

“The Sights and Sounds of Poland”

2019



Castle Square in Warsaw -- Photography by Richard Unruh

*A Musical Tour of Poland
Combining Choral Concert Presentations with
The Discovery of Poland's History, Culture and
Beauty*

June 14 to June 24, 2019

Tour Overview

Poland has long been the crossroads where much of European history interconnects. Because Poland is situated directly between Germany and Russia, it has often been the battlefield where both of these great powers have confronted each other. The fertile, level fields of Poland have produced much of the agricultural wealth—particularly grain—that the other countries around them have coveted for centuries. The greed of the surrounding nations resulted in the old nation of Poland being divided up by Prussia, Russia and Austria, so that Poland actually disappeared from the map of Europe between 1795 and 1918, reappearing only after the First World War.

However, the deep connection of the Polish people to their ancient land and history remained strong and treasured even during the years of partition, when the country had been swallowed up by their neighbors. The language was maintained, and the great cultural wealth of Poland was jealously preserved, even though the great powers tried to subdue and erase it. The arts have always been treasured by the Polish people, producing great composers like Chopin and Paderewski, great writers like Mickiewicz and Sienkiewicz, and great military and political leaders like Kościuszko and Piłsudski contributing to the culture and development of Western Europe as a whole.

During the 20th Century, Poland was the location where the first shots of World War II were fired and the location where the most vicious atrocities of Hitler were conducted. But this was also the place where the brutal soviet "Iron Curtain" – a regrettable byproduct of the Second World War – first began to crumble due to the strong national pride of the Polish people and their refusal to be subjected to the harsh rule of a cruel and demeaning conqueror.

For a number of years, the Fresno Community Chorus Master Chorale has brought music to many parts of the world. Our Chorale has sung in China, Austria, Greece, and most recently Spain, and now we turn our eyes to Poland, a country strongly devoted to choral music and to the arts in general. We are eager to contribute our musical offerings in this courageous country, and discover for ourselves the beauty, history, culture, cuisine and, above all, the generous hospitality found in this wonderful country.

Our Anticipated Itinerary

(Our exact itinerary will be developed based upon concert opportunities, available hotel and travel arrangements, and the size of the touring group)

Friday – June 14, 2019 Our tour begins in Warsaw, the capital city of Poland. We will arrive from our various starting points through individually-arranged flights to Warsaw, and check into

our comfortable Warsaw hotel. Our tour begins in the evening with a special "Welcome to Poland" dinner, at which we will get our initial introduction to our visit in Poland. By then, we will also know our own concert and rehearsal schedule.

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Saturday – June 15 After our first breakfast in the hotel, we will immediately plunge into Polish history with a city tour of Warsaw. We will visit the marvels of the rebuilt historic Old Town, walk through Łazienki Park, with its awe-inspiring memorial to Frederic Chopin and its lovely royal palace “on the water.” We will revisit the sobering site of the former Jewish ghetto, reliving some of the horrors of the Nazi oppression of Jews and other Polish citizens during the Second World War, and see many other significant sites of historic interest in the capital city. During the remainder of the day, we will have some free time to revisit some of the sites we saw or visit others on our own. Of course, we will fit into our schedule any necessary rehearsals or concert opportunities throughout the trip.

Sunday – June 16 After breakfast, we continue to visit more of the many important sites in and around Warsaw. There is a remarkable variety of such places, including Żelazowa Wola, the birthplace of Frederic Chopin, where there is a remarkable Chopin museum and the house where he was born, surrounded by a wonderful park. Or we could visit the new Jewish History Museum, where there are collections and exhibitions centering on the history of Jews in Poland. Another choice might be the Warsaw Uprising Museum, highlighting the events and activities of the Polish Resistance during World War II. We will make our final choices among this wealth of options as the tour plans are finalized.

Monday – June 17 After breakfast, we leave Warsaw by bus and drive northward through the scenic and picturesque countryside along the Vistula River (now known by its Polish name: the Wisła). The river is the symbolic and spiritual center of Polish life and experience, and we will see it – and cross it – multiple times during our tour. During our drive, we will stop at the historic town of Toruń, a glorious medieval walled city, and the birthplace of the noted astronomer and scientist, Nicholas Copernicus. This remarkable city – a UNESCO world heritage site – was virtually untouched during the war and remains one of the best preserved walled cities of the Middle Ages. It is also a university town, with more than 30,000 students. We will have time to walk its ancient streets and visit its wonderful medieval churches and buildings. Since this town is also renowned as one of the oldest manufacturers of gingerbread, some might want to visit one of the many gingerbread shops and stock up on this tasty souvenir item. Later in the day, we will continue our journey, travelling north to the port city of Gdańsk, another ancient historic city. We will check into our hotel, have our dinner, and then have time to explore the old town a bit on our own before bedtime.

