

The world of our ancestors: A study tour of Jewish Poland & Lithuania

27 August – 14 September 2020

**JEWISH
MUSEUM OF
AUSTRALIA**
Gandel Centre of Judaica

Following four highly successful tours of Jewish Poland and Lithuania, the Jewish Museum of Australia is pleased to announce this tour will return in 2020 after a two-year break. It will be led by Paul Forgasz, who taught Jewish history for many years at Monash University's Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation. Paul is well known as a presenter to many Limmud Oz audiences, and is a regular contributor to the Museum's adult education program. He has led previous tours focusing on the Jews of Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain.

What is special about this tour?

As with any tour, you will visit various towns, cities, and sites of both Jewish and general historical interest. Local guides will be on hand to explain the features of these sites, whilst under Paul's expert guidance, you will actively engage and interact with these places through the reading and analysis of texts and group discussions. At the same time, a series of study sessions will provide opportunities for in depth explorations of key issues and themes that have defined the Jewish Polish and Lithuanian encounter.

Tour operator

The local travel agent is FBI Travel. At the East European end, all land arrangements will be handled by Jerulita Tours, a Jewish Vilnius-based tour operator specialising in East European Jewish travel.

Polish and Lithuanian land package

The price per person is €4850 per person twin share and €900 for a single supplement.

All AUD payments will be tied to the EURO exchange rate. In order for this tour to proceed **on the basis of the above price**, we will need firm commitments from a **minimum of 15 people**. You are therefore advised not to make any flight bookings until you are advised that the tour is definitely proceeding.

The following are included in the land package:

- Four and five star hotel accommodation (18 nights) and buffet breakfasts.
- Five evening meals and two lunches.
- Experienced English speaking local guides.
- Entrance fees to itinerary sites.
- Deluxe motor coach travel, tips for local guides and bus drivers.
- Study sessions as per the itinerary and study materials.

Not included in the price:

- Airfare, airport taxes and travel insurance.
- Hotel transfers to and from the airport.
- Tips for hotel staff (at your discretion).
- Hotel extras such as mini bar, room service.
- Meals other than breakfast and meals designated above.

If you need any help with pre-and post-tour arrangements, booking of flights arrangements, or organising travel insurance, Tamara Menachem of FBI Travel would be more than happy to assist. Tamara can be contacted on 8573 0915 or via email: tamaram@fbitravel.com.au



Tour registration

You will need to complete the online registration form which can be accessed **here**.

Upon registration, you will be sent an invoice for payment of a **\$2000 deposit per person** which you will need to pay in order to secure your place on the tour. **Places are strictly limited and will be filled in order of receipt of deposits.**

Further payment instalments will follow on dates to be advised. Payment of single supplements will be added to the final instalment.

For each instalment you will be invoiced for the equivalent Australian dollar amount based on the exchange rate at the time of invoicing. FBI Travel reserves the right to slightly vary the equivalent Australian dollar amount, as a buffer for any increase in the rate from point of invoice to paying the European tour operator. However, appropriate account will be taken of this when calculating the Australian dollar amount of the final instalment.

IMPORTANT: membership of the Jewish Museum of Australia (JMA) is a requirement for your registration to be completed. If you are not a current paid-up member, upon registering for the tour, complete the online membership form at: **jewishmuseum.com.au/join/become-a-member**

Alternatively, call Annette Bagle at the JMA on (03) 8534 3606 Monday-Wednesday or via email: a.bagle@jewishmuseum.com.au You can also contact her if you are unsure of your membership status.

Deposits will be held by FBI Travel until the first instalment is transferred to Jerulita Tours in Lithuania, after which time deposits and subsequent payments will not be refunded if you wish to cancel your registration. You are therefore strongly advised to take out adequate and appropriate **travel insurance** to cover any unforeseen circumstances which might result in you not being able to participate in the tour. Also, as noted above, you should not make any flight bookings until you are advised that the tour is definitely proceeding.

