

# **Exploring Jewish Eastern Europe in Depth**

**Accompanied by our Scholar-In-Residence:**

**Dr. Zvi Gitelman, Tisch Professor of Judaic Studies  
and Professor of Political Science, University of Michigan**

**August 12-23, 2009**

*“Da m’ayin bata” [Know from whence you come] – Pirke Avot*

Four of five American Jews trace their ancestry to Eastern Europe, where seven million Jews lived around 1900. Since the fall of Communism twenty years ago, many have visited the major cities of the region. But large numbers of Jews lived in small towns and shtetls. For those who wish to engage in a unique learning experience, we offer an exploration in depth of the lesser known places formerly heavily populated by Jews. Here, the old ways of life are preserved, in contrast to the rapidly westernizing cities. We travel to Poland and Ukraine, stopping in, among other places, Lublin, with the oldest Jewish cemetery in Poland; Zamosc, with its 17<sup>th</sup> century synagogue; Berdichev, a classic Jewish town; Medzhibozh, the birthplace of the founder of Hasidism; Lvov (Lemberg), capital of west Ukraine; and Kiev, a center of Jewish religious and secular culture. We confront the beauties and horrors of the places and events that are so much a part of our history and culture.

The tour features daily brief lectures and on-site commentary by Zvi Gitelman, Professor of Political Science and Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. Dr. Gitelman has been conducting such tours for many years, and will deal with such topics as: Hasidism and Haskalah (Enlightenment), Zionism, Communism, Hebrew and Yiddish literatures, and the religious culture that permeated Jewish life into the twentieth century. During visits with local Jews in various communities, we will have the opportunity to discuss some of the dilemmas of contemporary Jewish life and some of the issues they confront in their attempt to preserve the past and build a future.

**Wednesday, August 12:**

Departure from the United States

**Thursday, August 13:**

Day 2: After arrival in Warsaw, there will be a brief tour of the city, devastated during World War II, rebuilt during the Communist period and now undergoing rapid transformation. Poland, now a member of the European Union, is one of the great post-Communist success stories. In the late afternoon, there will be a brief tour of the city including the Old Town, painstakingly reconstructed after World War II, the Royal Palace, and some of the Polish capital's lively main streets. D

**Friday, August 14:**

Our day begins with an early morning visit to the Jewish cemetery where some of the greatest figures of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish culture are buried. We continue by bus via the interesting town of Lowicz to Lodz, which has the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe. Lodz was a great textile manufacturing center. One can still see the Poznanski palace, one of the many homes of the wealthy Jewish manufacturers, and contrast it with the Baluty area, home to the Jewish workers and site of the wartime Ghetto. Return to Warsaw. B, L, D

**Saturday, August 15:**

Shabbat will be spent in Warsaw, home to 350,000 Jews before the war. This morning, you will have the opportunity to attend services at the one remaining synagogue, now the center of a small, vibrant Jewish community. In the afternoon, we will walk through the former Warsaw Ghetto and see its poignant monuments and the site of the future Jewish historical museum. B

**Sunday, August 16:**

Travel by bus to Lublin, a picturesque town whose imposing yeshiva building has been returned to the Jewish community. The oldest Jewish cemetery in Poland is found in Lublin. Adjacent to the city is the Nazi camp, Majdanek, which we visit. Stay in an exquisitely restored classic hotel. B

**Monday, August 17:**

From Lublin we travel to Zamosc, a beautiful old town with a 17<sup>th</sup> century synagogue and colorful town square. Moving south, we encounter the Belzec extermination camp, where 800,000 Galician Jews were murdered. We cross into Ukraine and stop in Zolkiew ((Zhovkva) to see the fortress-like 17<sup>th</sup> century synagogue, before arriving in Lviv (Lemberg, Lvov, Lwow), the largest city of west Ukraine (formerly Poland). B, L

**Tuesday, August 18:**

One can immediately see from the architecture that Lviv was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1918. We visit the ornate opera house, the Judaica collection in the local museum, the site of “Golden Rose” synagogue in the old Jewish quarter, and an operating synagogue. Time permitting, we shall see the Holocaust memorial, cemetery, and the wartime Janowska Road labor camp. B

**Wednesday, August 19:**

Continuing eastward, we stop in Ternopil and Khmelnytsky (Proskurov) to see some Jewish sights, such as a memorial to the 1919 pogrom in Proskurov. Then we arrive in Medzhibizh, birthplace of Baal Shem Tov, now a Hasidic pilgrimage site. We continue via the former shtetl of Letichev to the city of Vinnitsa which boasts a Jewish community center and synagogue. Overnight in Vinnitsa. B, L, D

**Thursday, August 20:**

The storied town of Berdichev is our first stop. We see the grave of Levi Yitzhak, the Hasidic master, and visit the sole functioning synagogue. In Zhitomir we stop at the modern Jewish Community Center which provides a wide range of welfare services, and continue to Ukraine’s capital, Kiev. B, L

**Friday, August 21:**

In the ancient city of Kiev, claimed by Russians and Ukrainians, we shall see some magnificent churches, the infamous Babi Yar killing site, and the imposing Brodsky synagogue. We will have Shabbat dinner at a kosher restaurant and visit the religious schools established by Rabbi Bleich, chief rabbi of Ukraine. B, D

**Saturday, August 22:**

Shabbat in Kiev. Morning is free to attend optional services. Kosher meals will be available for lunch and, later in the afternoon, we will embark on a walking tour of the historic sites in the center of this rapidly developing city. B, D

**Sunday, August 23:**

Return to the United States from Kiev.

**Pre-trip option to Vilnius, Lithuania**  
**August 9-13, 2009**

**Sunday, August 9:** Departure from the United States to Vilnius

**Monday, August 10:**

Arrive in the picturesque city of Vilnius, often called the “Jerusalem of Lithuania”, an intellectual capital of East European Jewry for 300 years. A great center of Rabbinic learning, Vilna was also an important center of the Haskalah, Hebrew and Yiddish literature, Bundism and Zionism.

**Tuesday, August 11:**

In the morning, we visit the Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum.

A walking tour takes us to the former Jewish ghetto, the choral synagogue and the cemetery, all of which give some indication of “Litvak” culture in its heyday. B

**Wednesday, August 12:**

After a short ride, we arrive in Kaunas, capital of interwar Lithuania. Kovno, as it was known to Jews, was also a major center of Talmudic study as well as home to famous Maskilim. We visit the nicely restored synagogue. Our last stop before returning to Vilnius will be at the Ninth Fort where the exhibits clearly show the tragedy and heroism of Lithuanian Jewry during WWII. B

**Thursday, August 13:**

Fly to Warsaw and join the group arriving from the United States.

Rosalyn Manowitz  
Valerie Wilson Travel, Inc.  
2700 Westchester Avenue  
Purchase, NY 10577

Phone: (914) 701-3202 – direct  
(800) 766-1116- ask for Rosalyn Manowitz  
Fax: (914) 701-3299 Attn: Rosalyn  
Email: [rosalynm@vwti.com](mailto:rosalynm@vwti.com)  
<http://www.rlmtravel.com>