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Updated: 12/06/2012 12:30 | By Tamara Hinson, contributor, MSN Travel

A whistle-stop tour of Poland and Ukraine

These two countries are hosting Euro 2012 but even if you aren't footie-mad, there are still some fascinating - and haunting - attractions worth checking out.

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Alic Keplicz_PA Images
A festival in Warsaw

Singer Bar, Kazimierz, Kraków, Poland

We guarantee this will be one of the strangest bars you'll ever set foot in. There may well be plenty of raucous singing but this small Kraków drinking hole is actually named after the Singer sewing machines found here, which double up as tables.

The owner - an avid Singer fan - will happily regale you with stories about his family's love of the machines while serving up some of Poland's finest dark ales.

Częstochowa, southern Poland

Located on the Warta river, this historic town is the home to the Pauline monastery of Jasna Góra, which contains the Black Madonna painting, a revered icon of the Virgin Mary and one of the most visited shrines in Poland.

The town itself is stunning, with clusters of medieval churches and more bizarrely, a museum of matches, which celebrates the town's role as a producer of matches since 1882.

Vilkovo village, Odessa, Ukraine

Commonly referred to as the Ukrainian Venice, Vilkovo village is located at the spot where the Danube flows into the Black Sea.

The river's many channels have transformed the village: boats are the main form of transport and traditional Ukrainian dwellings hug the river banks. The area is also a haven for wildlife, with over 265 species of birds, and is famous for its salted herring - said to be the tastiest in the Ukraine.

Auschwitz Birkenau, Poland

A visit to Auschwitz Birkenau may well lack the feel-good factor boasted by some of the other sites listed here, but it's a must-see nonetheless. Auschwitz was Nazi Germany's largest concentration camp, and today visitors can tour the gas chambers, prisoners' blocks and crematorium. There are also several fascinating exhibitions which provide a unique insight into one of the darkest periods of Europe's history.

Wieliczka salt mine, Wieliczka, Poland

Poland has no less than 13 Unesco world heritage sites, and the Wieliczka salt mine is one the most famous. The mine is spread over nine levels and salt was first extracted here in the 13th century.

Today visitors can explore over 180 miles of underground galleries housing sculptures and altars carved from salt by the miners who worked here. You'll never look at a salt shaker in the same way again.

Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, Kiev, Ukraine

Kievo-Pecherskaya Lavra, also known as the Kiev Monastery of Caves, is a historic Orthodox Christian monastery in Kiev that dates back to 1051.

While the monastery's grandiose bell tower is one of Kiev skyline's more notable features, it's what lies beneath the

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monastery that's really impressive: extensive underground cave systems that are rumoured to reach as far as Moscow and are home to underground chapels and even an underground museum. Not one for claustrophobics.



Pot.gov
Wieliczka salt mine



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Communism tour guides

Communism tour of Kraków, Poland

You'll have a cracking time in Kraków, Poland's second largest city, whatever you do, but to really get under the city's surface why not go on a **Communist tour**? The tours take place in a vintage Trebant (a Polish Fiat 125 or Soviet Lada are also available) and include a visit to a traditional restaurant in the communist district of Nowa Huta and a visit to a genuine, unchanged communist-era apartment.



LP
A bar in Krakow

say in Poland.)

Białowieża national park, eastern Poland

Fancy a trip back in time? The head for Białowieża national park, eastern Poland, the last remaining remnant of a primeval forest that once stretched all the way across the continent. The park is home to a huge variety of animals, ranging from wild boar to wolves, lynxes, elk and even bison - the largest European land mammal. The park is 160 miles to the east of Warsaw and the nearby town of the same name - Białowieża - is the perfect base for those wishing to explore the park.

Pervomaysk strategic missile base, Pervomaysk, Ukraine

Visitors to this **former Soviet missile base**, located 186 miles south of Kiev, can check out the SS-18 "Satan" Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, visit the 12-storey underground command post and sit in the very seat in which Soviet officers sat during the cold war.

You can even press the button that would have deployed the SS-22 missiles (and started an international catastrophe) 18 years ago.