Places on the tour are strictly limited and will be filled in order of receipt of registration forms.

Refer to the following page for a detailed tour itinerary.



Detailed tour itinerary

DAY 1 – Thursday 27 August

Check into Congress Avenue Hotel in Vilnius. The program will commence in the late afternoon when we will share our thoughts and feelings about visiting Poland, followed by an overview of the history of the Jews of Poland and Lithuania, by way of introduction over the coming days to a more in depth historical examination of the Jewish presence in Poland. Overnight in Vilnius.

DAY 2 – Friday 28 August

In this morning's study session, we will focus on aspects of Jewish life in Poland and Lithuania from the 13th to the late 18th century – the best and worst of times. We will then commence our walking tour of the historical centre of Vilna. Along the way we will see Gediminas Castle and Cathedral Square, the President's Palace, as well as Vilnius University, established in 1568. We will visit the old Jewish quarter and as we traverse the narrow streets and courtyards of the medieval ghetto we will stop at the former site of the Great Synagogue of Vilna and its *schulhof* and get some sense as to why this city was popularly referred to as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania". We will also visit the area of the "Large Ghetto" established by the Nazis in 1941 and see the site of the *Judenrat* or Jewish Council. In the heart of the former ghetto area, we will learn about the remarkable story of Vilna's Jewish resistance movement and hear the call to arms which was issued by Abba Kovner, a poet and leading figure of the movement. This evening, we will gather for dinner to celebrate the Shabbat. Overnight in Vilnius.



DAY 3 – Saturday 29 August

You will be free at your leisure. In the late afternoon study session we will focus on the period of the Polish partitions, paying particular attention to the fraught relationship between the Tsars and their Jewish subjects who lived within the Pale of Settlement. Overnight in Vilnius.

DAY 4 – Sunday 30 August

The day will begin with a study session in which we will continue our previous day's discussion of the Partition period in Poland. We will then visit Ponar Forest just outside Vilnius, where more than 100,000 people, mostly Jews, were murdered by the Nazis. On the way back to Vilnius, we will stop in Trakai, the ancient Lithuanian capital and residence of Grand Dukes of Lithuania, which is famous for its lakes and other scenic sites. We will walk along Trakai's Karaite street with its *Kenesa* [*beit kneset*]. On our return to Vilnius, we will continue our tour of the city, visiting the city's only functioning synagogue as well as the Jewish cemetery and stopping at the graves of the Vilna Gaon and other prominent Jewish figures. We will see the "Cheap Houses" built at the end of the 19th century by the philanthropist, Baron de Hirsch, for Vilna's Jewish poor. Our tour will include the site of the world famous "Widow and Brothers Romm" printing house, a leading publisher of Jewish religious literature. Overnight in Vilnius.



DAY 5 – Monday 31 August

This day trip from Vilnius will take us to Kaunas (Kovno), the second largest city in Lithuania and interim capital of pre-war Lithuania. We will visit Slobodka, a Jewish suburb of pre-war Kaunas and site of the Kovno ghetto. It was here that the most comprehensive collection of Holocaust-era halachic responsa was written by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry, some of which we will examine in a subsequent study session. Slobodka was also the home of the renowned Musar Yeshiva founded by Nathan Zvi Finkel, a disciple of Israel Salanter, founder of the Musar movement about which we will have more to say in a subsequent study session. Our walking tour will continue along the main street, *Laisvės Aleja*, with its two and three storey buildings, restaurants and shops as they looked before the war. During our visit to Sugihara House, we will learn about the remarkable story of the Japanese vice-consul who saved thousands of Jews during WW2 by issuing transit visas to them so that they could travel through Japanese territory. At the nearby killing fields of the Ninth Fort,

where thousands of Jews from Lithuania and other countries were murdered, we will visit the Holocaust museum and memorial. We will also see the synagogue and the Children's Memorial in its courtyard. On the way back to Vilnius we will visit the town of Ziezmari (Zhezhmer), a former *shtetl*, of which 60% of the population consisted of Jewish inhabitants at the turn of the 20th. In its market square we can see former Jewish houses and Ziezmari is also home to one of the very few still standing Eastern European wooden synagogues. Overnight in Vilnius.

