

THE ARABIANS AND THE POWER OF NATURE

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If you like to sunbathe on the beach, among other naked bodies, or maybe you prefer dancing in time to the deafening music, under the whirling lights of a trendy club – this text is not for you. The majority of Arabian horse lovers, however, seem to be rather in an explorer type. If you are one of them – and we believe you are – you should know, that Poland doesn't consist only of Janów and Michałów, although you admire those places. There are, however, some spots unknown to tourist agencies and guide books. You can get there, driven only by your unfailing intuition. One can feel intuitively his or hers soul brothers and sisters, fanatically addicted to the same idea. Such people, having at their disposal a huge area of untouched nature, undamaged by the industrialization, are able to deliver a fantastic surprise.

One of them is surely **GRZEGORZ MIKLASZEWSKI**, the owner of a guest house in Augustów (a town in north-eastern Poland, 250 km from Warsaw). In 2002 he found out by chance, that in Janów Podlaski a purebred Arabian horse is available for sale in a low price. Purchasing him for Grzegorz was partly following his sister Ewa's dream, or rather yielding to a temptation of an unknown adventure. His new acquisition, the grey gelding **Topaz** (Ararat – Torpeda/Balon), impressed him so much, that Grzegorz unexpectedly became an Arabian horse fan. "I rushed to catch up and did my best to acquire as many books, albums and pictures of Arabians, as possible. I tried to read everything about them and make friends with people, who became fascinated with Arabian horses' beauty, stamina and dispositions earlier than me. Especially great influence upon the development of my new passion exerted the book «Niosąca radość» («Bringing the Joy»), by Krzysztof Czarnota. After reading it, I felt a sudden desire to enter the «magic space» of those fantastic animals. I learned that Arabian horses made the best balm for the human senses. Their free, but at the same time dignified movements enchant every eye, whereas their soft, silky skin can be felt even by the most toilworn hands. The rider, in turn, would admire their stamina, manageability and – at the same time – their devotion and sensitivity", recalls Miklaszewski. He didn't wait long to share his fascination with others.





photo: Leszek Czokajło



photo: Mateusz Miklaszewski

Quite soon the remaining members of his family, including his sons – Hubert (the equestrian center manager), David and Mateusz – began to attend Arabian horse performance events. New riding horses were brought to the stable, including the progeny of Dębowiec, Wachlarz, Ganges, Balon and Albus. Their new owners did their best to improve their riding skills. Miklaszewski was 48 years old at that time and has never thought about taking up such kind of a physical activity before. Now his life gained a new speed. He runs the stud and, together with Hubert, conducts riding lessons indoors and outdoors.

After all, every rider, as soon as he/she acquires the rudiments of riding, dreams about going on a hack. “Of course, it’s a unique experience, what one can’t be fed up with”, says Miklaszewski. “Arabian horses are very well suited for covering long distances, but not always it has to be in a high speed. That’s why I came up with the idea of marking out multipartite horse trails. Their participants would be able to enjoy as well riding, as a close contact with the nature and exploring new areas.”

The idea took off, the more, that the Ostoja Stud was established in one of the most picturesque spots of Poland. The region of Augustów embraces many lakes, the magnificent Augustów Forest (with the area of 114 000 ha and about 2000 animal species) and – above all – the famous Augustów Channel, a historical water route, founded by the King Stefan Batory in the end of 16th Century. It is a real paradise for tourists, offering ideal holiday conditions in peace and quiet, with eye-catching landscapes. Of course, the main attraction for horsemen is the Horse Route of Mazuria and Augustów Forest. “The workers of several forestries marked out and inventoried about 400 km of routes”, explains Miklaszewski. “Currently there are established professionally conducted horse and rider’s hostels, more and more agri-tourist farms are keen on receiving groups of riders. But our farm is the only one where are organized rides

exclusively on purebred Arabian horses.” Among the guests of Ostoja Stud there are some foreign riders, very well trained. They are going home satisfied, so they will probably come back or recommend this spot to their friends. Once a year, in the end of September, a four-days-long endurance ride is organized, under the patronage of the Mayor of Augustów. The organizers try to invite for it not only the local riding fans, but also more widely renowned celebrities. It makes the most effective form of promotion of the area.

“Our equestrian center was established less than 3 years ago. It needs years of work to raise well schooled and safe mounts from our own youth. For the time being we have seven completely trained horses and several ones in training. Our goal is to complete a group of ten males and ten females broken under saddle, in order to be mutually replaced. I didn’t complete a professional, animal science education, but I like animals and have the required predispositions to work with them. For example, I’ve bred carrier pigeons for 38 years and have always been successful in it. We realize, that we’re facing plenty of work, but all my family is involved in this activity. My wife Barbara helps and supports us in running the farm and organizing rides. We believe we’ll succeed in introducing the Arabian horses to the horseback tourism and making them more and more popular. We want to make our farm a real sanctuary for endurance riders and their families” – the owner of “Ostoja” makes his plans for the future.

Miklaszewski hopes he’ll be able to organize a Polish Eastern Borders Trail Ride. For those, who haven’t caught the “horse bug” yet, he offers biking, canoeing, angling or picture taking. He strongly believes in the power of nature and in “infectiousness” of the horse passion. It gives him energy for the further activity and no wonder – such admirable surrounding is an endless source of good ideas. 🐾