

Feng-shui, prsut and the Old-timer

A trip to Slovenia. My oh my, this country is so beautiful that it makes me speechless. Seemingly it's a part of former Yugoslavia but people here live more of a Mediterranean or even Italian lifestyle. Plus their 2500m high mountains! More people drive BMW 6 or Audi 8 here in Slovenia than in Austria. The journey from Poland was terrific (after we've crossed the Polish border, to be more exact). Highways as far as the eye can see. After you have left the Czech Republic behind you and got on the highway in Žylyna you are being transported to a different world. You struggle not to step on the gas and reach Mach 1 but we do know that the Slovaks, Austrians and Slovenians are anxious to dig into our wallets for speeding which I hear is very costly here.

By and large: from Warsaw to Žylyna – 7 hrs (400 km), from Žylyna to Ljubljana, where we stayed overnight, also 7 hrs but we covered 800 km. Unfortunately, our GPS failed. In Slovenia it showed only highways but, with the help of a map I bought at a gas station and the local taxi drivers, we managed to find our hotel. And it was not just a hotel but more of a sports complex with a covered tennis court, swimming pool and a beach volleyball field. Rooms furnished according to the feng-shui rules. In case you don't know how such room should look like, I explain:

Rule # 1- there should be a church nearby whose provost decided to pursue his dream about playing drums – church bells rang with sounds resembling John Bonham's solo from 'Moby Dick' for 15 mins (Led Zeppelin, in case you don't have a clue of what I'm talking about). If you consider it's being played by four bells, each of them with a different pitch then you get the gist of how much faith it takes to survive all this.

Rule # 2- there has to be a strong stench of a cesspool penetrating the area otherwise you won't be able to decide whether "ying" and "yang" are well balanced

Rule # 3- there should be a plane flying over your head every 20 mins, either a chopper or a jet-engine, doesn't really matter, the more noise it makes the better.

I forgot the remaining seven rules that don't make us healthy, beautiful and rich.

The hotel was actually very "dog owner-friendly" however the said feng-shui winds up the animals and our Dumka flatly refused any cooperation whatsoever on day two. My wife and I, both equally anxious to keep fit, ordered four beers to our room and thus started warming up before the show.

Breakfast was served according to the European, not English standards- coffee plus a plate of cheese and cold meat of various kind, probably obtained in a supermarket. If it hadn't been for prsut, Slovenian ham which tastes very much like famous prosciutto, we would have had no other choice but to go to McDonald's. We pecked at the meat and went off to the show.

We covered 70km in 40 mins – something you don't experience in Poland. No wonder- our highways are meant to be ready for Euro 2012, not for dog shows. Our Dumka didn't compete the first day so we went to look around for partners for our bitches. Unfortunately, there wasn't much choice. In the end, I took Dumka for a stroll while Beata was taking pictures of any potential partners. At the same time we were also trying to keep up with the judging that day (which, by the way, was devoted to the Slovenian Great Dane – or Molossian- Club). I was right with

predicting which Molossian would win. As usual during such events, there were a few dog owners who were unhappy with everyone and everything around them. Spouses were angry with each other, exhibitors were angry with their double handlers for their lack of creativity and enthusiasm in the ring, and the owners themselves were angry with their dogs for not lifting their heads at a proper moment. Of course, everyone wants to win, but we tend to forget that a dog is a living creature and they too get moody from time to time, just as we do.

I admit that compared to EuDDC in Zagreb three years ago, it was spacious, beautiful and relatively stress-free. Dogs had considerable amount of space, the rings were large and everybody had enough room for themselves. Dumka (or Dupa) and I decided to relax in the car a bit and share our thoughts concerning the show. On my part I was sharing while Dupa was slumbering soundly with her head on my knees. An hour later we returned. Dupa got introduced to some new boys and I didn't get to meet any new girls. Finally there came the time for dinner. Steer clear from the dining venues at the show. Prices are sky high and the food tastes like MRE's. At one of such dining places I got a shish kebab and a meat ball, both of which had been served by a lady who did everything with her bare hands, including receiving the money for the meal. Who knows, perhaps she had even blown her nose earlier. I wanted to share my shish kebab with Dupa but Beata said I might poison the dog by doing so.

