oppressive regimes. Tomek added a few of his anecdotes but essentially the conversation was subdued.

By mid-afternoon I was peaked out ... lay down to rest for a few hours ... Tomasz had plans for us for this evening. I had to recover my energy.



In the interim ... Danka played chess (a very popular Polish pastime) with Krysia ... Danka almost always wins.

Laurentiu spending his time keeping track (by Internet) of things at the University ... his research projects.



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As it was getting dark (around 8 PM) Tomasz (the ever-present planner) told us it was time to drive to another nearby town for a nighttime visit. The town of **Bytom Odrzański** ... on the river Odra.

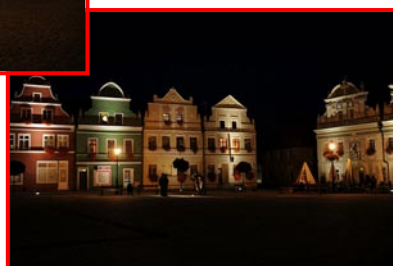
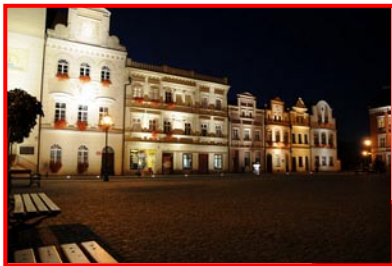


**Bytom Odrzański** is over 900 years old. Its history is complex and convoluted. Only a "quiet period" of the 19<sup>th</sup> century enabled the inhabitants of a normal life. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Bytom economy was dominated by agriculture, growing hops and grapes. In

the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Bytom was a major wine producer in Silesia. The city's economy, however, remained in the shadow of the faster-growing center, Nowa Sól. At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the town got a railway connection with Głogów and Nowa Sól. From 1884, there was nearby active coal mining. In 1907, an iron bridge over the Oder River completed. Larger plants emerged together with urban gasworks and some smaller industrial businesses. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the river port was modernized and expanded and thus began construction of a new residential area - along the road to Koźuchów.

In the early thirties, reinforced concrete shelters were built in anticipation of war with Germany. In the early years of World War II, the city was not involved in military operations. In mid-January 1945, the population was evacuated and the city turned into a point of resistance. On February 13, 1945, the town was overrun by Soviet troops. During the battle the bridge on the Oder and several residential buildings were destroyed. Greater damage to buildings was caused to the city by the post-war Soviet troops. Their demolition to obtain building materials for reconstruction destroyed many towns of Central Poland. In the summer of 1945, the first Polish settlers appeared in Bytom, who organized a Polish administration. Until 1945, the official name of the city was **Beuthen an der Oder**; in Polish, it was named **Białobrzezie**. Since 1947, the current name is used.

On nighttime visit was most delightful ... because of Bytom's Rynek (Central Square.) Illuminated throughout, every building was festooned in light, creating a magical atmosphere, as these images show:



I have no clue the significance of this sculpture in Rynek ... depicting a 'drunkard' and a rabbit dressed in medieval garb. Still, an interesting photo opportunity.



The square was virtually deserted ... some young people milling about ... no loud music or noise anywhere ... tranquil. Being so quiet, I overheard some of the youngsters casting disparaging remarks my way ... obviously, because I was an American, wearing a 'cowboy' hat. Oh well, rudeness is a universal curse. I ignore them ... continued my stroll. After 25 or 30 minutes, we opted to leave Bytom. We returned to Koźuchów.

✿ ... I mentioned earlier the abysmal country roads in western Poland ... it was more true of the road from Koźuchów to Bytom Odrzański ... narrow 2-lane, with asphalt only on the driving lanes ... the shoulders were unpaved, low, rough and pot-holed. Pity the car if it has to swerve to the shoulder to miss oncoming traffic. Traffic at 10 PM was non-existent.

When we returned, a light *kolacja* (supper) was waiting ... fried eggs, tomatoes, goose pâté, sausages, cakes, and, of course, vodka.

