



1. Kamila Söseman and daughter Olivia preparing dinner
2. Findus, the manor cat
3. Vintage 20th-century furniture offsets the 19th-century house

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CLEAN GETAWAY

Nestled in northern Germany, manor house Gut Pohnstorf has been revitalised by the Söseman family, who left Berlin to begin 'an unexpected love story' with the estate.

Not that you'd expect to see Kamila Söseman in a horse-drawn carriage, but the Tesla with which she picks up her guests from the train station is a surprising sight in this remote corner of Western Pomerania. Almost three years ago, Kamila and her husband Fabian moved with their two children from Berlin, 200km away, to Mecklenburg. Kamila gave up her job as a lobbyist to look after the estate and its guests, while Fabian continues to work for an electric-mobility and renewable-energy company. (Hence the Tesla – and the electric charging stations behind the house, e-bikes that guests can borrow and the robotic lawnmower that circles the garden.)

The Berliners have brought a breath of fresh air to the village of 36 residents, as well as to the estate. The seven apartments, large hall, blue salon and communal kitchen are modern and airy, and decorated with antiques and elegant modern pieces. Sheep graze on the doorstep and a wealth of hiking paths and swimming holes beckon to guests looking for a sense of wilderness. Here, Kamila tells us how the place called to them and what makes it special. — K





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Tell us about Gut Pohnstorf's history.
It was built in 1850 as a manor and was later the summer residence of an entrepreneur, whose mausoleum still stands behind the house. In GDR times, it housed a kindergarten, library and grocery shop. Up to 100 people lived here back then.

What have you changed about the manor house since moving in?
We made it an open house again. Right after we took over, we invited all the villagers for coffee and cake and everyone was welcome to trudge through the entrance hall.

How would you describe the interior?
Colourful, like life. It's a mix of old and new. For example, there are dressers in the house that I always liked so much at my grandma's, but also Artemide lights that we brought back from our Berlin flat. The house is a process. I'm always on the lookout for more antiques and there's always a wall to paint in a different colour. We also have new furniture made by a carpenter from the neighbouring village.

What is your favourite piece in the house?
A beautiful art nouveau wooden table with curved legs. It stands in the blue salon and is four or five metres long. It has a special meaning for me and I love sharing the table with people.

How did you acquire the house?
When we lived in Berlin, we regularly went to another estate in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania with our family. The landlord liked to cook for friends and guests, and at one meal we met the owner of Gut Pohnstorf. She told us, over some venison legs, that she wanted to put her estate on the market. We went to see it out of curiosity. And although it was a gloomy November day, I liked the atmosphere. It reminded me of my homeland in Poland. I come from Kashubia: sparsely populated, lots of forest, lots of lakes. It was an unexpected love story.

So it wasn't the great longing for the country that drove you?
No, I simply realised that I wanted to change my life. I wanted to be free and to be more self-determined. After three weeks thinking about it, we said, 'Let's jump'.

What makes your estate special?
The relaxed atmosphere, the airy and spacious rooms, the large garden. And, of course, the extremely beautiful location. When nothing works for me, I go to spend time in the forest.

There's a feeling here that we are in the middle of nowhere.
Yes, and that's the beauty. You hardly ever meet people on a bike tour. If you go to Lake Teterow – which is not far from us – there is hardly anyone. We have beautiful, secluded corners here.

What else can you do here?
In summer, guests spend a lot of time in the garden among lilac bushes and old fruit trees, reading, playing bocce [a game similar to *pétanque*] or lying in the hammock. Behind our house there is also a small glacial lake where you can swim. The children catch frogs there. In winter you can skate on it. The estate is also popular for family celebrations, yoga or meditation retreats.

What's for breakfast?
We get the eggs and honey from our neighbours' chickens and bees. The farm shop in the village next door has cattle and makes its own sausage and cheese. We make the jam ourselves. There are also many old fruit bushes in our garden.



4

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1. Quiet corner for morning coffee
2. Sunlight lands on an antique chair
3. Meadow flowers in the kitchen
4. Spacious ground-floor rooms
5. Regional specialties for breakfast
6. Lounge area of one of the apartments for guests
7. Airy bedrooms ensure a good night's sleep



7

Is it possible to have dinner too?
On request, our housekeeper Marion cooks for small groups. Yesterday, for example, she made mushroom sauce to go with medallions of venison, freshly shot by her husband, who is a hunter. Otherwise we recommend our regional caterer. But each of our apartments also has its own kitchen.

What's life like for your family?
The manor used to be the centre of the village and should remain so. My children have already sat on the living room sofa with everyone in the village. People here help each other out. The children played the violin in front of the house at Christmas and a neighbour accompanied them on a horn. There is a bond.

Do you also try to support local artists?
Yes. The paintings in the manor house are also by a local artist, Lothar Oertel. I like his modern, abstract art. It is down-to-earth and authentic. I know Lothar well and can imagine how feelings and needs rush through him and he expresses them on canvas. He tries to live as self-sufficiently and freely as possible here in the country. It would be nice if people could come here, be with themselves, feel similarly free – and then take something of this attitude to life home with them.
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