

Pomerania



Województwo Pomorskie

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**POMORSKA MISJA TURYSTYCZNA
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**POMORZE - WSPÓLNE EUROPEJSKIE
DZIEDZICTWO KULTUROWE**

**POMERANIA - A COMMON EUROPEAN
CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**SZWEDZKIM ŚLADEM
PO GDAŃSKU**

**FOLLOWING SWEDISH
TRACES IN GDAŃSK**

Following Swedish traces in Gdańsk

SE-Star: You are considered one of the most experienced "Swedish" guides in Trójmiasto.

Wojciech Łygaś: I have been working in the tourism industry as a tour operator and guide for 15 years. During this period, I have had enough time and opportunities to make some observations and comparisons of the tourist traffic coming to Trójmiasto from Sweden.

There were only a few Swedish groups or individual tourists in the 80ties. A number of visitors from Sweden were surprisingly low despite a good connection by ferry from Nynäshamn. There were more Finns. They organised regular weekend groups, circuit-trips and specialist groups. A direct coach connection Helsinki-Gdańsk-Budapest was a hit for a certain period.

Swedish tourists hardly ever came here with a defined trip schedule. The main attraction was shopping in Pewex (cheap alcohol - 1 bottle of vodka was then US\$ 1!) and a walk in the Old Town. This was nothing original.

SE-Star: What has changed in the last 10 years?

Wojciech Łygaś: The situation has changed a lot. It has improved in mid-90ties, mainly due to the fact opened an additional ferry connection from Karlskrona to Gdynia, a new air connection from Copenhagen was established and quite recently an air connection from Stockholm to Gdańsk (unfortunately suspended). Since some time, "Birka Princess", a passenger ship has been regularly stopping for one day in Gdynia on her cruise around the Baltic Sea.

The number of organised groups and individual tourists have been increasing every year. The diversity of the visitors is most pleasing.

They are not one-day shopping trip lovers. There are groups of business-people, journalists, travel agents, architects, self-government officials and tourist groups.

We are also happy to observe a large share of youths. Our town and the region are also visited by Swedish marine crews, which touch at Gdynia with a friendly visit once a year. Their interest has extended to the whole Pomerania region. This is another positive factor of the increased tourist traffic. The groups visit not only the Old town and cathedral in Oliwa but also Malbork, Frombork, Stutthof or Toruń. Occasionally, I also take groups to Warsaw and Kraków.

SE-Star: What is the biggest attraction for Swedish visitors?

Wojciech Łygaś: There has been a debate on own culture and history in Sweden for some period of time. It can be also observed when visiting Trójmiasto. I am fluent in Swedish and being a guide I have prepared a tour around Trójmiasto called "Following Swedish traces in Gdańsk". It turned out to be a hit. There are surprisingly many monuments of Swedish culture in Gdańsk. They are Goth's stone circles, St. Eric's, St. Olsf's and St. Brigida's chapels, old epitaphs and grave plates of Swedes as well as persons associated with Sweden, Karol's the 12th bell and most of all everything related to Sigimuntus the 3rd, grandson of Gustav Waza. Discovering own culture in other country is always exciting and particularly fascinating for the citizens of the country on the other side of the Baltic Sea. When I talk about all of these on the coach, I feel people listen to me with interest as very often they discover many things for the first time.

SE-Star: What are the perspectives for the next 10 years?

Wojciech Łygaś: The tourism traffic from Sweden to Poland will rapidly intensify. This is very important for us to improve our image in the eyes of an average Swede. Many visitors come back home astonished with Gdańsk and Poland, our tradition and achievements in various fields. Several thousand pleased Swedes are better advertising for Poland than all press articles, exhibitions or meetings at the "top". Let's hope that our Swedish friends will return to Poland many times and will discover here something they may not find anywhere else.

Interviewer M. Stalmarski