Tuesday – June 18 After breakfast, we will have a city tour in the spectacular Baltic Sea port of Gdańsk. We will have a city tour – largely on foot – since the old town of Gdańsk, like many of the other ancient towns in Poland, is "pedestrian-only" in much of the oldest and most historic parts of the town. Once again, there are a host of sites to see: the ancient "Long Market", rebuilt after the war to look as it had before, filled with

spectacular Dutch-style house-fronts and buildings, the "Westerplatte", where the first shots of WW2 were fired; the impressive new Solidarity Museum, located at the shipyard in Gdansk. Here Lech Wałęsa ignited the fire which resulted in the breakdown of the

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Soviet Union and its satellites by leading the shipyard workers to strike, eventually resulting in Poland being the first soviet-bloc county to part ways with Russia. We will always try to allow free time in each of these "visitor friendly" locations for tour members to find their own favorite sights, sounds, and souvenirs!

Wednesday – June 19 We spend another day based in Gdańsk, exploring some of the sites outside the city: We will want to see the massive Teutonic Knights headquarter castle at nearby Malbork. This castle, the largest brick castle in the world, is a spectacular site—again a UNESCO world heritage site. Damaged in the war, it has been returned to its former glory, with the most recent restoration completing the castle cathedral at the top of the castle site. It is a location not to be missed. Another potential site is the Oliwa Cathedral with its renowned pipe organ, one of the largest in Europe. Oliwa is conveniently close to the Baltic Sea beaches at Sopot, which would be another great place to visit and relax—and perhaps find some natural amber along the beach, to match the amber jewelry, which is a Baltic Sea specialty souvenir from this area.

Thursday – June 20 We drive back to Warsaw, which takes much of the day, but we arrive in Warsaw in plenty of time for a leisurely dinner there, followed by a "command performance" of a professional pianist, playing a concert of some of Chopin's great works.

Friday – June 21 We continue on to our final tour city, Kraków. This is another pristine medieval city, undamaged during the war. It was the former royal capital of Poland, and has the spectacular castle hill, called "Wawel", where the kings of Poland lived and where is also the ancient cathedral where the royalty and significant persons of Polish history are buried. Our city tour covers the old town, once again a UNESCO world heritage site. The enormous market square, with its central "Cloth Hall" and the unforgettable St. Mary's Basilica with its hourly trumpet-call – another ancient tradition. The market square is the best place to find a wonderful dinner or special drink at one of the abundant sidewalk cafes, watching the horses and carriages drive by.

Saturday and Sunday – June 22 & 23 Our discovery of Kraków and its environs continues, with many sights to see. One unforgettable site is the sobering and horrific former Auschwitz concentration camp, perhaps the largest and most complete example of the Nazi death camps during the Holocaust years. Another significant site to visit is the Wieliczka salt mines, begun in the 13th century, and still an amazing site, with numerous salt sculptures and exhibits, including a complete underground salt church, where we might have a chance to sing some of our choral pieces. The Jewish story in Kraków is memorable: a visit to the Schindler factory, of "Schindler's List" fame, tells the story of the Jews in Kraków, and a dinner in a Jewish restaurant brightens up our

sobering visits, reviving our spirits with live klezmer music. These are just a few of the sites that could more than fill these days but, alas we must say goodbye to Kraków and drive back to Warsaw for our final "farewell" dinner there.

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Monday – June 24, 2019 After our final night and breakfast in Warsaw, alas, we catch our flights back home, wishing we had many other concerts, and luxurious days in this captivating and often breath-taking beautiful spot on earth.

THIS ITINERARY DESCRIBES MANY OF THE LIKELY ACTIVITIES ON THE TOUR, BUT MAY NEED TO BE REVISED DUE TO THE CONSTRAINTS OF TIME, CONCERT SCHEDULE, OR OTHER VARIABLES. HOWEVER, IT DOES PROVIDE A FORETASTE OF THE POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES ON THE TOUR. ALL PARTICIPANTS WILL PROBABLY WISH THEY COULD SOON RETURN TO REVISIT THE PLACES THEY HAVE LEARNED TO LOVE, OR VISIT SOME OF THE ADDITIONAL SITES THEY DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO SEE THIS TIME AROUND!

