

The Community Synagogue's
Tour of
CENTRAL EUROPE

Berlin * Prague * Warsaw * Krakow

Led by Rabbi Irwin Zepowitz

May 7-19, 2023

(As of 9/3/22)

Jewish history in Europe neither begins nor ends with the Holocaust. Together we will explore 1,000 years of Jewish history. We'll confront the horrors of the past, experience the nascent Jewish renewal of the present, and discuss the challenges that face a Jewish future in Europe.



Day 1: Sunday, May 7, 2023: DEPARTURE

- We depart New York on our overnight flight to Germany.

Day 2: Monday, May 8, 2023: ARRIVAL IN BERLIN

- This morning, we arrive in **Berlin**, Germany's capital, reunited in 1989, and home of Germany's largest Jewish community. We are met at the airport by our local guide and begin our tour.
- We visit the **Frank Meissler monument** to the Berlin Wall, then stop for a photo opportunity at **Checkpoint Charlie**, the old border crossing between East and West Berlin.
- Next, we view the **Reichstag**, the meeting place of Germany's Bundestag, the lower house of the nation's legislature, first passing by the famed **Brandenburg Gate** along the way.
- This afternoon, we check into our hotel and have a chance to refresh.
- We continue with a visit to the largest open-air gallery in the world, Berlin Wall's **East Side Gallery**, a 1.3km-long section of the wall near the center of Berlin. Approximately 106 paintings by artists from all over the world cover this memorial for freedom.
- Late afternoon time to either relax or stroll on the main shopping thoroughfare of **Bikini Berlin**.
- Tonight, we enjoy a **welcome dinner** together at our hotel.

Overnight in Berlin

Day 3: Tuesday, May 9, 2023: JEWISH BERLIN

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we visit the insightful **Topography of Terror Museum**, built on the site of the former SS and Gestapo headquarters.
- We see **Potsdamer Platz**, known as "no man's land" and the current site of major redevelopment projects, followed by a stop to view the striking **Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (Holocaust Memorial)**.
- Next, we enjoy a walking tour along **Hamburger Strasse** to view the **Residential Monument** and **Moses Mendelssohn's grave**, as well as visit the **Burning of the Book Memorial at Bebelplatz**. This memorial was created by Israeli sculptor Micha Ullman and dedicated to the remembrance of the book burning that took place 90 years ago.
- We depart for the **Mitte**, Berlin's historic center district. Here, we stop to view the **Rosenstrasse Memorial**, site of a significant peaceful protest by Aryan wives and relatives of Jewish Germans rounded up for deportation.
- We continue with a visit to the small but fascinating **Otto Weidt Museum & Workshop for the Blind**. During the Second World War, the brush manufacturer and righteous gentile Otto Weidt employed many blind and deaf Jews who produced brooms and brushes here in a heroic effort to save them.
- We walk through the **Hackesche Hofe Courtyard**, which hosts over 40 business, including a cinema, cafes, shops and apartments, and is one of Berlin's most popular areas for nightlife!
- Later this afternoon, we visit the beautiful **Rykestrasse Synagogue**, Germany's largest, reopened 70 years after being damaged severely during Kristallnacht (pending security confirmation).



- This evening, we enjoy **dinner** together at a local restaurant.
- Those who wish may return to the Mitte to explore the unique nightlife now thriving in Berlin's former Jewish district or attend a possible evening performance (separate cost).