Again: 70km- 40 mins. I know, I know, I'm being picky again but it's really not a big deal there at all. At the hotel we had six beers and we conked out.

The European part of the show was scheduled for the following day so we got up early and left the hotel before breakfast. And, again, I'm going to pick on the road workers (with whom I have close professional ties) – 40 mins and we traveled 70 km. We had been planning to actively partake in the show this time however Dupa didn't share our enthusiasm in the matter. It might have been due to the ubiquitous dog dung in the exhibition area (many owners feel obliged to clean after their dogs only if they drop a bomb in the ring) or possibly just a fatigue after so much travelling mixed with feng-shui (bells and jet engines). The ring itself was also considerably smaller and, as it turned out later, Dupa competed with thirteen other bitches. Moreover, the ring floor was partially made of concrete (in the corners) so the dogs ended up skidding while taking a turn. Generally speaking, Dupa was scared but the overall score was nonetheless very good. If I say it didn't matter to me, nobody will believe me, since I have already let slip that everybody wants to win. But at least several bitches were as pretty as Dupa and I'm not disappointed. Which I cannot say about the 2 euro coffee, unfortunately. Something that tasted like water with tobacco was served in a plastic cup filled up to 1/3 of its capacity. It's a whole different story in cafes where I could get coffee with milk, and for only one euro, too. So I warn you once again – stay away from temporary diners and cafes at dog shows (though the only ones I can sincerely recommend I encountered at a show in Łódź this and the previous year). This time we didn't eat in any of those places and went back to the hotel. On our way there we decided to check out what kind of food they had in a restaurant nearby. A narrow door, nice and simple arrangements on the tables, smell of food (but not the kind that is likely to hit your nostrils in a Polish reataurant, with smelly fat and

cabbage, but herbs and cheese instead) so we unanimously decided we would stay for dinner. And it truly was a 'palatable' decision, if I may say so. I had a peasant's salad with tortellini and Beata ordered spaghetti with seafood. Delicious, despite the price, in euro of course. I highly recommend using Polish when talking to Slovenians since the most important word, namely 'beer', is pronounced in the same way in both languages.

Back in the hotel we had some more beer (x6) and went to bed accompanied by the TV (bells and planes ceaselessly tolling and buzzing in the background). I was surprised yet again - usually when you are staying in a hotel abroad the TV offer is limited to a few channels with RTL in German plus some local stuff- but here I had 180 channels, including HBO, Discovery and other fancy channels, and without dubbing. I am grateful because I could finally watch a movie with Charlie Sheen. Polish TV deprived me of that opportunity.

On the last day we slept in a bit and headed for breakfast with enthusiasm. To our surprise, we were served the very same plate of cold meat. With this tiny little difference that it had been resupplied in the exact spots from which we had eaten a slice or two before. Perhaps it only looked that way but, as I recall, we were the only guests there at that time and we got the same dish only it was two days older. I like food, especially in the morning, and it aggravates me whenever somebody is trying to persuade me to eat in moderation because it's supposed to be healthy for me. As usual we couldn't refrain from doing some shopping in a local supermarket. I recommend prsut. After I have tried Slovenian cheese, I'll tell update you on that as well. Same with the "jota" soup.

As a consolation, when we entered Austria, we bought wine and beer and sandwiches with schnitzel. In general, food at the so-called 'raststations' in Austria is splendid. We met a group of Japanese tourists, Dupa pooped and we continued our journey home. The magic was gone the moment we entered Bielsko-Biala: Ljubljana-Bielsko 7hrs (800 km), Bielsko – Warsaw 7hrs (350 km). Hvala ljepa!