

Professor Natan Meir Traveling University Tour to Poland & Lithuania June 2017

(Ending at Krakow's Jewish Culture Festival)

(As of 10/24/16)

Led by the engaging and enlightening **Prof. Natan Meir**, we'll uncover the stories of Poland & Lithuania. Stroll through former Jewish neighborhoods, marvel at stunning synagogues, and wander centuries-old cemeteries as we bring the past to life through historical documents, poetry, and photographs. Visit exciting new institutions such as the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews and the Shtetl Education and Museum Center in Chmielnik. Prof. Meir's presentations and touring commentary help create an immersive educational experience that won't soon be forgotten.



Day 1, Monday, June 12, 2017: Departure

- We depart the United States on our overnight flight to Vilnius.

Day 2, Tuesday, June 13, 2017: WELCOME TO VILNIUS

- Arrive in **Vilnius**, our capital of Lithuania and a city that holds great significance for Lithuanians, Poles, and Jews.
- Check into our hotel.
- We enjoy an afternoon tour of **Cathedral Square** and **Old Town Vilnius** with their medieval cobblestone streets and stunning Baroque architecture, including the medieval **Cathedral**, **Gediminas Tower**, **Vilnius University**, **Dawn Gate**, and the old **Jewish quarter**. At the site of the former **Great Synagogue**, we will draw on contemporary accounts to imagine its vanished splendor.
- Tonight we enjoy an orientation lecture and **welcome dinner with Professor Natan Meir**.

O/N Vilnius

Day 3, Wednesday, June 14, 2017: VILNIUS

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Morning lecture with Prof. Meir.
- We begin with a visit to the **Vilna Gaon Jewish Museum**, with exhibits on Jewish life in



Vilnius, and the **Choral Synagogue**, built in 1903 in Romanesque-Moorish style and the only functioning synagogue in the city.

- Our tour continues in the former **Nazi-era ghetto**, where we will stop to read accounts from war-era diaries.
- This afternoon we visit the controversial **Genocide Museum**, devoted to the oppression of Lithuanians under Soviet rule.
- **Dinner** at the **Jewish Community Center** together with members of the local Jewish community.

O/N Vilnius

Day 4, Thursday, June 15, 2017: VILNIUS



- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Morning lecture with Prof. Meir.
- We start our day with a visit to a complex of buildings just outside the **Old Town** that were built as subsidized housing for poor Jews by Baron de Hirsch in the early 20th century, and later used as ghetto housing by the Nazis.
- We then travel to a Vilnius suburb that is the site of the **Ponar Forest**, a mass murder site during the Holocaust. Here we see the museum and memorial and pay tribute to the 70,000 Jews massacred at this spot.
- We continue on to the picturesque lakeside town of **Trakai**, medieval capital of Lithuania and home to one of the only Karaite Jewish communities in Eastern Europe. We visit the Karaite museum.

O/N Vilnius

Day 5, Friday, June 16, 2017: THE ROAD TO WARSAW

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Lecture with Prof. Meir on the bus.
- We continue on towards the Polish border, traveling through what was once the heartland of Jewish *Lite* (Lithuania). After crossing into Poland, we stop in the town of **Sejny** for a visit to the restored neo-Baroque synagogue, which houses the **Borderland Foundation**, a cultural center and museum dedicated to promoting and documenting the cultures of the region: Polish, Lithuanian, Jewish, Belarusian, and Russian.
- Our next step is the charming town of **Tykocin**, home to a stunning **17th-century Baroque synagogue**. Lunch options include a restaurant serving Ashkenazi-Jewish-style food.



- We continue to **Warsaw**.
- Check into our hotel.
- This evening, we enjoy **Shabbat services** at **Beit Warszawa**, Warsaw's Progressive synagogue, and **dinner** with members of the community.

O/N Warsaw

Day 6, Saturday, June 17, 2017: WARSAW

- Breakfast at our hotel. Shabbat Shalom!
- This morning, we invite you to join us for optional Shabbat services at the **Nożyk Synagogue**, Warsaw's only surviving synagogue from the prewar period.
- This afternoon, we enjoy a walking tour of Warsaw's **Old Town** and tour of the **Royal Castle**, after which you are free to explore the sights of the capital's Royal Route or visit the impressive **Warsaw Uprising Museum**.
- We attend a **concert of Chopin** together this evening.

O/N Warsaw

Day 7, Sunday, June 18, 2017: WARSAW

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Morning lecture with Prof. Meir.
- This morning we enjoy a guided tour of the new and much celebrated **Museum of the History of Polish Jews**, also known as the POLIN Museum.
- From the museum, we set out on the Route of Martyrdom and Struggle, a series of monuments commemorating aspects of life in the **Warsaw Ghetto**, the largest ghetto in Nazi Europe. The route ends at **Umschlagplatz**, from where Warsaw's Jews were deported to the Treblinka death camp.
- We continue to the unforgettable **Okopowa Jewish cemetery**, one of the largest in Europe and home to many splendid tombstone monuments of prominent cultural and religious figures.
- We end our day with a tour of the **Nożyk Synagogue** and a visit to one of the only remaining sections of the **Warsaw Ghetto Wall**.