Finally took a bath/shower (must explain later) at 11:30 PM ... joined family conversation until 1 AM ... family goes to bed around 1 AM - 2 AM; Tomasz surfs the web until ??? (hard sleeping for him.) I retired to my

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bedroom/office and fell into bed ... but sleep eluded me for a while ... damn that barking dog!

### Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup>...

Another restless night of sleep ... woke up at 8:30 (thankfully without the barking dog wake-up call.) Day dawned sunny but cool ... no wind. A good omen for today we start our three-day trip to the mountains and all the attractions therein. Breakfast consisted of hard boiled eggs, 3 types of ham, 3 types of fresh bread and 2 type of rolls, sausages, cakes, and tea. We had to fill up our 'gas tanks' with food fuel as it is going to be a long day ... i.e., no lunch.



Danka prepared enough food and other edibles (including her famous pierogis) for our trip ... sort of serious picnic fare.

Outside, Laurentiu entertained himself with Cezar ... his new friend.

Packing the FIAT, we left Kożuchów around 10 AM ... first stop, city of **Bolesławiec**.

Tomasz drove our FIAT chariot throughout this leg of the trip ... we were not given the option of 'spelling' him. Just as well, majority of Polish drivers are in a class by themselves ... aggressive.

✿ ... Polish drivers ... yes, as a group, they are aggressive and, to me for the most part, somewhat reckless – especially the young ones with expensive German cars. Tomasz, on the other hand, is a careful (actually overcautious) driver. He passes others when the road is clear and conditions warrant. Otherwise, he drives the actual posted speed limit ... that at times is frustrating to the drivers behind him. Tomasz loves to stay in higher a gear (car is a manual) which means that uphill the car struggles. Still, I would rather go slower than drive like hell. On the other hand, Tomasz loves his CB radio (citizens band) ... something everyone in the USA virtually abandoned 30 years ago. I was a little apprehensive about this distraction while driving ... plus, the constant "squelch" of the radio was irritating. However, he was driving and I kept my mouth, and ears, shut. His GPS unit, for navigation help, was another matter I will mention later.

The road to **Bolesławiec** was clear, traffic light, the countryside appealing ... arriving in town at 11:15.



**Bolesławiec** (German: Bunzlau) in Lower Silesia was first mentioned in 1201 and took part in the battles against the Mongols in 1241. After that, a renewed city with city walls was established. The city seal, still used today (left), was first used in 1316. In

1346, Bolesławiec came under control of Imperial Bohemia. It was again heavily destroyed during the Hussite Wars in 1429. After that, a double city wall was started in 1479.

With the majority of burghers in 1522 becoming Protestant early on, Bolesławiec became an important center of the Reformation. The city town hall was rebuilt by the famous Wendel Roskopf in 1525 and at the same time construction of a sewerage system was started. This was an unusual and difficult undertaking; it was finished in 1565 and it was the first canalization system in that part of Europe. In 1558, the first apothecary was established.

For a long time Bolesławiec has been famous for its Bunzlauer pottery works. Pottery was an early trade and already in 1511, the Bolesławiec pottery guild is mentioned. This entire region has a history of pottery making dating back to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Early pieces from the 1700s and 1800s were used by farmers as storage pieces and had a chocolate colored glaze. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the potters of Bolesławiec began to introduce new lines of pottery intended for use in the parlor. At the same time, they began to experiment with colored glazes, sponging techniques, and various decorations. Much of the pottery is of high quality, hand painted stoneware. In 1898, the German government established the Keramische Fachschule (Ceramic Technical Training School) to foster development of the art.

One of the biggest Soviet Red Army contingents was stationed in Bolesławiec until its withdrawal in 1992. Perhaps this explains why a rare event took place after 1945. Poland received administration of most of eastern Germany from the Soviet Union. However, the Bunzlau German Evangelical church continued even after 1945, until 1950. This is in contrast to what happened to other parts of Germany east of the Oder-Neisse line. Between 1942 and 1945, Bunzlau was the site of a concentration camp.