Tour Information

This description of the tour includes only the "land portion" of the tour, provided in conjunction with the Travpol Travel Agency in Warsaw. The price of the tour therefore covers only those costs beginning with our first dinner together in Warsaw on June 14, 2019. The tour will include all lodging and travel costs within the land portion of the tour, including all tips, gratuities, and entrance fees for all activities included in the tour. All breakfasts are included, as are many of our lunches and dinners. All our hotels provide a comfortable–sometimes almost luxurious–breakfast, with both hot and cold breakfast items, usually in a buffet arrangement. Of course, if you choose to visit sites or incur costs during your free time, any tips, gratuities, admission fees, etc. will be your own responsibility.

Since the price quoted below includes only the land portions of the tour, tour participants will need to make their own flight arrangements to and from Europe. Some of you might have "frequent flier miles" or "points" in some other program that you wish to use for the costs of the flight. Many might also welcome the opportunity to add on additional days, either before or after the tour, to visit other sites in Europe on your own. Warsaw has excellent flight and rail connections to much of the rest of Europe, and some additional days in such places as Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Berlin – and even Paris – are all possible add-ons since you will be in Europe already anyway! For those who wish to have assistance making flight arrangements for the trip, we have contacted a local Fresno travel agent, Georgia Knapton at the Altour Travel Agency in Fresno, and she is prepared to assist you in making your travel arrangements. Her email address is: georgia.knapton@altour.com, and her office phone number is (559) 226-1166. She welcomes the use of credit cards in making these travel arrangements.

The tour group must number at least 25 persons, to guarantee a proper choral makeup and balance, and also to reduce the price of the tour. More than that number have already indicated interest in the tour. We know that we can handle up to 60 tour participants, but it will

be important for us to know relatively soon how many plan to participate in the tour, so that all arrangements can be made far in advance of the tour dates. See the “Financial Arrangements” section below.

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The tour does involve walking tours through the “old town” portions of the cities and the various sites visited. Many of these ancient city centers are not accessible by bus. Many of the older streets and city squares are reserved for pedestrians only. We also leave the bus to visit historical sites, and the castle sites and the salt mine also include some flights of stairs. Tour participants should be able to manage a significant amount of walking.

There are a variety of matters that will need to be communicated: travel arrangements, concert opportunities, travel-related advice, a reading list of suggested published materials related to Poland and our tour, and other hints and suggestions. As a result, a series of Tour Newsletters will be distributed by email to all tour participants, once registrations for the tour exceed our minimum of twenty-five participants. Virtually all tour-related communications are made by email. If you don't have an email address yourself, please indicate the email of a nearby relative or friend that we can use to send tour newsletters and other correspondence to you.

Financial Arrangements

(Important Note: All of the costs below depend upon the current exchange rate between the Euro (the currency used in the Polish travel industry) and the US dollar. If there is a significant change in the currency exchange rate, these costs may be affected)

The price of the tour is as follows:

US\$ 1995 per person, double occupancy
US\$ 495 single supplement

This price includes lodging for 10 nights, an English-speaking Polish guide for the entire journey, some entrance fees for the included sites, travel by motor coach, all gratuities for organized group activities, welcome and farewell dinner, and lunch or dinner each day. Any additional privately-arranged excursions, and the gratuities associated with them, would be an additional personal expense. In addition, any travel insurance protection that you select would be an additional personal expense not included in the tour price.

Remember, this cost does NOT include airfare to or from Warsaw. You will need to make your own flight arrangements, as mentioned above in the “Tour Information” section!

Schedule of Payments:

A nonrefundable deposit of US\$ 250 per person is required by June 1, 2018. An additional payment of \$750 is required by December 1, 2018. All remaining costs are

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due by April 1, 2019. You are invited to make additional intermediate payments during the year, if you find it easier to plan your payment in that manner. If more persons register for the tour than we are able to accommodate, additional registrants will be placed on a waiting list in the order that their registrations are received. Deposits will not be required from those on the waiting list until they replace a tour participant that finds it necessary to drop off the tour.