Chernobyl tour, Ukraine

It's still possible to **tour the site** of the famous nuclear disaster - you just have to book well in advance. Highlights include a brief (emphasis on brief) stop near the famous reactor 4, a visit to the ghost town of Pripyat with its deserted hotels and rusted Ferris wheel, and a drive through the Red Forest, one of the most contaminated places on Earth and home to thee-headed squirrels. Probably.

Kraków farm tour, Poland

To really scratch beneath the surface of this area of Poland, why not visit one of the many farms that surround Kraków? A farm-themed excursion organised by **Krakow Tours** allow those taking part to visit working farms, meet the animals and learn how to bake bread like the locals. The tour finishes with a traditional Polish meal washed down with local beer and homemade vodka. Cheers! (Or Noo davaytee, as they apparently

Tatra mountains, Poland

The Tatra mountain range forms a natural border between Poland and Slovakia, and is made up of the highest mountains within the Carpathian range.

In winter the Tatras attract skiers from all over Poland while the town of Zakopane is known for its traditional restaurants - try the mead or smoked sheep's cheese. Also worth checking out is the town of Poprad, with its medieval buildings and stunning old town (Spišská Sobota).

Fryderyk Chopin museum, Warsaw, Poland

You don't have to be an avid tinkler of the ivories to appreciate this **fascinating museum**, which was established in the 1930s and houses a huge collection of the Polish composer's original manuscripts, along with sculptures and original photographs of the man himself.

The museum stages regular piano recitals but be warned - it's one of Poland's most popular attractions so it's best to book your ticket well in advance.



Pot.Gov
Tatra mountains



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Summy King

26/06/2012 18:48



When I have planned to visit Gdansk in Poland short before the Euro 2012 to see the beautiful new football field I wanted to save as much as possible, mainly on travel and accommodation. I chose Eurolines coach, and I paid for a return ticket only £ 89. A few weeks before I read about a new low-cost connection from London to Poland at www.europebus.co.uk was happy, but I was thinking that this is a new low-coast airline. First, I did not take this option into consideration, but after checking the prices of flights I decided for the coach. My first thought: 24 hours in a coach is not for me, but now I know that there are regular stops, ferry crossing where to buy something or eat, and few stops along the way to Poland. It wasn't bad for £ 89, but movies only in Polish, you can ask for subtitles. £ 89 - unthinkable for people who want to go to London for the Olympics. Currently, all the cheap flights between Poland and the UK are more than £ 150, of course if people are travelling

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0 0 | Replies (0)

Bob Syouruncle

31/05/2012 00:27



Seriously though....Poland does have some issues with anti sematism,but,the feeling is mutal amongst many people of the jewish diaspora who can also be guilty of a little irrational bigotry when it comes to Polish people. Despite Poles saving the most jews from the holocaust at the risk of death to themselves and their entire extended families there are some tensions. But,and its a big BUT, what you see on the terraces isnt genuine "lets pogrom some jews" anti sematism. In Krakow it was true what that fan said, one team was owned and supported pre war largely by the towns jewish population the other by the catholic population, no different to some London teams. When you see one set of supporters on the documentries calling the other side Jews as though thats something to be ashamed of what they always seem to edit out is that the other side open the chanting by shouting " We are the jews ,we are the jews"....its a bit odd,not very "PC" but its not a

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3 0 | Replies (1)

JOHN COWIE

30/05/2012 23:41



the english racist defence league will feel right at home here with the other neo ****s

3 5 | Replies (0)

Rahima Khatun

30/05/2012 22:39



Watch the panorama and Ross Kemp's take on gangs in Poland. Take Sol Campbell's advice; See the way innocent Asian men are beaten in Ukraine..Watch the anti-Semitism Chants and the Hitler Salutes.....If you survive that,then you can worry about sight seeing and tourist attractions!!!

14 8 | Replies (0)

jen gahagan (Wolf_1979)

30/05/2012 22:13



look up Bloody Euro on youtube.
Documentary by Volodymyr Ariev, Ivan Kravchyshyn and Kateryna Filipenko
it wont let me share the link so search it yourselves and see what all football supporters are contributing to. Shun the Euro!