O/N Warsaw



Day 8, Monday, June 19, 2017: LODZ

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We set out for **Łódź**, about a two-hour drive from Warsaw. Lecture with Prof. Meir on the bus. Jews played a major role in the city's rapid growth in the 19th century to become Poland's manufacturing capital.
- We tour the **Museum of the City of Łódź**, housed in the palatial residence of the Poznański family, the wealthiest Jewish family in Łódź.
- We continue on to the **Factory Museum**, showcasing Łódź's industrial past, and enjoy the **Manufaktura complex**, a huge shopping and entertainment complex set in a renovated 19th-century textile mill.
- This afternoon, we set out on a walking tour of the former **Jewish ghetto**, the last ghetto in occupied Poland to be liquidated (1944), and bring history to life with readings from the diary of a teenage boy, Dawid Sierakowiak, who did not survive the war.
- We visit the **Radegast Station**, the deportation point for the ghetto's Jews to the killing center of Chelmno and now the site of a moving memorial.

O/N Warsaw

Day 9, Tuesday, June 20, 2017: TO LUBLIN

- Breakfast at our hotel.



- Check out of our hotel.
- We depart for Lublin. Lecture with Prof. Meir on the bus.
- On the way, we stop in the town of **Otwock**, a former Jewish health resort, and visit the ruins of the former Jewish psychiatric hospital, where Prof. Meir will share the results of his extensive research into the lives of the Jewish mentally ill in Eastern Europe.
 - We continue on to **Lublin**, one of the oldest urban Jewish settlements in Poland and an important center of Jewish religious, cultural, and political life. We tour the former (and newly restored) **Chachmei Lublin Yeshiva** and the **Old and New Jewish Cemeteries** (the former with gravestones dating to the 16th century).
- We continue with a visit to the **Brama Grozdka -- NN Theatre**, an organization dedicated to preserving the Jewish heritage of Lublin through educational and cultural activities. We view the exhibition on Jewish Lublin and hear about Brama Grozdka's activities from its leaders.
- This afternoon, we visit **Majdanek**, a concentration and death camp in the Lublin suburbs, where gas chambers, crematoria, and barracks still stand.
- Check into our hotel.



O/N Lublin

Day 10, Wednesday, June 21, 2017: LUBLIN

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Lecture with Prof. Meir on the bus.
- Today we visit several former shtetls in eastern Poland. Our first stop is **Lęczna**, where we visit the 17th-century former **Great Synagogue**, recently returned to Jewish communal ownership.
- We continue to **Zamość**, a stunning example of Renaissance town planning, where we tour the beautiful Old Town with its Great Market Square and restored synagogue.
- We continue on to **Szczebrzeszyn** with its 17th-century former synagogue and medieval Jewish cemetery, and from there to **Frampol**, where the Jewish cemetery was recently rededicated. We meet with local schoolchildren who cleaned the cemetery and help to maintain it.

O/N Lublin

Day 11, Thursday, June 22, 2017: TO KRAKOW

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Check out of our hotel.
- Lecture with Prof. Meir on the bus.
- We depart for Krakow. En route we stop in **Sandomierz**, a charming city with great significance in Polish history. We tour the Old Town, including the former synagogue and cathedral with its notorious depiction of the blood libel myth.
- We continue on to **Chmielnik**, where the municipal government has renovated the former synagogue as an impressive museum of Jewish history and culture. We enjoy a tour of the museum and Old Town.
- Our day's journey ends in **Krakow**, where we check into our hotel and enjoy the evening at leisure in the spectacular medieval Old Town.



O/N Krakow



Day 12, Friday, June 23, 2017: AUSCHWITZ



- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Morning lecture with Prof. Meir.
- **OPTION A:** Today we take part in a tour to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, the largest Nazi concentration and extermination camp, now a state memorial and museum. We tour Auschwitz I, which includes the prison block and museum exhibits, including a new exhibit on the camp's Jewish victims, and then Auschwitz II-Birkenau, site of the gas chambers. We continue on to the neighboring town of **Oświęcim**, where the newly dedicated **Auschwitz Jewish Center** houses a museum depicting Jewish life

in the town and a functioning synagogue.

OR

- **OPTION B:** For those who have visited Auschwitz previously, options include a tour of the **Wieliczka Salt Mine** and the Socialist Realist suburb of Nowa Huta.
- This evening we gather for Shabbat services and **dinner at the Krakow JCC.**

O/N Krakow

Day 13, Saturday, June 24, 2017: SHABBAT IN KRAKOW

- Breakfast at our hotel. Shabbat Shalom!
- Enjoy the morning at leisure - you may choose to attend Shabbat services at one of the synagogues in the Kazimierz Jewish district or enjoy a **walking tour of Krakow's Old Town**, including Wawel Castle, the Jagiellonian University, and the Market Square, Europe's largest. Alternatively, you may want to sample the offerings of the opening day of Krakow's renowned **Jewish Culture Festival**.
- This afternoon, we set out for a tour of **Jewish Krakow**, including picturesque **Kazimierz** with its many synagogues, Jewish museum, and Jewish-themed restaurants and shops, and **Podgórze**, site of the former ghetto and Schindler's Factory.
- We enjoy a special **farewell dinner** together this evening, as we recount all we have experienced.

O/N Krakow



Day 14, Sunday, June 25, 2017: DEPARTURE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We transfer to the airport for our flight home.

(Contact Ayelet Tours for information on a Krakow extension for more time to enjoy the Jewish Culture Festival.)

The Memories Last Forever!

**Itinerary subject to change*

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