Payments made in addition to the non-refundable deposit will be refunded to participants who later discover that they are unable to be a part of the tour, according to the following schedule:

- (1) If a registrant cancels at any time and is immediately replaced by another person from the tour waiting list, the full amount, including the deposit, will be refunded.
- (2) If a registrant cancels and requests a refund on or before November 1, 2018, and there is no available replacement, two-thirds of the paid-in amount, except for the non-refundable deposit, will be refunded.
- (3) If a participant cancels and requests a refund on or before February 1, 2019, and there is no available replacement, one-third of the total amount paid in, except for the non-refundable deposit will be refunded.
- (4) There will be no refund made if a participant cancels after February 1, 2019, and there is no available replacement.

The Use of Credit Cards

It is anticipated that all tour payments for the "Land Portion" of the tour will be made by cash or check. We will not accept credit card payments for this portion of the tour's costs. It should be noted that many credit card companies make special offers or promotions that allow an account holder to write a check on their credit card account, usually at a lower-than-usual interest rate. These special promotion checks would be an acceptable form of payment for the tour costs.

ALL QUESTIONS REGARDING TOUR PAYMENTS, REGISTRATIONS, AND ASSISTANCE WITH TRAVEL ISSUES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE TOUR COORDINATOR, CHRISTIE SARTOR.

"Single Supplements"

Tour participants who want a single room are required to pay the appropriate cost for the "single supplement" portion of their tour cost. Single travelers may arrange

to room with another person traveling alone to qualify for the “double occupancy” rate. If you have no preferred roommate, we will attempt to pair you with another single traveler, but we cannot guarantee that a roommate will be available. If more than two participants wish to room together, we will inquire whether the tour’s hotels provide

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such rooms for more than 2 persons, but we cannot guarantee that such rooms will be available.

Once reservations and deposits have been received, additional information, including a suggested reading list, informative maps, travel suggestions and information, and periodic newsletters will be sent by email to all tour participants by the Tour Leader, Alan Peters. Since tour information is provided by email, you should indicate your own email address, or find a relative or friend that will be willing to receive such emails on your behalf. If you have any questions about the itinerary or other related questions about the tour program, please contact tour leader, Alan Peters.

A REGISTRATION FORM IS ATTACHED TO THIS BROCHURE AND IS REQUIRED FOR EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT. SUBMIT THE REGISTRATION FORM AND YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT TO CHRISTIE SARTOR, TOUR COORDINATOR, at the following address: Fresno Community Chorus, P.O. Box 25505, Fresno, California 93729.

Tour Staff

The tour leader will be Alan Peters, President of the Fresno Community Chorus, member of the Fresno Master Chorale, and frequent leader of previous tours to Poland and other countries, including Ukraine and Netherlands. He will be responsible for all the program-related activities and tour content. He can be reached at LNPTRS@comcast.net or by phone at (559) 222-5554.

The tour coordinator will be Christie Sartor, the Chorus Administrator and Board Member for the Fresno Community Chorus. She will be responsible for all financial arrangements for the tour, and for participant requests regarding lodging, dietary restrictions, and other personal arrangements related to the tour. Her mailing address is: P.O. Box 25505, Fresno, California 93729. She can also be reached at csartor@sbcglobal.net or by phone at (559) 269-6133.

The Musical Director will be Dr. Anna Hamre, Artistic Director of the Fresno Community Chorus, and the conductor of all its constituent choral groups and ensembles.

The Associate Musical Director will be John Sorber, Director of the Visalia Community Chorus, and a faculty member at the College of the Sequoias, Visalia, California.

REGISTRATION FORM

Please complete this form for each person registering for the 2019 Tour: "The Sights and Sounds of Poland" sponsored by the Fresno Community Chorus, Inc. The form can be used for two persons if they have the same street address.

Please place my (our) name(s) on your registration list. Registrations will be recorded in the order that they, and the accompanying deposit(s), are received.

Reservation Information

Person #1 (Please supply information as it appears on your passport):

Name: _____

Passport No.: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Person #2 (Please supply information as it appears on your passport):

Name: _____

Passport No: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Other Information: If a singer, circle voice part(s): P#1: S A T B P#2: S A T B

Room preference: double____single____ (requires a single supplement)

Other, including name of roommate: _____

Diet restrictions: _____

Emergency contact name: _____

Phone _____

Please submit this form and the necessary deposits to:

Christie Sartor

P.O. Box 25505

Fresno, CA 93729