

## 'Go home, Polish' graffiti prompts photographer's 1,200-mile walk

When photographer **Michał Iwanowski, 41**, came across some graffiti in Cardiff that said, 'Go home, Polish', he decided to take it literally. Here, in his own words, he tells how and why he embarked on the 1,200-mile walk from Wales back to his country of birth.



I still remember seeing the graffiti. It was only small, but I was taken aback: 'Go home, Polish'. I had lived in Cardiff for many years and considered Wales my home. But I was

**A**  From there I walked through Belgium, Holland, Germany, and the Czech Republic before reaching Poland. Along the way, I told people what I was doing and why, to see what reaction I would get. It was almost always positive. People shared their own stories, their own hopes and fears, their worries about their lives and situations. Only once was I shouted at, when I wandered onto an allotment in Germany to ask a man for directions. I began to realize that on an individual level, we have so much in common.

**B**  I ended up low on energy and electrolytes. At one point, I remember throwing my backpack in the bushes and just wanting to give up, which is unusual for me, as I am an upbeat person. In the end, I sat there for about two hours, then got up again and continued the walk.

**C**  In total, it took me 105 days to arrive in my home village of Mokrzeszów, in western Poland. By the end, I was in survival mode. I was reclusive and refused company. I walked up my home street and, as I did, a group of my relatives slowly walked out to meet me carrying a 'Welcome home' banner. It felt like a funeral procession. It was very surreal.

**D**  Back in the UK, there is still anti-Polish and anti-immigrant graffiti, of course – much worse than what I saw – and I deplore

Reading comprehension

(in class) – timed: 15'

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I still remember seeing the graffiti. It was only small, but I was taken aback: 'Go home, Polish'. I had lived in Cardiff for many years and considered Wales my home. But I was also Polish, so I began to question whether I was at home or not, and where, in fact, home was. I had never felt any negativity towards me in Wales. I found the people warm and welcoming. But after the Brexit referendum, I felt a change in mood – not towards me, but towards immigrants in general. I felt some people were dehumanizing 'the other' and the concept began to terrify me. How could people turn on each other like this?



**2** From there I walked through Belgium, Holland, Germany, and the Czech Republic before reaching Poland. Along the way, I told people what I was doing and why, to see what reaction I would get. It was almost always positive. People shared their own stories, their own hopes and fears, their worries about their lives and situations. Only once was I shouted at, when I wandered onto an allotment in Germany to ask a man for directions. I began to realize that on an individual level, we have so much in common.

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**7** Back in the UK, there is still anti-Polish and anti-immigrant graffiti, of course – much worse than what I saw – and I deplore it every time I see it. We must never tolerate racist language. But I need to put away my cynicism, and remember – as my walk showed me – that most people are generous and most people are good.

**1** It was then I began planning my journey, setting off on 27th April 2018 with a rough route map and a 15 kg backpack. Carrying British and Polish passports, I often wore a T-shirt bearing the word 'Polska', so people would know I was Polish. I walked over the bridge from Wales into England, then took the ferry to France.

**6** Of course, it didn't feel like an achievement at the time. Plenty of people walk long distances. But, looking back, it feels like I have achieved something. The walk helped me to solidify my views on 'home', I felt utterly at home walking across the breadth of Europe's landscape. I don't need to be told by a person or government where my home is and isn't. I belong to the ground beneath my feet, not to any country where I happen to have a passport.

**3** Much of the walking was enjoyable, whether it was through Brussels or Cologne, or through the bushes and wild forests of Germany. I would stay in Airbnbs, wild camp or sometimes stay with strangers, who would often offer me food. But, as I was walking in the summer, I was hit by the Europe-wide heatwave, and began to find my mission unbearable.

**Glossary**  
**electrolytes** salts and minerals in your body that you lose when you sweat

No direction home

- 1 – E
- 2 – A
- 3 – G
- 4 – B
- 5 – C
- 6 – F
- 7 – D

1 LISTENING & SPEAKING



Listening practise


At home!

