

Łeba-Deba Doo!

A July morning in Łeba greeted us with a terrible drizzle, so we decided to head to what was advertised as the local Jurassic Park (the name obviously taken from Spielberg). We did not expect much, but what is there to do in a seaside resort when it's cold and rainy? However, in the end I was pleasantly surprised at what turned out to be a very praiseworthy attraction.

A year ago one of the local financial tycoons (as the locals say - the sign gave three names) enlisted the support of the EU, the local and regional administrative leaders, and even a senator, and bought up 20 hectares of land, 70% of it being nothing but swamp and the rest forest. Here he laid out a 3.5 km pathway running through tall rushes and other vegetation, so that someone on the path cannot see others just 50 m further along. To be honest it's not even really a path, since the swamp is a real swamp and so one walks along an elevated platform the whole time. Hidden away amid the swamp are plastic dinosaurs on a 1:1 scale, which often roar ferociously at unsuspecting visitors.

It comes close to being awfully kitschy, but on the other hand there is a serious voice describing when each creature lived, what it ate, where its remains were found, etc. Moreover, in stylized huts there is a very deft presentation of the globe's geological-biological history, showing where the continents were and what kind of fauna and fauna was dominant at a given moment from the Earth's formation to the present day. The information is thorough and up-to-date. Halfway along the route the dinosaurs die out and mankind appears. We encounter Australopithecus - of astonishing stature but pleasant-seeming - and our other ancestors, also presented on a 1:1 scale. We see

them start to have something like a household. There is a detailed description of their appearance, so that anyone who meets a Neanderthal on the street will recognize him. We observe their habitats and their struggle against predators (for instance they are holding a saber-toothed tiger in a wooden cage) and can see them killing off a mammoth bogged down in the swamp. This history of humanity takes us all the way to the Slovincians, who lived in these lands. Where possible, everything is documented with original excavations and anthropological relics. Next we enter the forest, where there is a high-class nature trail. To top it all off, at the end of the two-hour route is a mini-zoo.



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There is no doubt that this is a profitable project. One can take a break along the route to have a meal in very modern style. There are tents where one can watch documentary movies familiar from TV. One can take a ride in the Flintstones' car or have one's picture taken with dinosaurs or Neanderthals (climbing on the dinosaurs is not allowed, however, as some of them are several meters tall). The tickets themselves also come at a price: 0 zlotys for a three-year-old, but up to 25 zlotys for his grandfather.

What makes me so enthusiastic about this park? The observation that the developer concluded that authentic scientific information would help the project be more of a commercial success. And that, to put it delicately, is not a universal view. These days an attraction speaking to the mind rather than just to the eyes and ears is unfortunately not all that frequent.

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