DAY 6 – Tuesday 1 September

This morning we depart by coach for Białystok. On arrival, following a light lunch, we will tour Białystok's Jewish sites including: the area of the Jewish ghetto and the monument to the heroes of the ghetto uprising; the house and statue of Ludwik Zamenhoff, the creator of the Esperanto language; memorial of the Great Synagogue; the Hebrew Gymnasium in which all subjects were taught in Hebrew; the former Jewish hospital; the Jewish cemetery; the market square and the Branicki Palace.

In the late afternoon, the study session will focus on Jewish Poland's fascinating interwar period and will include a screening of "Five Cities," a short film chronicling Jewish life in Białystok, Cracow, Lwów, Vilna, and Warsaw on the eve of WW2. In 1938 and 1939, Shaul and Yitzhak Goskind of Warsaw-based Sektor Films visited these Jewish communities in an effort to record the vitality of interwar Jewish life in Poland. Little did the Goskinds suspect that their film recordings would be one of the last visual accounts of a once vibrant world. Following a dinner break in the hotel, we will learn about the terrible pogrom which occurred in July 1941 at Jedwabne, a mere hour's drive to the west of Białystok, and discuss why this event subsequently became a defining moment in Polish-Jewish relations, especially in the wake of the publication of Jan Gross' book, *Neighbors* Overnight in Białystok.

DAY 7 – Wednesday 2 September

This morning we depart for Warsaw, stopping en-route to pay our respects at the Treblinka extermination camp memorial. This evening we will have dinner at Warsaw's Jewish Community Centre, one of the institutions which is part of the revival of Jewish life in Poland today. We will have an opportunity to be in conversation with Agata Rakowiec, the Centre's young dynamic director, and with Stanisław Krajewski, professor of philosophy at Warsaw University. Stanisław will share his experience of living under both Communist and post-Communist rule in Poland and talk about the role which he played in the remarkable revival of Jewish life in Poland following the fall of Communism. Overnight in Warsaw.

DAY 8 – Thursday 3 September

Today we visit sites which focus on Warsaw's Jewish history, beginning with an exploration of the Old Town. The tour will include the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto where one can still see fragments of the Ghetto Wall; the Path of the Heroes, marked by stones with names of Jewish resistance leaders; the Rappaport Monument and the Umschlagplatz Monument, the site from which the big deportation was realized; the bunker of Jewish insurgents on former Miła 18 Street; the monument to Janusz Korczak who accompanied his Jewish orphans to meet his death in Treblinka; the remains of Nałęcz Street which once teemed with business life; Nożyk Synagogue, the only active synagogue in Warsaw; the Kaminska State Jewish Theatre; and the 200 year-old cemetery. We will also visit the Museum of the History of Polish Jews opposite the impressive Monument to the Ghetto Heroes.

In preparation for tomorrow's meeting with a group of Polish middle-school students, we will meet with a representative of the "Forum for Dialogue," an organization which works at fostering Polish-Jewish dialogue. Overnight in Warsaw.

DAY 9 – Friday 4 September

Today we will meet with a group of Polish teenagers and experience firsthand, the Forum's groundbreaking School of Dialogue, a program that encompasses 48 schools throughout Poland, reaching some 1200 students who have become "curators" of Jewish history in their home towns and cities. In the evening we will come together for dinner to celebrate the commencement of Shabbat. Overnight in Warsaw.



DAY 10 – Saturday 5 September

You will be free at your leisure until the late afternoon. The study session will focus on the life and death issues which were faced by Jewish leaders in the ghettos. In particular we will examine the dilemmas which confronted three renowned leaders of the *Judenrat*, the councils set up by the Nazis: Jacob Gans in Vilna, Adam Czerniakov in Warsaw and Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski in Lodz. We will also study responsa written by Rabbi Ephraim Oshry in the Kovno ghetto. Overnight in Warsaw.

