

GOLF IN POLAND

In our continued series on Golfing options in Poland, Declan Brennan visited the Gdansk and Olsztyn region for Irish Golf World.

INTRODUCTION

My second trip to Poland in a relatively short period of time took me to the Gdansk and Olsztyn Region to sample the golfing delights in northern Poland. Our Ryanair flight landed in Gdansk Lech Walesa International Airport and from there our host Bogdan Becla, Director of the Polish National Tourist Office took us on a short walking tour of Sopot. Had I not known that our flight was destined for Poland I could have been forgiven for thinking that we were on the French Riviera! Sopot is probably one of Poland's best-known and popular summer resorts in the Baltic Region. The "Gdansk in Your Pocket City Guide" tells me that Sopot's reputation started with the building of a bath house and spa by a returned French doctor in Napoleon's army. Like Gdansk, Sopot was originally part of the German Empire and later as part of the Free City of Gdansk. It is the summer home and playground for many of Europe's ruling classes. I believe that Kaiser Wilhelm the Second had a summer home here and I can well see why. The principal city Gdansk too has had a very chequered history. It is strategically the gateway into northern Poland. To say that Gdansk had many masters is an understatement. For example Gdansk was:- Capital of a Pomeranian Duchy (1215– 1271); Monastic State of the Teutonic Knights (1308–1454); part of the Kingdom of Poland (1454/66–1793); in the Kingdom of Prussia (1793–1806); Napoleonic Free City of Danzig in the Kingdom of Prussia (1815–1919); Free City (1920–939), World War 2 (1939–1945). Gdansk in more modern times will I believe be always associated with Lech Walesa and his Solidarity Movement. He was originally employed as an electrician in the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk in 1967. At that time Poland was under Communist rule. Solidarity was formed by Lech Walesa in August 1980 at the Lenin Shipyards in Gdansk. It eventually became the first independent trade union in a Soviet bloc country. Solidarity was a broad, non-violent, anti-communist social movement that at its height had in excess of 9 million members. There is little doubt that Solidarity made a massive contribution to the fall of communism. In 1983 Lech Walesa was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace and in 1990 he was sworn in as President of a reborn independent Poland, democratically elected in a General Election. [...]

GDANSK GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB – POSTOLOWO

On our last day in the Gdansk and Olsztyn Region we visited the Postolowo Gdansk Golf and Country Club. Postolowo is situated 26 km from the city of Gdansk. Postolowo Golf Course was designed by the British born golf architect Jeremy Turner and Postolowo opened in 1992. Jeremy Turner spends a lot of his time in Sweden and he has designed many courses in both Sweden and Norway. Jeremy Turner's philosophy in designing a golf course is that a golf course should in every sense belong to the landscape in which it is situated. Jeremy Turner was no doubt assisted in the location insofar as Postolowo area itself is blessed with a sandy soil. The area is also populated with beech, oak and pine trees. Jeremy Turner made the best possible use of a magnificent lake in the heart of the course and some smaller ones as well. Postolowo has staged a number of very prestigious tournaments including the Polish Open in 1997, '98 and 2007 and the European Youth Team Championship in 2002. In 2008 and 2009 Golf Digest ranked it as the best course in Poland and in the top 100 golf courses in Continental Europe. It is also the longest Golf course in Poland and second longest in Europe, measuring 7,101 metres (7,770 yards) from the Championship tees. Postolowo has a Golf Academy, Driving Range with 16 bays, Putting Green, Pitching Area and Practice Bunker. Jeremy Turner has used the water within the confines of the course to the best effect and that is very apparent on the back 9 where the water comes into play on no less than 7 holes. The holes that grabbed my attention were holes 3, 15 and 16. Hole 3, Par 3, Index 12 that measures 174 metres from the blues is very well guarded by no less than 5 bunkers, 3 on the left of the green and 2 more on the right of the green. The strokesaver indicates that the moniker on this hole is "One Club More". Did I take that on board? No – I finished in one of the bunkers on the right of the green! The moral of the story is – the strokesaver is rarely wrong. Hole 15, Par 4, Index 3 measures 375 metres from the blue markers. A good drive of 200m+ should leave you with an approach shot over water to the green that is strategically placed at the end of a peninsula. This hole incidentally is called "Peninsula". This hole is a real test of nerves and skill. Hole 16 is another Par 3, Index 11. It is longish 186 metres from the blue tee markers and you may well favour a 3 wood or maybe even a driver to ensure that you manage to carry the large expanse of water between tee box and green. If you would like to take on a real challenge and have no fear of water why not try this hole from the Championship tee. That means your tee shot will have to carry more than 200 metres over water!