We easily found parking just outside of Rynek and walked the short distance to the square. It was eerily quiet ... town was either still asleep or the folks were in church.



The Rynek of Bolesławiec is a compact square ... with the square's center held down by the Rathaus (City Hall.) The majestic tower is its highlight ... imposing.

Some people were seated around its perimeter ... again, eyeing this 'old man' wearing

a 'cowboy' hat ... a sight not commonly seen in Poland. I enjoyed this particular feeling of being in a different culture ... indicating to those people that I wanted to be here.

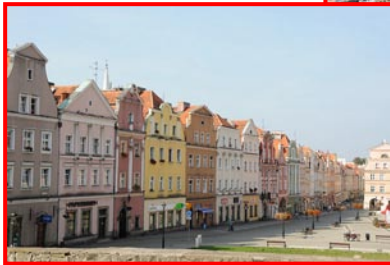
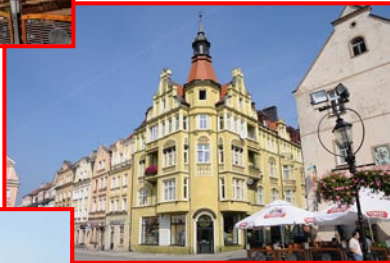
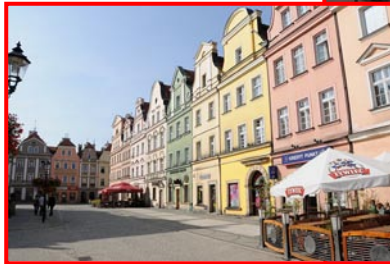
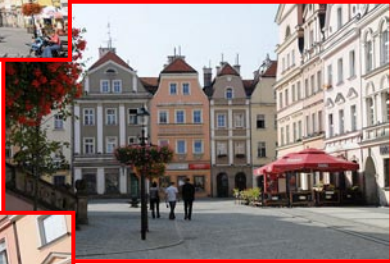
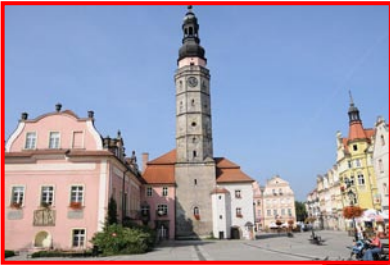
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Sights around the Rynek ...



This last view of the Rynek is from the front steps of the Church ... and High Mass was in session. We decided to join the congregation for a brief prayer.



The Church ...

The archway leading to the Church (c. 1774) ...



The Church 'rear' door ...

Mass to a full house ...



We did not stay long in Church ... long enough to hear some chants from the priest (he had that voice that actually belongs in a Church setting.) We left quietly ... circled the outside of the church ... backtracked through the 1774 gate ... rounded the Rynek and returned to the FIAT. I thought we were through with Bolesławiec but Tomasz, familiar with the city and without saying a word, drove about 1/4 -mile to the next attraction he picked for us – a bridge. Again, no fore mention ... just drove to the bridge.

By 1851, Bolesławiec had a railway connection with Wroclaw and Dresden. For this one of the longest viaducts in Europe, architect Frederick Engelhardt Gansel was awarded the Order of the Red Eagle.



The structure is impressive – the Bolesławiec viaduct is 490 meters long, 8 meters wide and 26 meters in height. The designer of the bridge modeled it on Roman aqueducts. The stone used was bright yellow sandstone from a nearby quarry.



Construction of the bridge started in 1844, lasted for 2 years, and cost 400 thousand dollars. Although this amount was, for those times, astronomical, the experts have calculated that only the proximity of the quarry from which material was drawn for

the construction of the viaduct, helped reduce construction costs by as much as half. For the scaffolding, 12 thousand trees were cut. Construction of the viaduct work required over 600 people ... with a further 3200 who were indirectly related to its construction.

Viaduct consists of 35 semicircular arches supporting the huge pillars. Those pillars are spaced at regular distances: varying in distances of 15 m, 11.5 m and 5.65 m.

