

PASSPORTS & VISAS

US and Canadian tourists must carry proof of citizenship. A valid signed passport with an expiration date at least six months beyond the tour return date is required. No visas are required to travel to Poland or Czechia.

CURRENCY, ATM MACHINES & CREDIT CARDS

CASH: The monetary unit of currency in Poland is the zloty. The monetary unit of currency in Czechia is the koruna. If you wish to use cash to exchange into local currency, please bring crisp US dollars in denominations of five, ten and twenty dollars.

If you want to check current rates at the time of travel a good website to use is <http://www.xe.com/ucc/>. You will be given opportunity upon arrival in each country to exchange USD for local currency or withdraw funds from an ATM.

ATMs: ATMs are prevalent in the larger centers in Poland and Czechia. Check with your bank for more specific details about using ATMs such as the network your bank supports, PIN numbers, etc. However we recommend that ABM or ATM not be your only source of cash.

CREDIT CARDS: Visa, MasterCard and American Express are the most widely used credit cards. Use may be restricted in small businesses, such as open marketplaces and street vendors. Credit cards should be protected by **RFID-blocking sleeves** so they cannot be scanned, and your payment information stolen. You can find RFID-blocking sleeves at most luggage stores. Do not use

your credit card in questionable shops and never let your card out of your sight. Non-essential cards can be left at home. It is recommended to bring your driver's license in case you are asked for additional photo ID, and your health card in case of an emergency.

Before leaving home, we encourage you to consult with the bank that has issued the credit cards and debit cards you will be using as you travel. Today banks have a variety of fraud detection systems so we advise you to be sure you will be able to use your cards. You should also have an out-of-country contact phone number available in case any cards are lost or stolen.

LANGUAGE

Polish is the official language spoken in Poland. Czech is the official language spoke in Czechia. English is widely understood in tourist areas.

COMMUNICATION

Internet: There will be opportunity to access the internet while on tour. Most hotels and some buses will have Wifi available.

Phone: North American cell phones are not automatically equipped to make international calls. If you plan to use your cell phone on tour, please check with your wireless service provider for direction regarding international calling.

TIME ZONES

Poland and Czechia are 6 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST). Therefore, when it is 9:00 p.m. in Poland it is 3 p.m. in Pennsylvania and Ontario (EST).

CLIMATE

The climate in Eastern Europe is generally pleasant without extremes in temperature. In July you can expect daily averages of 15-25°C (59-77°F) with the occasional rain shower. It will be cooler in the evening.

ELECTRICAL CURRENT

The electrical current in Europe is 220 volt - 50 cycles alternating current (AC), whereas in Canada and United States it is 110 volts - 60 (AC). Wall outlets in Poland and Czechia take Continental-type plugs, with two round prongs. If you will be bringing electrical appliances on tour, you will require an adapter. Multi-voltage electrical appliances (shaver, curling iron, etc.) are available at most major department stores.



However, if your electrical appliance is *not* designed to operate on either 110 or 220 volts by the flick of a switch, you will also need a converter. Converters and adapters should be available at major department stores, electronic shops or stores that specialize in selling luggage. But before you purchase a converter, be sure to check the label on your appliance. Some appliances never need a converter. **If the label states 'INPUT: 100-240V, 50/60 Hz' the appliance can be used in all countries in the world.** This is common for chargers of tablets/laptops, cameras, cell phones, and toothbrushes.

CLOTHING AND CUSTOMS

Plan to take a variety of casual clothing that is easy-care, comfortable and doesn't show the dirt. Be able to dress in layers so that you can peel off or add as the temperature changes. Bring a light jacket or sweaters and an umbrella. A good pair of walking shoes is recommended.

Travel in eastern European countries where Eastern Orthodoxy is practiced will mean visiting cathedrals open for public view. Out of respect for local worshippers, it would be appropriate for both men and women to wear clothing that covers knees and shoulders and for women to cover their heads during cathedral visits.

WATER PURITY

It is advisable to drink only pure, bottled drinking water, which is readily available for drinking and brushing teeth, and **not** the tap water. Maintaining health is a major concern for travelers, and it is relatively easy to follow the rule: "*If it has been cooked or boiled or you can peel it, you can eat it, otherwise forget it.*" Eating yogurt daily for two weeks before traveling is recommended as it may strengthen your immune system.

