

POLAND:

POZNAN BEING ITSELF

By Denson Pierre

In order to develop a balanced view of how a city lives and thrive it tends to help to be able to spend some time there during typical working days. There is a lot of industry going on across Poznan where they start and complete their working day earlier than we typically do in the Netherlands. It cannot be established here whether this is a contributing factor to Poznan having a lower rate of unemployment than Amsterdam but they have managed to keep their rate at around the 4% mark while Amsterdam should show something twice as many in need of proper, non-seasonal work.

*‘Visit the properly historic core
of the city by foot’*



*‘A lower rate of unemployment
than Amsterdam’*



‘There is the much more glistening and deliberately modern museum’

At the beginning of July Poznan introduced the electronic travel card system to their public transport network, making paper card paid journeys obsolete. There were reports of unavoidable start-up problems but it did seem like the network did not grind to a halt, the comfortable trams at least appeared to be running and there was no chaos to do with automobile traffic. This was all fairly fine so I opted to visit the properly historic core of the city by foot together with my host from the local tourism promotion office. Poznan as a settlement can be said to have grown from a natural island on the river Warta. This is now home to the cathedral (and other churches) and most excitingly, the two museums charged with telling the entire story of the evolution of the city.

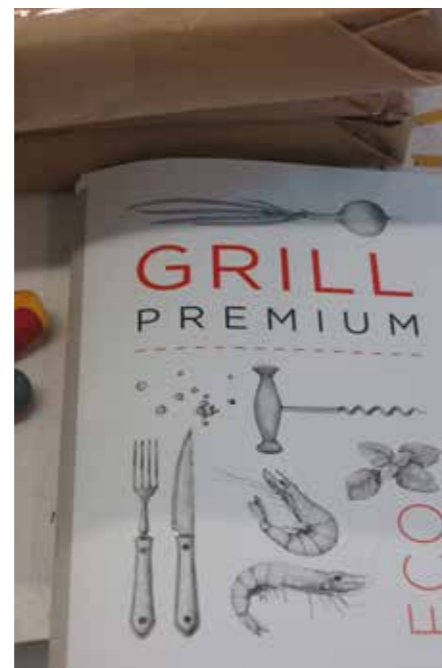
The archaeological museum is a freshly designed and well laid-out, with a small cinema (most major European languages provided per audio guide) hall. Before you even have time to walk around and check the physical artefacts on display and the exhibitions [the ideally suited walls are used to show art work and photography which can in some way tie itself into the deep history of the area] there is a 3D movie. This film dramatises

the entire history from the point when the settlement was becoming substantial and developing the need to fortify against other tribes or intruders. The ingenious engineering of the earthen and wood-filled defensive walls is narrated by a series of professors and other experts leaving you with a feeling that you want to find your own field and build one for fun.

Further along on this pretty special little island (I believe they are also wanting to anticipate UNESCO listing for some or all of it) there is the much more glistening and deliberately modern museum which focuses more on the history of the area from the time in the tenth century when Poland was forming itself as a recognisable nation state under the church. This is another of these high on architecture, technology and design museums that are now refreshingly to be found across Europe. It has many interactive elements, high-quality audio-visual aids to tell the many stories and actually does not feel like a museum, as we used to know them, but more like small adventures into the stories about the lives of the ancient Poles and Poznans. I like this island complex a lot as it can properly take two hours on it to learn so much and even then catch some of the pretty impressive art and carvings within the cathedral. I suppose there are a couple considerations still left for UNESCO but with signs openly showing the cooperation with the European Union in terms of funding these impressively new and reconditioned statements of heritage, and seeing the new generation of artists using the surroundings as inspiration, one can only feel



‘Small adventures into the stories about the lives of the ancient Polans and Poznans’



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generally inspired by the little old island and say that visitors should make the time to visit it and its almost completely interesting cluster of addresses. With it approaching lunchtime there were two things left for me to do before I jetted out from Poznan this time. I was to be taken on a tour and lunched at Concordia Design. This is a super-impressive complex, in private ownership, that makes you think you are in Amsterdam, somehow. I was to learn that they do indeed have cooperation with Amsterdam and other international, creative partners but with their 3D printing, “we can print on anything” attitude, skills and machines, this was a lovely way of seeing from the inside one of the ways why Poznan can present itself so well to the outside.

Next morning the slight sadness that comes with having to leave somewhere you are growing fond of set in. As soon as I started making my way to breakfast, I was however, to realise, as I looked over the patio and dining area of my hotel from the second-floor glass window of the lift itself, that Poznans are truly high on design and play with space and decor to pleasing effect. The patio was called Patio Provence and with pastel colours and fine wine it actually worked a treat with all the sunshine that streamed in during my breakfasts over the three days I stayed there. Lovely, fascinating and full of contrast to the different scenes encountered as soon as you left the front door.

My last act this time round was to join the hundreds of people gathered to applaud and marvel at

the performance of *The Poznan Goats*. A brilliant mechanical clock display on the market square (in the tower of the historical town hall), and there is maybe nothing more heart warming than hearing the gathered pre- and primary school children excitedly countdown (well, up) to the 12 times the rams clashed their heads for show and to re-announce themselves as the city of Poznan’s metallic time guardians. By the time they retracted themselves into their tower the time had come for me to prepare to head to the airport. How many counts it will be before I am back to dig deeper and wider into the pleasantness of this city I cannot yet be sure, but return I must.

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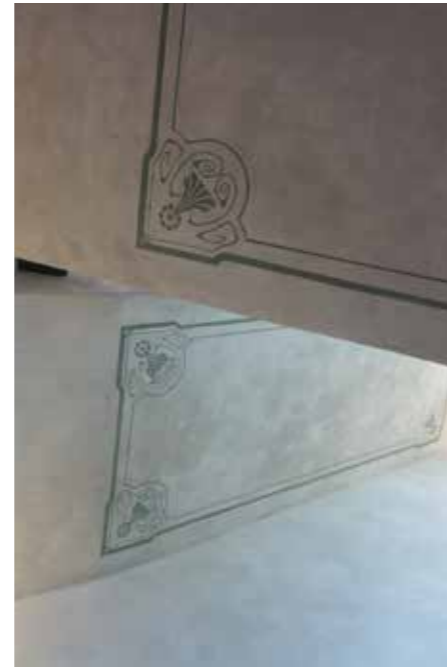
Genius Loci Archaeological Reserve
www.muzarp.poznan.pl

‘Porta Posnania’ Heritage Centre
www.bramapoznania.pl

Hotel Kolegiacki
www.hotelkolegiacki.pl

Tourism Poland
www.polen.travel

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Applaud and marvel at the performance of *The Poznan Goats*'