Accommodation, activities, and discovery in the Alpujarra mountains of Granada, Southern Spain

Las Chimeneas is a <sup>1</sup> *dramatic* set of converted village houses which have been welcoming guests to the Alpujarra since 1998. There are nine <sup>2</sup> rooms, each with fabulous views across the hills to the sea in the <sup>3</sup> distance. We provide very comfortable accommodation, with lots of antiques and books and hidden nooks and crannies, together with a delightful little restaurant that will surprise you by the quality of its freshly made <sup>4</sup> produce.


We have an <sup>5</sup> knowledge of the area and are anxious to share our enthusiasm for this place which has been our home for so long. We offer all kinds of holidays, including trekking, birdwatching, cycling, painting, cookery, and yoga.

Above all, what we supply is peace and relaxation, and a genuinely <sup>6</sup> welcome. This represents a <sup>7</sup> combination. Perhaps it is this that led *The Times* to number us amongst their top ten of Europe's best mountain hideaways. *David and Emma Illsley*

- c  10.5 You're going to listen to an interview with David and Emma Illsley, who run Las Chimeneas. Read questions 1–8 and then listen to Part 1 of the interview. Answer the questions with **D** (David), **E** (Emma), or **B** (both).

Who...?

- 1  first got a job in Spain
- 2  studied at Warwick University
- 3  taught English
- 4  fell in love with Mairena
- 5  taught in Granada for a year
- 6  worked in local government
- 7  thinks having children helped them to integrate
- 8  employs local people

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Who...?

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- 2  **E** studied at Warwick University
- 3  **B** taught English
- 4  **B** fell in love with Mairena
- 5  **D** taught in Granada for a year
- 6  **D** worked in local government
- 7  **E** thinks having children helped them to integrate
- 8  **B** employs local people

- d** Listen again and answer the questions.
- 1 What does Emma say 'seduced' her about David's lifestyle in Majorca?
  - 2 What does David say they did on their year off?
  - 3 How does David describe his experience as Deputy Mayor?
  - 4 How does David think having a business has helped them to integrate?

- 1 The swimming, barbecues in the mountains, fishing for octopus
- 2 They rented a cheap house in the mountains, and did lots of walking and cycling.
- 3 He considered it an honour to be involved in local politics and be part of the decision-making process.
- 4 People can see they're working, and they employ local people.

Unit 11

e  10.6 Now read questions 1–5 and the three options for each. Then listen to Part 2 and choose a, b, or c.

o direction home

- 1 What Emma likes most about living in Mairena is \_\_\_\_.  
 a being able to farm the land  b the size of the village  
 c the amazing weather
- 2 What she likes least is the fact that \_\_\_\_.  
 a there is so much bureaucracy  
 b the local shops aren't very good  
 c they have to use their car more than they would like
- 3 Apart from family and friends, David misses \_\_\_\_.  
 a features of UK culture and behaviour  
 b some types of entertainment in the UK  
 c the varieties of beer in the UK
- 4 When Emma goes back to the UK, she enjoys \_\_\_\_.  
 a the nightlife in London  
 b being able to use public transport and not having to drive  
 c mixing with different kinds of people
- 5 They think it \_\_\_\_ that they will go back to live in the UK.  
 a is quite probable  b is highly unlikely  c is very likely

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## Unit 11

## No direction home

### f 10.7 Language in context

Listen to some extracts from the interview and complete the idioms and phrasal verbs. With a partner, say what you think they mean.

- 1 ...he'd agreed to, to let us rent this house for, for  to ...
- 2 ...we wandered around and cycled around and finally   this little village of Mairena, where we live now...
- 3 ...we were  a  and enjoying it too much, really, to, to want to go back...
- 4 ...as long as I can remember, I always  a  – I really wanted to live in a very small community...
- 5 ...on the one hand, it's great being away from shops – it's like a kind of a, real kind of  ...
- 6 ...so we, we've never really  it . It would be tricky, I think, to come back, largely for economic or financial reasons.
- 7 To take them back to the UK, I think now, that would be perhaps a, a  .
- 8 ...I think once you've spent 15 years building up a business, then also that's something you don't want to, to easily  your  on.

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