Overnight in Berlin

Day 4: Wednesday, May 10, 2023: THE ROAD TO POTSDAM

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we travel outside Berlin, viewing many important historical sites along the way.
- First, we visit **Wannsee Villa**, site of the infamous "Final Solution" decision, with its memorial museum across the **Glienicke Bridge**, a famous exchange point for Soviet spies during the Cold War.
- We continue to **Potsdam**, stopping for lunch on our own en route.
- Following lunch, we visit the **Zacharias Frankel College**, where many prospective rabbis come to study Jewish texts and train to become Masorti/Conservative rabbis. The graduates from this college are the first to become ordained as rabbis in Germany since WWII.
- Next, we continue to the **Cecilienhof Palace**, site of the Potsdam Conference, where Allied leaders met in 1945 to decide the fate of Germany, which had surrendered weeks earlier.
- We drive by the **Palace of Sanssouci**, with time for a brief photo stop before returning to Berlin.
- On our way, we stop at the **Grunewald Train Station**, site of the deportation of the majority of Berlin's Jews, and view **Gleis (Track) 17**, the memorial to the deported.
- Enjoy dinner on own.
- Later, tonight, we attend an evening concert at the **Berlin Cathedral** (pending confirmation).

Overnight in Berlin

Day 5: Thursday, May 11, 2023: BERLIN TO PRAGUE

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we depart Berlin and board the **train to Prague**, the Czech capital, also known as "the City of One Thousand Spires," with its Baroque churches, promenades, parks and ancient city walls. (Our luggage will be transferred by bus).
- We meet our local guide and cross the **Charles Bridge**, stopping to see the **Astronomical Clock** on the way to the **Old Town Square**. Here, we see the statue of the Czech revolutionary, **Jan Hus**, who reformed the Czech universities and inspired the Hussites, who rebelled against Catholic doctrine.
- We check into our hotel and have time to refresh, then set out to explore and enjoy dinner on own.



Overnight in Prague



Day 6: Friday, May 12, 2023: DAY TRIP TO TEREZIN

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we travel to **Terezin**, the former “model” Nazi concentration camp. We visit the **fortress, Jewish cemetery, museum, the hidden synagogue** and the **memorial monument**. While here, we see the plaque dedicated in memory of **Regina Jonas**, the first woman ordained a rabbi. We’ll also hear stories and see photos of some of the great rabbis imprisoned here, including **Leo Baeck**.
- We enjoy a **boxed lunch** en route.
- Before returning, we stop for a special reflection on the 15,000 children imprisoned in Terezin.
- We return to Prague for a chance to relax and process today’s visit.
- Tonight, as the sun sets, we join progressive congregation **Ec Chajim** led by **Rabbi David Maxa**, the first Czech born rabbi since World War II, for **Shabbat services** followed by **Shabbat dinner** with members of the community.

Overnight in Prague

Day 7: Saturday, May 13, 2023: SHABBAT SHALOM!

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we enjoy a tour of Golden Prague at the 1,000-year-old **Hradčany Castle**. We stroll down the **Golden Lane**, consisting of small brightly painted houses, souvenir shops and a museum of medieval armory as our guide tells us stories about **Franz Kafka**, the famous Jewish author who lived in a home near the bottom of the hill with his sister for a short period of time.
- Next, we visit **Petrin Hill** and the **Petrin Lookout Tower**, built as a mini version of the Eiffel Tower in 1891 for the Jubilee Exhibition. Those who venture to the top are rewarded with a magnificent view overlooking the city.
- We complete our tour at the **John Lennon Wall**, filled with ever-changing artistic graffiti, Beatles lyrics and designs pertaining to important global causes.
- Evening at leisure and dinner on own tonight.



Overnight in Prague



Day 8: Sunday, May 14, 2023: JEWISH PRAGUE/WELCOME TO POLAND!

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we set out to tour the **Josefov**, Prague's Jewish town, where we see the **Old Town Hall**, the **Alt-Neu Synagogue**, the **Pinkas Synagogue**, the **Maisel Synagogue**, the **Jewish cemetery** and the **State Jewish Museum**. The area, site of the former Jewish ghetto of Prague, offers a unique window into the past.
- This afternoon, we transfer to the airport for our short flight to **Warsaw, Poland**.
- Upon our arrival, we check into our hotel and have a chance to freshen up.
- This evening, we meet for **dinner** with members of the **JCC Warsaw's Boker Tov Club**, that usually meets every Sunday for brunch and community togetherness.