DAY 11 – Sunday 6 September

On this day trip from Warsaw we will drive to Lodz, the former Jewish textile industrial capital. Our tour of Jewish Lodz we will encompass a number of sites: Ksiezy Mlyn, an industrial district where one gets the sense that time has stopped; the buildings of Karol Scheibler's factory, which in the 19th century formed a city within city, as well as the site of the factory of Israel Posnanski (the "king of cotton"), nowadays the site of *Manafaktura*, a shopping and entertainment centre; Poznanski's vast palace-house which became seat of the German local administration during WW2; the only remaining pre-WWII synagogue built between 1895 and 1900 which survived simply because it was used for storing salt; the remarkable Jewish cemetery on Bracka Street which is preserved in its pre-war state; Radegast railway station, once the departure point for the death camps of Chelmno and Auschwitz. The tour will also include the area of the former Litzmannstadt Ghetto, one of the most remarkable ghettos in Poland because of the actions of Rumkowski, the infamous head of the Judenrat in Lodz about whom we will have more to say in a subsequent study session. Overnight in Warsaw.



DAY 12 – Monday 7 September

This morning we depart for Lublin, the biggest Polish city on the eastern side of the Vistula River and throughout the ages a very important centre of Jewish culture and the Yiddish language. On the way we will stop in Kazimierz Dolny, located on the banks of Poland's largest river, the Vistula. Kazimierz Dolny is an art centre and we will enjoy a short tour of this picturesque town with its beautiful natural scenery and also see the former C18th synagogue building.

Our late afternoon study session will focus on the theme of Jewish resistance during the Shoah. Dinner in the hotel will be followed by a screening of *Escape from Sobibor*, a depiction of the most successful uprising and mass breakout in any Nazi camp. The film is an adaptation of a book of the same name written by Richard Rashke who interviewed 18 of the 53 known survivors of Sobibor. The film also presents a graphic portrayal of concentration camp life, adding a tiny touch of reality to our visit tomorrow to Majdanek. Overnight in Lublin.

DAY 13 – Tuesday 8 September

This morning we visit the nearby Majdanek concentration camp. The camp, which operated from 1941 until 1944, was captured nearly intact by the Red Army and remains the best preserved Nazi concentration camp. Returning to Lublin, we will see the Old Town with its impressive Krakow Gate dating back to the 14th century, the Town Hall, as well as the 13th Dominican church and monastery. One of the most important historical artefacts to be found in Lublin is the priceless set of Russo-Byzantine frescoes in the Holy Trinity Chapel, located within the fortified walls of Lublin Castle. Our tour of Lublin will continue with a focus on the city's Jewish heritage, commencing at Castle Square. The history of Lublin's Jewry is closely connected with the Castle, which sat like an island in the original Jewish Quarter. During WW II it was a prison, whose inmates included Jews found in public places without an armband marked with the Star of David. We will visit the Old Kirkut Cemetery and the New Jewish Cemetery, as well the building of the prewar Academy of the Lublin Sages (Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin). The only synagogue not destroyed during WW II is the Synagogue of the Chevra Nossim Funeral Society, which we will also visit. Overnight in Lublin.



DAY 14 – Wednesday 9 September

Departing Lublin, we will head southward through countryside formerly covered with many *shtetlach* in the heartland of Poland's "Hasidic Route." On the way we will learn about the Hasidim and their opponents, the Mitnagdim, amongst whom the Vilna Gaon was a leading figure; and of the eventual rapprochement between the two groups because of their common opposition to the secular Maskilim who championed the Haskalah. We will also navigate the complex maze that comprised the yeshiva world of Eastern Europe.

