# HUNGARY



## Hortobagy

Our last day in Hungary for this part of our trip has probably been our most interesting. We arrived last night to the village at the centre of a large national park based on preserving the traditional pastoral use of this area. The Puszta, as it is called, consists of vast plains where specific land-use practices such as animal husbandry, have evolved and include the grazing of hardy livestock breeds adapted to the natural conditions of alkaline pastures, steppes, meadows and wetlands. The area is dotted with reed lakes galore. We attempted to ride to one today over a very potholed, water covered, muddy road. We got all the way but ended up in the wrong locality! It was great exercise and an interesting location where national park employees were tending fish ponds. Bikes need a wash.

Our next stop was the Nine Hole Bridge - a famous symbol of the park. It was the longest road stone bridge in historic Hungary prior to 1921. It was a very photogenic sitting over the channel amidst masses of reeds.

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MUD GLORIOUS MUD Our bikes were clogged full of mud by the time we got back from our ride and we were too exhausted to wash them.

THAT FACE We opened a creaky shed door and there it was - the only one in in there earnestly appealing for food. So funny.

HERDSMEN We are some way out into the wilderness when we saw three bandits approaching. Evidently bandits wear skirts in Hungary. They caused great commotion.

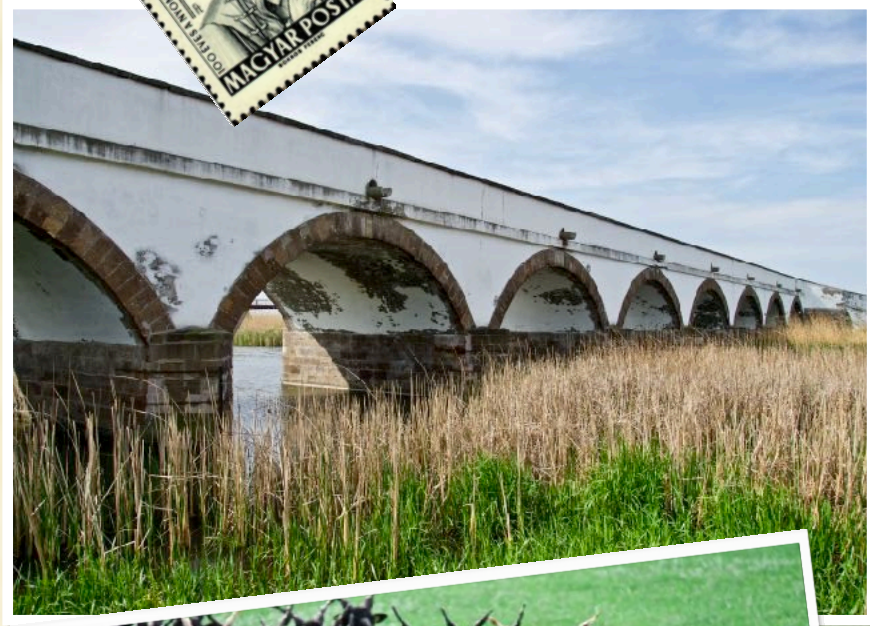
# Traditional plainsmen tending their animals …….

Yesterday we discovered that an old stud aimed at preserving some of the Hungarian breeds of horse is just down the road. Today we returned and were able to book into a tour. This consisted of a ride in a cart (pulled by 2 of their steeds). We were taken out over the extremely flat, green landscape (in some places very muddy) that had no trees or fences at all. We passed some very large unusual barns with strange "roofs" that incorporated/covered the sides of the buildings. This type of thatched structure is apparently very efficient in terms of temperature control. Our first encounter was with a strange breed of traditional Hungarian sheep - Racka Sheep. They have distinctive horns that are spiralled and protrude in a V shape. They are either black or white. We missed seeing the Hungarian Grey Cattle because the ground was too wet to get out to them. However we were treated to a show put on by some of the resident Hungarian Sport horses. The stud also specialises in breeding another Hungarian bred called the Nonius. The horsemen rode out to join us on the plain and demonstrated whip cracking, and various activities like getting the horses to lay down while on them. Then one rider cantered out standing up on 2 horses and driving 3 others in front. Most interesting fact was that none of their saddles had any girths!! They are apparently the traditional type of saddles - great balance needed there.

We headed to another wild life park to see some of the other rare breeds that are being saved on the park land - strange pigs with wiry hair being the most interesting.