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The bridge was opened on July 27, 1846 however; commemorative plaques are built into one of the arches give a different date: June 18, 1844 as the start of construction and completion on July 5, 1846. On August 17, 1846, the railway crossing was officially opened, attended by King Frederick William IV.

In 1945, the retreating Germans blew up the west bay situated directly on the river and two spans. For a short time after the war, it was necessary to interrupt the rail journey, crossing the river by whatever means and

continue driving the train on the other side of the line. By 1947, the Bolesławiec viaduct has been rebuilt. Subsequent work on the viaduct was carried out in 1984-85 in connection with the electrification of the railway line.

Source: <http://pkip.boleslawiec.pl/wiadukt/>

To get a better sense of the sheer magnitude, or scale, of the viaduct, here are two images extracted from the source site mentioned above.

The red arrow denotes our location for the images on the preceding page. I did not even know beforehand that there was a river under the viaduct (discovered only upon my return home.)



\* ... It was unfortunate that for the majority of the sights I encountered I had no clue as to their cultural, historic, or special significance ... none was offered and literature or brochures were not available anywhere. Certainly would have added more spark to my touring.

We only stayed here long enough to snap a few photos and departed almost immediately ... our next destination ... ????

From Bolesławiec we drove due south ... the countryside becoming more interesting. Rolling hill turning into low mountains turning, in the distance, into higher peaks. Aha ... I thought ... finally we're in a zone made for hiking, geology, flora and fauna ... maybe some cultural icons. Again, I was unaware of neither our destination nor the intent ... only that we will be overnighing a couple of days. In time we left the main southbound highway and started our descent into a valley-like setting ... I asked Tomasz where we were heading ... towards **Jelenia Góra** his reply.

**Jelenia Góra** (German: Hirschberg im Riesengebirge,) a city in Lower Silesia. The name of the city means "deer mountain" in Polish and German. It is close to the Karkonosze mountain range running along the Polish-Czech border. As at 2007, the population of Jelenia Góra was ~ 87,000.

History ... Polish authors Piotr Pregiel and Tomasz Przerwa in their work on history of Silesia note that Jelenia Góra was used by Polish ruler

Bolesław Krzywousty as base for his campaigns against the Czechs in 1110. A legend, mentioned by German author Johann Karl Herbst in his town chronicle from 1847, attributes the beginnings of the town back to the times of the Polish Piast dynasty, and connects its foundation with King Bolesław III Wrymouth (1108). Today instead of the first mention, the legend is used by the town to celebrate their anniversary.

German and Polish authors, however, note that the town was only founded shortly before 1281, on a cleared spot in the mountains, during the German Ostsiedlung. In 1281, the settlement was first mentioned as Hyrzberc, and in 1288 in Latin as Hyrsbergensium. When the Silesian Piasts lost inheritance and Agnes of Habsburg, the last dutchess of Schweidnitz- Jauer (Świdnica-Jawor) died in 1392, the city passed to Bohemia, ruled by the House of Luxembourg.

The city was inherited by Habsburg Austria in 1526; two years after the town adopted the Protestant faith. In 1560, a fire destroyed large parts of the city and stopped the economic development, which until then was characterized by linen weaving. The city recovered when Joachim Girth, a shoemaker on a return journey from Holland, introduced veil weaving.

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The first "light veils" were offered in 1625, and five years later, the city received an imperial privilege by Ferdinand II for these veils.

During the Thirty Years' War, the city suffered badly. Hirschberg was beleaguered by troops of both parties, paid high contributions, and during a siege in 1634, the city burned down again. Two more sieges followed in 1640 and 1641. The town needed several years to recover. One reason for the new boost was the creation of a merchant society 1658, which secured Hirschbergs position as the most important center of linen and veil trade in the Silesian mountains during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Hirschberg was annexed with Lower Silesia by the Kingdom of Prussia during the Silesian Wars. The city was again partly destroyed, had to pay contributions and was seized several times. The detachment from Austria and the new border in the mountains to the south badly damaged the economy as the merchants lost a large part of their customers. Although Prussia took on substantial efforts to revive the economy, they never recovered completely and finally lost their position during the industrial revolution.

