

# *A Custom Designed Itinerary*

## *Jewish Heritage Tour: Poland & Lithuania*

*By*

### *IN QUEST OF THE CLASSICS*

**Day 1: KRAKOW.** Midday arrival at Krakow airport. Transfer to the hotel. Late afternoon departure for *Kazimierz* – the Jewish Quarter of Krakow. Kazimierz, the heart of Jewish Krakow, is now a thriving district, a mixture of cultural festivals, cafés, antique shops, art galleries, restaurants and bars; a place to watch the world go by over a coffee. Visit the Old Synagogue (the oldest synagogue in Poland, the original building was built at the beginning of the 15th century), and Remuh Synagogue and Old Cemetery. *Dinner at one of Kazimierz Jewish style restaurants. Live Optional: Klezmer music to be performed during dinner.*

**Day 2: KRAKOW.** Morning visit of *Krakow's former Jewish Ghetto*. The Krakow Ghetto was created on 3 March 1941 when Otto Wachter was the Krakow District Governor. The ghetto was situated in the Podgorze district of Krakow and eventually housed 20,000 Jews; not just from Krakow, but also from neighbouring communities. Prior to the establishment of the ghetto, this same area had housed approximately 3,000 people. Visit Lwowska Street to see the part of the original ghetto wall, as well as the Tadeusz Pankiewicz pharmacy located within the ghetto. Visit the Oscar Schindler factory; the man and his story were made famous by Spielberg's film, *Schindler's List*.

Afternoon tour to *Auschwitz* with a short stop near the Plaszow Forced Labour Camp. On arrival, visit the Auschwitz Death Camp. Established by the Nazis in 1940, the camp was originally used to hold Polish political prisoners. Later, Soviet prisoners of war were imprisoned there, as well as prisoners of other nationalities. However, within two years it became the centerpiece of Hitler's mass extermination plan of European Jews. The site at Auschwitz is known for its infamous gate "Arbeit macht frei", and consists of former prison blocks, as well as blocks used by the Germans. The blocks are now used to hold permanent exhibitions to the victims of the Holocaust.

**Day 3: KRAKOW / LANUT / LUBLIN.** Departure to Lublin. Visit the *four-pillared masonry synagogue in Lancut* built around 1726 to replace a wooden synagogue which had been destroyed by a fire. The synagogue was constructed near the grounds of the palace of Polish nobleman, Count Potocki - the protector of the Jews in the Lancut region. The Lancut synagogue survived World War II. During the war, and for a few years after the war, it was used as a store. It was restored and has been a regional Jewish museum since the 1960s. Afterwards visit to the Lancut Palace. It is one of the most beautiful aristocratic residences in Poland, famous for its excellent interiors and extraordinarily interesting collection of horse-drawn carriages. The palace complex is surrounded by an old and picturesque park in the English style, filled with pavilions and farm buildings, all part of the former daily life of the castle. Later, arrive in Lublin for overnight.

**Day 4: LUBLIN / KAZIMIERZ DOLNY / WARSAW.** Morning visit to the *Majdanek Death Camp*. The camp, built from autumn 1941, was initially called Kriegsgefangenenlager der Waffen SS Lublin – a camp for prisoners of war -, and in February 1943 was renamed Konzentrationslager Lublin –a concentration camp. The official functions of a POW camp and concentration camp did not exhaust the tasks allocated to Majdanek by the German authorities.

Later a brief *tour of Lublin*. The tour is very much a search for the lost world. Lublin became one of the main centres of the Chassidic movement, thanks to its charismatic leader, Ha Choze (the Seer). The renowned Academy of the Sages, established by Meir Shapiro in 1930, was the swan song of Lublinian Jews, who represented one third of the city's population before the outbreak of WW2. The tour takes in all the most important remnants of the Jewish community in Lublin: the Old Cemetery (with graves of Maharshal, Ha Choze mi Lublin, dating back to XVI century) and the Rabbi's Academy ( Yeshirah Hahmey) Early afternoon departure for *Kazimierz Dolny*. The first information of a Jewish settlement in Kazimierz Dolny (in Yiddish Kuzmir) dates back to the year 1406. The town, situated on the bank of the Vistula river, was involved in rafting of wood and wheat, and that was the factor conducive to the development of a local Jewish community. Szmul Jakubowicz Zbytkower, a well known Jewish rich person and a money-lender to King Stanisław August Poniatowski, ran his business here. In 1827 tzadik Ezechieł ben Cwi-Hirsch Taub, a pupil of famous Jakub Icchak Horowitz - "the Seer of Lublin"- moved to the town. His court in Kazimierz attracted many hassids who believed in the miraculous power of the tzadik. Visit the synagogue and the beautiful Old Town called “Pearl of the Polish renaissance” before continuing to Warsaw.

**Day 5: WARSAW.** Today's *tour of Warsaw* includes the Jewish Cemetery. In spite of sporadic disrepair and neglect, this remains a beautiful and poignant place to visit. The cemetery was originally founded in 1806 and currently houses around 250,000 tombs. Amongst those buried here are Ludwik Zamenhof, inventor of the ill-fated language, Esperanto. Continue with a visit to the Jewish Historical Institute, focusing entirely on the study of the history and culture of the Polish Jews. It houses permanent and temporary exhibits relating to secular and religious Jewish life in the country, from its beginnings to the annihilation of the Jews in Poland during WWII, and beyond. As well as an excellent bookshop, the institute's museum, opened in 1948, features a large interactive display in the entrance hall that allows its users to find out about Jewish life in any part of the country, the extraordinary Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943 exhibition, religious treasures, an archive and a small cinema. The tour also includes: the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, Nozyk Synagogue, the area of the Ghetto and the Umschlagplatz, as well as Warsaw's Old Town area.

**Day 6: WARSAW / VILNIUS.** Transfer to Warsaw airport for a flight to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Arrival in Vilnius. Transfer to hotel. Accommodation. Afternoon visit to the *Jewish State Museum* telling a tragic story of the Jewish community in Lithuania.

*OPTIONAL: Concert of the Jewish music*

**Day 7: VILNIUS.** Morning *Vilnius city tour* includes all the major architectural and historic monuments of Lithuania's capital city, among them the former sites of the Ghetto and the Great Synagogue, the street named after the Vilnius Gaon – the pious and enlightened Rabbi who led the orthodox in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the Jewish street. Afternoon tour to Paneriai, southeast of Vilnius, the place of the Vilnius Jewry's mass extermination by the Nazi.

*OPTIONAL: Dinner with members of the Jewish Community*

**Day 8: VILNIUS / TRAKAI / VILNIUS.** Enjoy a pleasant morning 28 km drive to Trakai, the ancient capital of Lithuania, with the 15th century *Trakai Castle* amidst the lakes. On the return to Vilnius, a stop at the *Jewish Cemetery* where Vilna Gaon is buried.

**Day 9: VILNIUS / KAUNAS / VILNIUS.** *Optional Vilnius- Kaunas -Vilnius* A day tour to Kaunas, Lithuania's 2nd biggest town and the capital of the country in between the two World Wars. The tour of Kaunas includes the most interesting architectural and historic monuments in the Old Town, the Slobodka area and a visit to the *IX Fort Museum*, a former death site of thousands of Jewish nationals during WWII.

*OPTIONAL: Meeting with the Jewish Community of Kaunas.*

**Day 10: DEPART.** Transfer to the Vilnius airport for a departure flight home.

*Exclusive Property of In Quest of the Classics [www.iqotc.com](http://www.iqotc.com)*