Overnight in Warsaw

Day 9: Sunday, May 15, 2023: DISCOVERING WARSAW

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we enjoy a **city tour of Warsaw**, including **Chopin's Monument**, the **Royal Castle**, the **Jewish Historical Society**, and walk to **Old Town Market Square** and **Lazienki Park**.
- This afternoon, our sightseeing tour encompasses the **Nozyk Synagogue** (the only surviving synagogue in Warsaw, founded in 1900), the **Warsaw Ghetto**, the **Jewish Resistance Bunker at Mila 18**, the **Stawski Street buildings** (where the SS had their headquarters) and the **Gesia Cemetery** (established in 1806, containing the graves of about 250,000 people and known as the largest cemetery in Poland).
- Next, we enjoy a guided visit of the **POLIN Museum (The New Museum of the History of Polish Jews)**. The Hebrew word Polin means either Poland or "rest here" in English and is related to a legend of the arrival of the first Jews in Poland. The museum sits on the former site of the Warsaw Ghetto and features multi-media narrative exhibitions about the vibrant Jewish community that has flourished in Poland for a thousand years.
- Tonight, we meet with members of the **local progressive congregation** in Warsaw.
- Afterwards, we set out for dinner and exploration on our own.

Overnight in Warsaw



Day 10: Monday, May 16, 2023: DIALOGUE FOR CHANGE/TRACING THE PAST

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, drive to the **Warsaw Zoo**, where we visit the **Zookeeper's house** owned by the couple that saved many Jews during the Holocaust, now memorialized in the movie "*The Zookeeper's Wife*".
- Next, we enjoy a discussion with representatives from the **Forum for Dialogue**, an organization dedicated to inspiring new connections between contemporary Poland and the Jewish people. Pending confirmation, we meet with some of the children from the local community.
- Next, we join the artist collaboration **Mi Polin** for a moving tour through **Warsaw's Praga District** to discover the traces of pre-War Jewish history by **following the outlines of mezuzahs** that once adorned the doorways throughout the neighborhood.
- We drive to **Krakow** this afternoon. Upon arrival, we check into our hotel and freshen up.
- Tonight, we enjoy **dinner** with guest speaker **Jonathan Ornstein**, Executive Director of the **Krakow JCC**, who updates us on the many exciting projects they have undertaken in what is now a growing and flourishing Jewish community in the heart of Galicia and became a center for Ukrainian refugee support after the war began.



Overnight in Krakow

Day 11: Tuesday, May 17, 2023: FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we travel to **Auschwitz-Birkenau**, the infamous Nazi concentration camp, where many Jews and others perished in WWII. Here, we see the museum and pay tribute to the victims.
- Before Auschwitz became the ultimate symbol of the Holocaust, it was an ordinary Polish town known as Oswiecim with the majority of its citizens being Jews. We have a group conversation and short **memorial service** at the **Oswiecim Jewish Center** on the site of one of the many pre-Holocaust synagogues.
- We return to Krakow for a quiet evening and dinner on own.

Overnight in Krakow



Day 12: Wednesday, May 18, 2023: EXPLORING JEWISH KRAKOW

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, see the **Wawel Castle**, **St. Mary's Church**, the **Renaissance Cloth Hall** and other ancient landmarks.
- We continue with a **Jewish heritage walking tour** beginning in the old Jewish district known as **Kazimierz**, where we see the **Old Synagogue** (a massive fortress-like building erected in the 15th and 16th centuries), the **"Temple"** and the **Remuh Synagogue**.
- We drive by the site of the **Plaszow Concentration Camp**, then continue past **Schindler's Factory** and the **Little Museum at the Drugstore**.
- This evening, we enjoy a festive **farewell dinner**, recalling all the amazing experiences we have had on this journey together.

Overnight in Krakow

Day 13: Thursday, May 19, 2023: FAREWELL

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.

The Memories Last Forever!!

**Itinerary subject to change*