On our arrival at Leżajsk we will visit the Jewish cemetery and the grave of Elimelech, one of the great founding Rebbes of the Hasidic movement who was responsible for the dissemination of Hasidism in Poland. His grave is a site of pilgrimage for thousands of Hasidim, particularly on the anniversary of his death. In Lancut we will see the ornately decorated Baroque synagogue with its Judaica collection, as well as the beautiful Potocki gardens. Continuing onto Tarnow, we will stop for a short visit to the old town and also see the only remaining part of Tarnow's oldest brick synagogue which was destroyed by the Nazis in 1939. We then head towards Krakow for the final stage of our journey, Overnight in Krakow.

DAY 15 – Thursday 10 September

Today's tour of Krakow's Jewish heritage will focus on the Kazimierz district with its seven synagogues, among them Rema Synagogue of Rabbi Moses Isserles, the renowned 16th Talmudist and halachic scholar who adapted Joseph Caro's great Jewish legal code, the Shulchan Aruch, for the needs of Polish Jewry. In the old cemetery we will see his grave. We will also visit the old market square as well as the Ghetto Heroes square and finish the day at the Oscar Schindler factory museum. We will also have an opportunity to meet with Jonathan Ornstein, director of Krakow's Jewish community center, Overnight in Krakow.

DAY 16 – Friday 11 September

Very early this morning we will depart early for Auschwitz/Oswiecim. Established in 1940 as a concentration camp for Polish political prisoners, in 1942, Auschwitz became the focal point for the extermination of European Jews. Between 1940-1945, the Nazis killed about 1,500,000 here, mainly Jews but also Poles, POWs, Gypsies, Russians, and other nationals. The visit begins in Auschwitz 1, with a guided tour of various exhibits in some of the surviving prison blocks, the gas chamber, and the crematorium. After a short break, we continue to the second part of the complex, Birkenau/Auschwitz II, where we will ascend the watchtower above the entrance gate to catch a glimpse of this largest of all Nazi extermination camps. It is at Birkenau that one gets to fully appreciate the sheer scale of the killing operation at Auschwitz. After our visit to Birkenau, we will proceed for lunch and a "debriefing" session at the Auschwitz Jewish Centre located in the heart of Oswiecim.

This evening we will celebrate the commencement of Shabbat with a communal meal at Krakow's Jewish Community Centre. Overnight in Krakow.

DAY 17 – Saturday 12 September

This morning we will meet with Professor Slawomir Kapralski, a sociologist from the Pedagogical University of Krakow. He will discuss the evolution of attitudes towards and public discourse about the Holocaust in Polish society. He will also present an analysis of some of the difficult questions in Polish-Jewish relations.

In the afternoon, our walking tour will encompass various sites of general interest in Krakow. We will commence at the Old Town and head up to the Castle and Cathedral on Wawel Hill. Sticking to the Royal Route, we will proceed down Kanonicza and Grodzka Streets to see the ancient Jagiellonian university area, and then a gentle walk takes us through the largest mediaeval square in Europe. Overnight in Krakow.

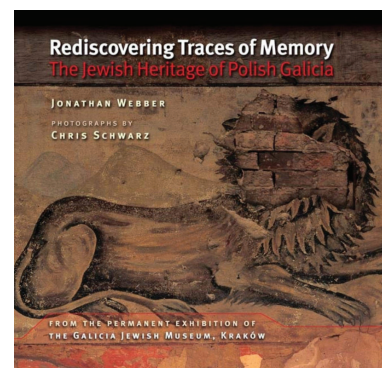


DAY 18 – Sunday 13 September

On this final day of our tour, we will visit the Galician Jewish Museum where we will see the internationally acclaimed permanent photographic exhibition, *Traces of Memory*, which presents a contemporary and thought-provoking perspective on Jewish Poland which reflects various issues and processes rooted in the past, but also influencing the future. This will be followed by a farewell lunch at the museum. The rest of the afternoon will be free at your leisure. Overnight in Krakow.

DAY 19 – Monday 14 September

Hotel checkout.