In 1871, the town became part of the German Empire upon the Prussian-led unification of Germany, as one of the largest towns in the Province of Silesia. The Deutsche Riesengebirgsverein (German Giant Mountains Club), an organization to protect the environment of the Giant Mountains (Karkonosze) and to promote tourism, was founded in 1880 by 48 dignitaries of the region. It was the seventh oldest German mountaineering club with up to 18,000 members and 95 local groups, some of them even in Hamburg, the Rhineland, or New York. In 1912–14 the Riesengebirgsmuseum, a museum about the mountains and the history of Hirschberg and the region, was opened by the club. It was closed in 1945 together with the Riesengebirgsverein, whose members were expelled. The museum was rearranged in 1950 and opened again in 1953. The club still exists in Germany, although its mission is obsolete.

After World War I, the town became part of the Province of Lower Silesia in 1919, and in 1922 became a separate city. During the Nazi era under the regime of Adolf Hitler, a concentration subcamp of KZ Gross- Rosen was located in Hirschberg.

Following the end of World War II in 1945, the town was placed under Polish administration according to the decisions of the Potsdam Conference, and became officially known by its Polish name of Jelenia Góra, which was first recorded in 1882. The remaining German inhabitants were expelled westward and replaced with Polish settlers. The city was not destroyed in the war. After the war, the new Polish authorities dismantled the Old Town and destroyed the cemetery of the Protestant church. Afterwards the buildings around the market place were reconstructed in more simple forms.

As we entered the main road through town we were caught in a gridlock ... making progress measured in inches. It was Sunday ... flea market day in town (I learned later) ... whereby buyers and sellers converged on this short 1-mile road by the thousands. It took nearly 30 minutes to clear this "parking lot" before we were able to locate a secondary road to our final destination ... a *noclegi* (tourist overnight stay.) Passing through town I noted the price of unleaded gasoline ... 4.59 zloty per liter ... or

roughly \$7.25 USD per gallon (at current exchange rates.) No ... we will not stay in Jelenia Góra but in a nearby suburb called Podgórzyn.



It was about 1:45 PM when we pulled in front of Willa Polanka ... our 2-night stay.



We were greeted not by the hosts but by a large, mean-looking, snarling canine ... ready to chew on any leg that comes within reach. The barking produced the hostess who was surprised to see us ... she assumed we would arrive next week. No problem she countered as there are no guests at the moment and rooms are available. We unloaded the FIAT, lugged our luggage up two narrow flights' of stairs and were shown our rooms ... a 2-person room for Danka and Toamsz and a 4-person room for Laurentiu and myself (by person I mean number of beds.)

My bed shown at right ... against the wall ...

Laurentiu had a choice of two ... he chose the one by the window ...



✿ ... In low-cost tourist hotels of any kind in Europe there is no such thing as double, queen, or king size beds. Single beds, narrow as possible to fit the room, are the norm. Mattresses are typically hard ... bedding very clean but shows its age ... blankets rough ... towels worn and scratchy. Atmosphere is downright rustic and homey. However, the price is right ... because you are saving lots of \$\$\$.

Want a \*\*\*\*\* hotel, do not travel out of the big cities. Yes ... these *pensiunes* are very popular and most always booked solid. Our Willa Polanka ... very nice.



Time was roughly 2 PM. I was not that hungry but Danka insisted that we have a 'picnic lunch' she brought along ... pierogis. She even brought an iron skillet in which to heat them (most *noclegis* have a community kitchenette, this

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one did not.) The hostess, out of sheer hospitality, offered to reheat them for us.



Waiting for our mid-day meal, I caught up on my note taking ... and savored a brew supplied by Danka (the woman thinks of everything.)