8 1 | Replies (0)

jim rogers

30/05/2012 22:09



, r1844,,,,ive done my share of work and served my country. more than you have i suppose, i dont have to sign on either.if you love these people so much why dont you go and live with them. oh and by the way ,you dont have to apoligize to the world for me as ive nothing to be ashamed of

3 1 | Replies (1)

jen gahagan (Wolf_1979)

30/05/2012 21:31



yeah the Ukraine is the host of Euro 2012, and while everyone is getting hyped up about the football, the Ukraine is poisoning thousands of cats and dogs, shooting, beating them to death and also they are catching them and sending them to the crematoria to be burned alive.... just to clean up the streets of the Ukraine for the Euro..... well done football supporters for saying nothing, well done for condoning such cruelty and brutality. If you disagree with whats being done, why dont you speak out? i guess football is more important than morals and the humane treatment of animals. I for one will not be watching any of this events football.

17 2 | Replies (0)

jim rogers

30/05/2012 21:17



r1844,,,,yeah fine people ,,it wasnt only the germans that sent hundreds of thousands of people to gas chambers. poles did as well

13 12 | Replies (5)

glen 7777 (R1844)

30/05/2012 20:59



What a pity the British, mainly the English, are so "PIG - IGNORANT" , of other European nations and the history of the world. I'm English, and I apologise on behalf of half of the ignorant T****S in England, that watch sub-standard, cheaply made television documentaries about Eastern Europe, and place stupid comments about you fine people. Half the great unwashed, running around this side, don't even know that the Queen is German and her husband is Greek.

25 10 | Replies (0)

jim rogers

30/05/2012 19:06



you got no problem with violence from the poles ,because they are all over here

19 17 | Replies (1)

George Davison (dontbefooledbythem)

30/05/2012 18:18



Why would you need a twenty Euro note in your passport Cristopher if stopped by the police?
you know nothing!!

6 12 | Replies (1)

Christopher Fagan (ixtis)

30/05/2012 18:14



keep a twenty Euro note in your passport, handy when you are stopped by the police

8 17 | Replies (1)

ian campbell

30/05/2012 17:53



Barbra, you must have a short memory, i think you'll find the the Englund knuckle draggers are just as bad,
However I do think they will be no match for the home Countries

9 12 | Replies (0)

George Davison (dontbefooledbythem)

30/05/2012 17:47



I can't believe some people, they watch some programme on TV and think that everything they see and listen to is the truth. you sad brainwashed people try going to some of these places then judge for yourself. I spend most of my time in Ukraine and travelled to most of it, and have never seen any of these so called thugs that you talk about. infact I feel safer walking around in this country than I do in England. The same goes for Poland I have been there many times too. Get a life!!!!!!!

43 18 | Replies (4)

Barbra Davison (b_davison)

30/05/2012 17:25



Not going to either of them and i hope no other brits go either. The police have said we will be safe but i beg to differ after the programme on TV the other evening. They are not fans of the game rather thugs that go to games and they have said they WILL target all England fans. There has only been 3000 tickets sold unlike the normal 100,000 + normally sold to us the country of fun loving footie fans and i hope none of the 3000 bother to go. Hit them where it hurts, in their pockets... disgusted that they have been allowed to host such a prestigious tournament, they should have been striped of their right when it became obvious they could not contain their peoples (thugs). Sort it out for next time FIFA and have a 'stand in' host country for all tournaments to avoid this stalemate

31 29 | Replies (0)

rocknroll480

30/05/2012 16:53



lovely but I worry about the recent claims of raicism and facism by hooligans, crazy is the 21st century and I have serious seconds thoughts of travelling to a major football event for fear of being racially attacked.

30 16 | Replies (1)

Bob Syouruncle

30/05/2012 16:15



Hahahahaha .Epic fail...that *festival in Warsaw* photo is of a GayPride March that was attacked by neo ****s while the Polish coppers stood back and let them..... sort of like showing a photo from last years london riots and calling it * vibrant london street life*

23 7 | Replies (0)

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