MEDICAL & VACCINATIONS

Inoculations are not required if you are traveling directly from the US or Canada. Routine booster immunizations (e.g. Tetanus-Diphtheria, Polio, etc.) should be up to date.

It is advisable to take along enough prescription medicine for the whole tour and a written prescription from your doctor for each medicine. If any of your medicines contain habit-forming drugs or narcotics, take precaution to avoid misunderstanding by properly identifying all drugs. Do not remove the drugs from their original containers and

carry only the necessary quantity. These safeguards could save you considerable trouble.

PROTECTING YOURSELF

Before you leave on your tour remove any unnecessary cards from your wallet and leave them at home. Photocopy your passport ID page and any credit or debit cards (both sides) that you plan to take with you. Keep a copy (or more) separate from your wallet for quick reference should your cards be lost or stolen. Leave a photocopy with friends or family at home.

Pickpockets are more common in Europe than in North America, especially in public spaces like airports and train stations. Carry billfolds in the front inside pocket of a jacket or front

pants pocket as opposed to your back pocket. Consider a money belt (obtainable at AAA stores, for example) for excess cash. Beware of a common pickpocket ploy which is to announce that pickpockets have been observed in the area. People instinctively touch their pockets to check and the pickpockets then know where you keep your valuables.

Don't leave cash or valuables in your room or on the bus.

OTHER ITEMS TO BRING

An extra memory card and a good supply of spare or rechargeable batteries for your photographic or video equipment are recommended.

SUGGESTED RESOURCE LIST

Some people find it helpful and interesting to read books about the places they are going to visit. Although this list is not compulsory, we hope it will offer you worthwhile reading material as you prepare for your tour.

POLAND HISTORY & HISTORICAL FICTION:

- Davies, Norman, *Heart of Europe: The Past in Poland's Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Driedger, Gerhard. *The Werder. The Land between the Vistula and the Nogat*. Self-Published, 1995.
- Dyck, C. J. *Introduction to Mennonite History*. Third Edition, 1993, Herald Press, 1996.
- *Jantzen, Mark. *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772-1880*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.
- *Klassen, Peter J. *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.
- Klassen, Peter J. *A Homeland for Strangers: An introduction to Mennonites in Poland and Prussia*. Fresno: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1989.
- Michener, James A. *Poland: A Novel*. New York: Random House, 1989.

- Schroeder, William, and Helmut T. Huebert. *Mennonite Historical Atlas*. Hillsboro: Springfield Publishers, 1996.
- *Thiessen, Edna Schroeder, and Angela Showalter. *A Life Displaced: A Mennonite Woman's Flight from War-Torn Poland*. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000.
- Wiebe, Rudy. *Sweeter Than All the World*. Toronto: Jackpine House, Ltd., 2001. A novel of Mennonite engineer Adam Wiebe of Danzig (Gdansk).
- Zamoyski, Adam, *Poland: A History*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 2012.
- See many articles on GAMEO (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia) or in print.

*Highly recommended

CZECH / MORAVIAN ANABAPTIST & HUTTERITE HISTORY:

- Gross, Leonard. *The Golden Years of the Hutterites: The Witness and Thought of the Communal Moravian Anabaptists During the Walpot Era 1565-1578*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1980.
- Hostetler, John A. *Hutterite Society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- Liechty, Daniel. *Andreas Fischer and the Sabbatarian Anabaptists: An Early Reformation Episode in East Central Europe*. Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1988.

See articles on:

- Prague, Moravia, Nikolsburg, Bohemia, Kromau, Czech Republic (Czechoslovakia), Slovak Republic, Hutterites, and Balthazar Hubmaier on GAMEO (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia) or in print

TRAVEL GUIDES:

- *DK Eyewitness Travel Guides*
- *Fodor's*
- *Frommer's*
- *Lonely Planet*
- *Rick Steves. Off the Beaten Track series*
- *Rick Steves and Gene Openshaw, Europe 101: History and Art for the Traveler* Berkeley: Avalon Travel Publishing; 7th ed., 2007. This book carefully ties each style of art to its historical era.
- Whitman, John. *The Best European Travel Tips*

Your local library will have an excellent variety of travel guides for your specific interest.