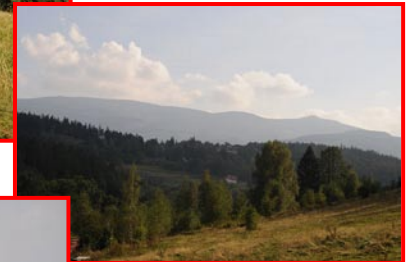
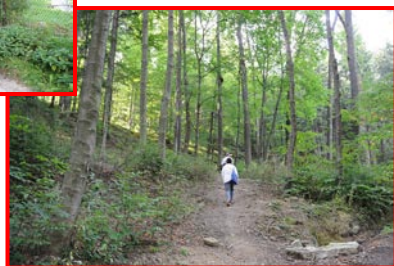


Sure enough, fifteen minutes later here comes the hostess with our warmed-over lunch.

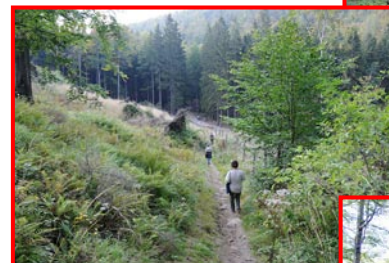
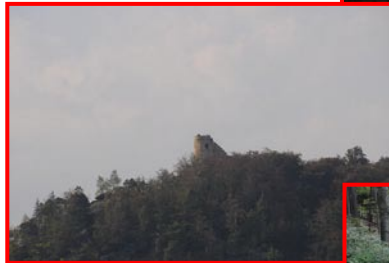
Can you imagine a more traditional Polish meal ... beer and pierogis? OK ... meal finished ... thirst quenched ... time to relax and savor the day. Perhaps take a short

stroll through the vicinity of the *noclegi*. NO! Tomasz had bigger plans ... we are taking a "short" hike to a *Zamek Chojnik* (Castle Chojnik) ... a little hike to help digest the *pierogis*. This was news to me ... I just ate a big meal ... nothing was mentioned beforehand (again, a surprise.) And where in God's name is this castle located ... OH, a 3-5 km hike (2-3 miles) UP a mountain. Good Lord ... this cannot be real.

Having no choice, I get ready for a grueling walk although my senses tell me that I will suffer for it later. It is now 2:30 PM as we set off ... just off the Willa is a trail that leads into the mountains (well planned by Tomasz.) Just to allow the reader to get a better sense of what this "hike" consists of ... the following images tell the tale, without words:



... our objective.



From the images, one thing is obvious ... as the photographer, I am the last in line on this hike, and Danka is just in front of me. Who is in the lead? Tomasz. The man has excess energy and expects everyone else to have the same ... impossible. His pace was grueling. Danka and I just kept back ... not pushing ourselves. Besides, it gave us a chance to chat some more about family. We will get there eventually.



It was 4:30 PM when we arrived at the castle gate ... a rough 2-hour hike. Tomasz and Laurentiu were fresh from the hike ... Danka and I were winded and exhausted.

The castle was due to close in 30 minutes so we had to scramble to get our sightseeing in before they closed the place. So much to explore ... so little time.

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**Chojnik** (German: Kynast) is a castle located above the village of Sobieszów, today part of Jelenia Góra. Its remains stand on top of the Chojnik hill (627 m (2,057 ft)) within the **Karkonosze National Park**.

The building of the fortress dates back to the times of the Silesian Piasts and for most of its time was in the possession of the Schaffgotsch noble family. Today the semi-ruined stronghold is a major tourist attraction and houses a hotel and a restaurant.



**History ...** The castle of Chojnik was originally erected by the order of Duke Bolko I the Strict in 1292 at the site of a former hunting lodge built by his father Boleslaw II the Bald. The fortress was meant to protect the borders of Bolko's Duchy of Jawor against the menacing Wenceslaus II of

Bohemia. Bolko's grandson Bolko II the Small, the last independent Piast duke, had the castle reconstructed starting from 1355.



