This 3rd edition of Lonely Planet’s *Polish phrasebook* is based on the previous edition by the Lonely Planet Language Products team and Piotr Czajkowski, who provided the translations and pronunciation guides as well as cultural advice.

Piotr works in Lonely Planet’s Melbourne office as a senior GIS analyst. He hails from Gliwice and Kraków and studied in Wrocław before migrating to Australia to further his education at the University of Melbourne and Swinburne University of Technology. He’s adapted well to life in Australia but still pines for Polish *piwo* (beer). Piotr would like the world to know that, contrary to popular opinion, Polish is not difficult to pronounce. It has, in fact, one more vowel than English.

Piotr would like to thank his wife Gosia and his daughter Aleksandra for their help, and little Karolinka for her patience.

Thanks also to James Howard, English teacher and long-time resident of Kraków, for contributing his insights into Polish language and culture, and to Yukiyoshi Kamimura and Wendy Wright for the inside illustrations.

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make the most of this phrasebook ...

Anyone can speak another language! It’s all about confidence. Don’t worry if you can’t remember your school language lessons or if you’ve never learnt a language before. Even if you learn the very basics (on the inside front cover of this book), your travel experience will be the better for it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort.

finding things in this book

For easy navigation, this book is in sections. The Basics chapters are the ones you’ll thumb through time and again. The Practical section covers basic travel situations like catching transport and finding a bed. The Social section gives you conversational phrases, pick-up lines, the ability to express opinions – so you can get to know people. Food has a section all of its own: gourmets and vegetarians are covered and local dishes feature. Safe Travel equips you with health and police phrases, just in case. Remember the colours of each section and you’ll find everything easily; or use the comprehensive Index. Otherwise, check the two-way traveller’s Dictionary for the word you need.

being understood

Throughout this book you’ll see coloured phrases on each page. They’re phonetic guides to help you pronounce the language. Start with them to get a feel for how the language sounds. The pronunciation chapter in Basics will explain more, but you can be confident that if you read the coloured phrase, you’ll be understood. As you become familiar with the spoken language, move on to using the actual text in the language which will help you perfect your pronunciation.

communication tips

Body language, ways of doing things, sense of humour – all have a role to play in every culture. ‘Local talk’ boxes show you common ways of saying things, or everyday language to drop into conversation. ‘Listen for ...’ boxes supply the phrases you may hear. They start with the script (so a local can find the phrase they want and point it out to you) and then lead in to the phonetic guide and the English translation.
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For more details, see the introduction.
Ask most English speakers what they know about Polish and they will most likely dismiss it as an unpronounceable language. Who could pronounce an apparently vowel-less word like szczyt (meaning ‘peak’), for example? To be put off by this unfairly gained reputation, however, would be to miss out on a rich and rewarding language. The mother tongue of illustrious personalities such as Copernicus, Chopin, Joseph Conrad, Marie Curie and Pope John Paul II has a fascinating and turbulent past and symbolises the resilience of the Polish people in the face of domination and adversity.

The story of Polish begins with the arrival of the Polish tribes who occupied the basins of the Oder and Vistula rivers in the 6th century AD. These tribes spoke a range of West Slavic dialects, which over time evolved into Polish. The closest living relatives of Polish are Czech and Slovak, which also belong to the wider West Slavic family of languages.

Polish reached the apex of its influence during the era of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth, which was formed in 1569 and lasted until 1795. The Commonwealth covered a swath of territory from what are now Poland and Lithuania, through to Belarus, Ukraine and Latvia and part of Western Russia. Polish became a lingua franca throughout much of Central and Eastern Europe at this time due to the Commonwealth’s political, cultural, scientific and military might.

When Poland was wiped off the map of Europe from 1795 to 1918 after three

| at a glance ... |
| language name: Polish |
| name in language: **język polski** jen-zik pol-skee |
| language family: Slavic |
| key country: Poland |
| approximate number of speakers: 45 million |
| close relatives: Czech, Slovak |
| donations to English: horde, mazurka, vodka |
successive partitions in the second half of the 18th century (when it was carved up between Russia, Austria and Prussia), the language suffered attempts at both Germanisation and Russification. Later, after WWII, Poland became a satellite state of the Soviet Union and it came under the renewed influence of Russian. Polish showed impressive resistance in the face of this oppression. The language not only survived but enriched itself by borrowing many words from both Russian and German. The works of Poland’s greatest literary figures who wrote in exile – the Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz, and, during Communist rule, the Nobel Prize winner Czesław Miłosz – are testament to this fact.

Today Poland is linguistically one of the most homogeneous countries in Europe – over 95% of the population speaks Polish as their first language. There are significant Polish-speaking minorities in the western border areas of Ukraine, Belarus and in southern Lithuania, with smaller populations in other neighbouring countries.

Getting acquainted with Polish is easy. It’s not difficult to pronounce and the coloured pronunciation guides in this book are designed to help you say any Polish word with ease. This book gives you all the practical phrases you need to get by, as well as all the fun, spontaneous phrases that will lead to a better understanding of Poland and its people. Local knowledge, new relationships and a sense of satisfaction are on the tip of your tongue. So don’t just stand there – say something!

abbreviations used in this book

| a    | adjective       |
| acc  | accusative      |
| adv  | adverb          |
| dat  | dative          |
| f    | feminine        |
| gen  | genitive        |
| general pl | general plural |
| imp  | imperfective    |
| inf  | informal        |
| inst | instrumental    |
| lit  | literal         |
| loc  | locative        |
| m    | masculine       |
| m pers pl | masculine personal |
| n    | neuter          |
| nom  | nominative      |
| perf | perfective      |
| pl   | plural          |
| pol  | polite          |
| sg   | singular        |
| v    | verb            |
| voc  | vocative        |