Hunting in Poland

Poland is one of Europe’s most traditional hunting countries. Poland is a beautiful country of forests and meadows, whose natural environment is excellent for wildlife, and hunting has rich, deeply rooted traditions. Polish hunting traditions go back in history to the times of the first Polish Kings, and the characteristics for hunting in Poland are still very strongly affected by centuries of tradition, customs and habits. Hunting there is relatively inexpensive and provides many hunters, old and new, with a rewarding, exciting and memorable experience.

Game animals that can be found in their natural environment in Poland include red stag, roe and fallow deer, wild boar, foxes, hares, ducks, partridges and pheasants. Most hunters in Poland are very experienced in the woods. They hunt in unfenced territories and have excellent knowledge of these animals. Some hunts are conducted with one or two hunters, and others are very social events with as many as 10 – 20 hunters. There is a Polish saying – the formula for successful hunting consists of three crucial elements: first of all the company, secondly the company, and finally the company. Many hunters say that collective hunting, with its typical festive frame and customs, is the essence of the hunting adventure. All these aspects generate a big interest for hunting in the beautiful Polish countryside and make it famous world wide.

Hunters in Poland form a brotherhood with their own traditions, language and customs. As they say, they are not killers, but ‘selectioners’, assisting in the natural balance of nature. At the end of a collective hunt the harvested game is
often carefully laid out in a clearing, with the animals facing the area from which they came, and then surrounded with a frame of freshly cut boughs. There is always respect and reverence for the animals and sincere gratitude for the sustenance they provide to the community.

The Polish Hunting Association, Polski Związek Łowiecki, is the only national hunters' organization and is in charge of most aspects of hunting in the country. All hunters and all hunting clubs must be members of this association. All game living in the wild belongs to the State, however, after it is shot the game become owned by the hunting clubs. The hunting rights do not belong to the landowner and can only be exercised by members of the Polish Hunters' Association within the hunting grounds.

The hunting grounds in Poland are divided into 5,250 hunting territories with a minimum area of 7,500 acres. Most of these territories are rented out to the
hunting clubs. Yearly shooting plans are drawn up by clubs and approved by the forestry administration.

The patron of hunters in Poland is Saint Hubertus, and the third of November is the “feast of hunters”.

**Bigos,** also known in English as **hunter's stew,** is a Polish dish of finely chopped meat of various kinds stewed with sauerkraut and shredded fresh cabbage, and with various other ingredients such as wine, raisins, mushrooms, etc..

Traditionally, bigos is stewed in a cauldron over an open fire or in a large pot on a stove. This traditional Polish sauerkraut stew is said to have been introduced by Władysław II Jagiełło, a Polish prince who became king in 1385 and served it to his hunting party guests.

The Illinois & Chicago Chapter of Safari Club International is fortunate to have many Polish members, and the values, ethics, skills and traditions they contribute to our hunting heritage.