

## *Travelogue: Poland, Masuria*

*By Elisabeth Hambrügge, Product Manager at Pegasus equitour*

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A long-cherished childhood dream led me on this trip to Poland. More specifically, to the 'Immenhof Idylle' – or, to put it another way, the East Prussian past set against a legendary landscape.

First of all, my daughter and I had to tackle the journey to the middle of nowhere.

My journey from Basel took me as far as Warsaw, where I went on a short sightseeing tour of the Old Town. It's well worth a visit, though the sprawling capital of Poland certainly isn't.



The next day, I set off for Gdańsk to pick up my daughter from the airport; she was travelling from Stockholm. The journey from Warsaw to Gdańsk wasn't particularly impressive either. But then: from Gdańsk, we headed into Masuria. The landscape took on a new character.

Hills, like waves, with endless stubble fields (which really sets a rider's heart racing!). Vast grassy expanses without fences or barriers alternated with woods and lakes. Pure countryside, punctuated here and there by tiny hamlets consisting of just a few houses.

The further we ventured into Masuria, the stronger this impression became.

The Immenhof from the film I watched as a child could have been right there.

Lake after lake, and those very typical country roads, lined with old trees with thick trunks at the roadside, standing close together in a tree-lined avenue.

And by the way: I'd expected – clouded by

preconceptions – the roads to be in poor condition. That wasn't the case at all! Renting a car was a brilliant decision. We really enjoyed exploring this landscape independently and at our own pace.

Upon arriving at our destination near Bartoszyce, the Immenhof made my childhood dream come true.

An estate straight out of a fairy-tale film. Historic buildings lovingly renovated into an equestrian hotel. The stables and the hotel are situated side by side. The former pigsty has been converted into a restaurant and reception area. Lovingly furnished with plenty of wood and a rustic flair. The rooms are comfortable and clean.

The hotel and the horse stables are grouped around the lake in the inner courtyard, forming a continuous complex of buildings. This was the economic wing of the castle. For the actual



main attraction is the small castle next door. The ambience and stately grandeur of these buildings, as well as the large garden with its stream and lake, are romantic and nostalgically elegant. There are also a few hotel rooms here, though they are somewhat set apart from the stables. We were delighted to be so close to the horses.

The stables also had this nostalgic charm, yet were airy and bright. Most of the centre's horses are kept in the extensive paddocks on the estate.



Two indoor riding arenas and several outdoor arenas offer ample training opportunities. Jumping equipment on the premises and cross-country obstacles in the immediate vicinity are a delight for show jumpers.

The horses are predominantly Westphalian and Polish warmbloods from the estate's own breeding programme. At present, the estate has 76 horses, which get plenty of exercise thanks to the estate's extensive paddocks and are consequently well-balanced in character.



The horses are in excellent condition. Their coats, eyes and body condition indicate that their care is in the hands of expert management.

Due to the high summer temperatures, we only went for one early morning ride each day. We did, however, take a riding lesson in the morning and another in the afternoon on the first day to discuss with the riding instructors to what extent our riding skills would allow us to ride 'outdoors'. As a result, the ride on the following days was the highlight. We set off early in the morning, which meant the horsefly nuisance and the heat were bearable. The morning atmosphere through the woods and across the wide fields is indescribable. Fresh air, unspoilt nature and the undulating landscape were a real treat. The well-trained horses, fitted with high-quality bridles, allowed for plenty of galloping and trotting.

After the ride and a refreshing shower, a hearty breakfast awaited us. The food at the resort is excellent and the service is commendable.

Breakfast was served as a buffet, and for dinner you could choose from the à la carte menu or the buffet.

Thanks to our hire car, we were very flexible. We visited various sights in the surrounding area. My Komoot app was helpful, allowing us to make new discoveries every day.

And afterwards we headed to the swimming lake. Our estate also has a swimming lake, but with jetty access. We discovered another lake in Kikity: a sandy beach, gently sloping into the water, and clear, wonderfully refreshing water. Entry is free and it wasn't overcrowded. There are shady spots for relaxing and picnicking. The only charge is for the car park, which costs the equivalent of €2.50.



So our days were very full and we managed to relax effectively in a short space of time. An unforgettable trip that gave us the feeling of being immersed in the history of East Prussia. One more tip on getting there: Warsaw, Gdańsk and Olsztyn are the airports recommended for reaching this beautiful site. Wizz Air offers cheap flights. There's a direct flight from Dortmund to Olsztyn. This is the nearest airport, just 70 km away.

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