After Bolko II had died without issue in 1368, his widow Agnes von Habsburg sold the castle to one of the courtiers, the knight Gotsche Schoff. Gotsche II Schoff modernized and expanded the castle in 1393. In the same year, he donated the Gothic chapel,

which was completed in 1403. The chapel devoted to Saint Catherine and Saint George featured artful paintings preserved until World War II. The castle survived the next centuries without damages. It withstood the attacks by the Hussites in 1426 and by King Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, who after his campaign of 1469 destroyed many Silesian castles. In 1529 Ulrich von Schaffgotsch expanded the building with two forecourts, depots and a pillory, and at the end of the 16th century Renaissance modifications were carried out.

During the Thirty Years' War Hans Ulrich von Schaffgotsch, Lord of Kynast - though a Protestant - after the 1620 Battle of White Mountain, supported Emperor Ferdinand II and served as a general in the Imperial army under Albrecht von Wallenstein. After Wallenstein's persecution and assassination in 1634 Schaffgotsch, as his liegeman, was arrested, accused of high treason, and executed one year later. Ferdinand II seized his property and had Kynast castle occupied by his troops, who resisted the attacks of the Swedish forces. Ferdinand III added new bastions to the castle in 1648 and finally restituted it to Christoph Leopold von Schaffgotsch, Hans Ulrich's son, in 1650. Still during the latter's lifetime, in 1675, the castle that has never been conquered, burnt down completely after being struck by lightning and was not reconstructed.



The comital family relocated down into the valley to the old palace of Warmbrunn (today Cieplice Śląskie-Zdrój) and the destroyed castle became a tourist attraction already in the early 18th century. It was visited by the Prussian royal family and poets like Heinrich

von Kleist and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as well as Theodor Körner, who immortalized the ruin in one of his poems and made it famous all over Germany. In 1822, the Schaffgotschs added a tavern and harborage to the castle and three years later rebuilt the tower. In the 1920s, the old legends were resuscitated by Waldemar Müller-Erhardt, and in the next years, these folk plays were performed there. The ruins remained in the property of the Schaffgotsch dynasty until in 1945 the family was expelled. In 1964, the Polish state restored the ruins and rebuilt the mountain hut.

**Kunigunde legend ...** The ruins of Chojnik is tied to the myth of Kunigunde, a castle lord's daughter desired by many knights. As she had no intention to enter into marriage she promised to espouse the bold man who would complete a circuit along the castle's walls on a horseback, knowing that on the steep slopes horse and rider must fall into the chasm. Many tried and perished until a proud nobleman came along, who appealed to Kunigunde's eyes. Though she declared to abandon the precondition and to marry him right away, the knight insisted to take the risk and he succeeded. Instead of accepting her proposal, he scolded her for her cruelty and departed. Kunigunde however, deeply humiliated, lunged into the abyss herself.



Panoramic view of village of Sobieszów from castle tower.

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The castle closed on time ... unceremoniously. The caretakers literally kicked the people out and closed the barbican (gate). It was still light outside (5 PM) so we had a little picnic ... thanks to Danka's foresight. Bread, sausages, cake, and bottled

water. We lingered for perhaps 20 minutes before deciding to leave ... the retracing of our long hike is not something I looked forward to but obviously necessary.

We returned to our *noclegi* at 6:50 PM ... exhausted and legs cramping up. The hike was a blessed mix of emotions ... nice to hike, nice to visit a

castle ... but I sure wished it were closer and at an even elevation from the room. Everyone was tired so it agreed that we would pass on any evening meal.

This particular *noclegi* had separate shower / toilet facilities ... thankfully on our floor. After an hour of just laying on the bed nursing the pain in my feet, ankles, and knees (my lungs having recovered as soon as we hit lower elevation) ... I jumped in the shower ... plenty of hot water ... and let the jet spray soothe the aches.

Hitting the bed was an easy decision ... nothing to do in this part of the valley. TV was turned on ... virtually all channels were German ... lone exception was BBC, with repeat news. Laurentiu crashed as soon as his head hit the pillow. Turning out the lights and TV ... it was sayonara for the day. Outside it was DARK and PEACEFUL ... no barking dogs.