Hotel information

Vilnius: Congress Avenue Hotel

<https://www.congressavenue.lt/en>

Bialystok: Branicki

<http://www.hotelbranicki.com.pl/en>

Warsaw: Sofitel

<https://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-3378-sofitel-warsaw-victoria/index.shtml>

Lublin: Wieniawski

<http://www.hotelwieniawski.pl/en>

Krakow: Vienna House Andel's Hotel

<https://www.viennahouse.com/en/andels-cracow/the-hotel/overview.html>

The above hotels may be subject to revision depending on room availability at the time of making reservations. However, if bookings will need to be made for alternative hotels, they will be of a similar standard to the above.

REFER TO THE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR TERMS AND CONDITIONS, ACCEPTANCE OF WHICH YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO INDICATE UPON REGISTRATION.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Touring can involve a considerable amount of walking and stair climbing in places visited and it is important that tour participants have a level of physical fitness that allows them to take part in such activities without the need of assistance from others.
2. Jerulita Tours (Vilnius, Lithuania) is responsible for making arrangements for the tour services offered here, including transportation, sightseeing, meals and hotel accommodation. FBI Travel acts only as agents for passengers in facilitating payment to Jerulita Tours. Accordingly Jerulita Tours (Vilnius, Lithuania) cannot accept liability for any act of omission, whether negligent or otherwise of those carriers, hoteliers or others providing services in connection with the tour over whom we have no direct or exclusive control.
3. Jewish Museum of Australia (JMA) and FBI Travel do not accept responsibility for any damage to property or person(s) incurred during the course of this tour.
4. JMA and Jerulita Tours (Vilnius, Lithuania) are not liable and accept no responsibility for any direct or indirect loss, financial loss, consequential loss, loss of enjoyment, pain & suffering, damage, injury, accident, delay or irregularity occasioned to the individual, whether caused by act, omission, negligence or otherwise while participating in this tour.
5. JMA and FBI Travel strongly recommend that individuals insure themselves against medical expenses and loss of personal possessions, and any other foreseeable loss or expense.
6. It is the responsibility of tour participants to obtain suitable advice from a recognised health authority regarding any vaccinations or applicable health precautions.
7. Tour participants are responsible for ensuring that they have a valid passports, visa and permits which meet the immigration and governmental requirements of the country of travel. Passports must be valid for at least six months upon return into Australia from overseas travel.
8. Before travelling overseas JMA and Jerulita Tours (Vilnius, Lithuania) recommend you to register your travel and contact details online or at the local Australian embassy, high commission or consulate once you arrive so you can be contacted in an emergency.
9. Upon registration, payment will be required of a \$2000 deposit **per person**. Payment of the single supplement will be added to the final instalment. For each instalment you will be invoiced for the equivalent Australian dollar amount based on the exchange rate at the time of invoicing. FBI Travel reserves the right to slightly vary the equivalent Australian dollar amount, as a buffer for any increase in the rate from point of invoice to paying the Lithuanian supplier.
10. For Melbourne participants: as membership of the Jewish Museum of Australia is a requirement for registration. See page 2 above for further details. For those who are not paid up members, the Museum membership fee will be added to the final instalment at the time of invoicing.
11. In order for this tour to proceed on the basis of the quoted price, we will need firm commitments from a minimum of 15 people. You are therefore advised not to make any flight bookings until you are advised that the tour is definitely proceeding.
12. Deposits will be held by FBI Travel until the first instalment is transferred to Jerulita Tours in Vilnius, after which time deposits and subsequent payments will not be refunded if you wish to cancel your registration. Deposits held by FBI Travel will be returned if the tour does not go ahead due to lack of numbers.
13. Places on the tour are strictly limited and will be filled in order of receipt of registration forms. Successful applicants will be notified once the tour group is filled. Prospective tour participants should not make any flight arrangements until advised that the tour is definitely proceeding and that their registrations have been accepted.