Late in the day some of our Polish relatives joined us after driving 9 hours from their home just south of Warsaw. After conversing via a translation app we headed out to an evening meal in a well known town that had natural heated spa facilities and included a number of very large swimming pools and various water sports ponds. We had a very enjoyable meal and a long catch up "chat." Tomorrow we intend to cross over to Romania and they are coming with us for a few days.

# PHOTOS



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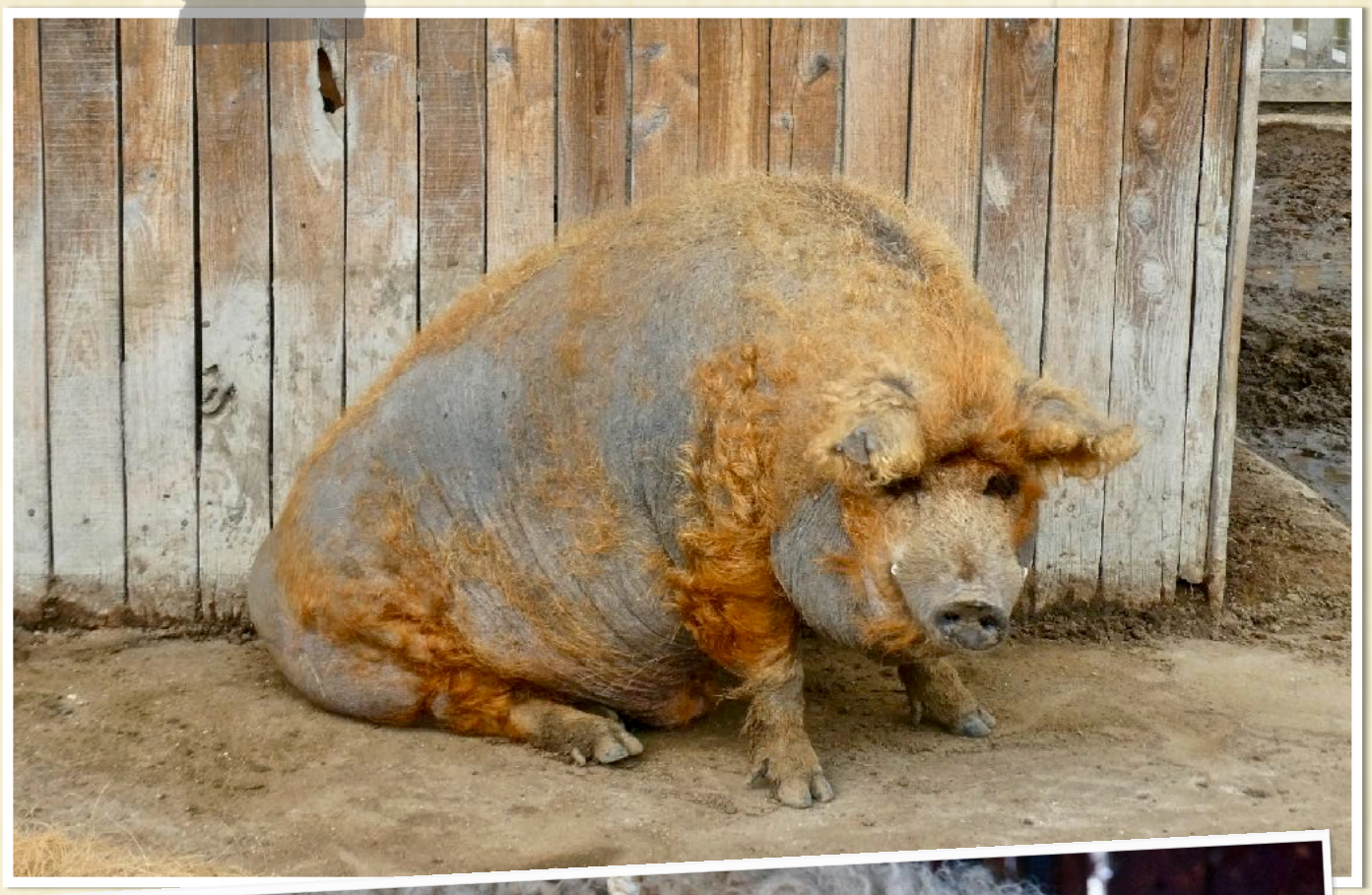

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