



LATVIA - LITHUANIA - BELARUS

Riga - Sigulda - Kaunas - Vilnius - Volozhyn - Minsk - Grodno - Khatyn

August 6-17, 2020



Peitav synagogue in Riga built in 1905

DAY 1 : Wednesday August 5
ON FLIGHT

Depart San Francisco on a overnight flight to Europe

DAY 2: Thursday August 6 (D)
RIGA

Arrive in Riga in late afternoon. Check in at the hotel and enjoy a welcome dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight: Hotel Radisson Elisabeth Riga, Latvia

DAY 3: Friday August 7 (B, D)
RIGA

Visit the Peitav Synagogue, Riga's sole surviving synagogue built in 1905. Enjoy a walking tour of Riga's Old Jewish Quarter, which at its peak, prior to the Holocaust; was home to some 44,000 Jewish inhabitants. Meet the Director of the Jewish Community Center and learn about Jewish life in Riga today. Visit the Memorial of the Burnt Synagogue, destroyed by the Nazis in 1941. Celebrate Shabbat at Peitav synagogue follow by dinner at the hotel Overnight: Radisson Elisabeth Hotel, Riga.



Riga's Old town

DAY 4: Saturday August 8 (B)
RIGA

Tour Riga's Old Town visiting Riga Castle; St. Mary's Dome Cathedral, the largest cathedral in the Baltics; Large and Small Guilds, the former home to the Riga Orchestra and the latter still serves as a guild for craftspeople, Freedom Monument, a 138-foot-high monument honoring soldiers killed during the 1918-1920 Latvian War of Independence.

In the afternoon continue exploring Riga with visits to St. Peter's Church, first built in the 13th century and since expanded and Riga's Art Nouveau district, one of the largest centers of Art Nouveau in Europe. Visit Museum of the Occupation in Latvia. Overnight: Radisson Elisabeth Hotel, Riga.

DAY 5: Sunday August 9 (B)
SIGULDA

Half day excursion to Sigulda. For centuries, painters, poets and lovers have found inspiration amidst the lovely landscapes of Sigulda, and visitors continue to embrace this exceptionally beautiful part of Latvia today. Overlooking the picturesque Gauja River in the majestic Gauja National Park, Sigulda's forested valleys are steeped in myths and legends. Travel back to the past with a visit to Turaida Museum Reserve, home to impressive Turaida Castle as well as Folk Song Hill, a symbol of Latvia's rich musical heritage where timeless pagan ceremonies are held. Return to Riga. Free afternoon and evening. Overnight: Radisson Elisabeth Hotel, Riga.

DAY 6: Monday August 10 (B, D)
RIGA-KAUNAS-VILNIUS

Drive to Kaunas, Lithuania's second largest city and at one time its temporary capital. Until 1940, Kaunas, also known as Kovno, boasted a Jewish population of some 40,000; one-fourth of the city's entire population. Lunch at leisure in route.

Tour Jewish Kaunas (Kovno) this afternoon including Slobodka Jewish Ghetto, home of the famous Slobodka Yeshiva, considered the 'mother of all Yeshivas' and the forerunner of the Hebron Yeshiva; Zamenhoff and Mapu Streets, named in honor of Zamenhoff, the inventor of the international Esperanto language, and Abraham Mapu, a native of Slobodka and a Hebrew novelist of the Haskalah movement, considered the creator of the Hebrew novel. Also visit Ohel Yakov Synagogue, the Children's Memorial and Holocaust Museum and Memorial.

Visit the Sugihara House. Sugihara was a Japanese diplomat who gave out visas to Jews in 1940, saving thousands of lives. He's known as the "Japanese Schindler". Stop at the Ninth Fort. During World War II, parts of the fortress complex were used by the governments of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union for detention, interrogation and execution. About 50,000 people were executed there, including 15,800 victims of the Holocaust. Drive to Vilnius. Check in and dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Radisson Astoria Hotel, Vilnius.

DAY 7: Tuesday August 11 (B)
VILNIUS

Visit the medieval Jewish Quarter and what was traditionally known throughout the Jewish world as Vilna, Yerushalayim de Lita (the Jerusalem of Lithuania). Vilna was one of the most significant pre-Holocaust European communities with a community of over 100,000 and was a world center for the study of Torah and the home of Rabbi Eliyahu Kremer, also known as the Vilna Gaon (the Genius of Vilna). Visit the Vilnius Choral Synagogue, built in 1903; Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, dedicated to the history of Lithuanian Jewish life, which includes an exposition on the Holocaust including the Judenrat (Vilna Ghetto Council) and is home to a contemporary Tolerance Center and visit the Jewish Cemetery. Overnight: Radisson Astoria Hotel, Vilnius.



Vilnius Ghetto Memorial

DAY 8: Wednesday August 12 (B)
RUNDNINKI FOREST-PONARY-VILNIUS

Visit the Jewish Partisan Fort in Rundninki Forest, 25 miles from Vilna. Comprising decaying concrete, wooden bunkers and other remnants, it was used as a hidden refuge by nearly 400 Jews who escaped the Vilna Ghetto between 1943 and 1944.

Visit Ponary. There were 100,000 people killed at Ponary Forest. Of these, 70,000 were Jews, mostly from Vilna. Tour Vilnius, Lithuania's largest city and capital, with an Old Town that was listed in 1994 as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Explore the Vilnius Castle Complex, a group of defensive, cultural and religious buildings that evolved between the 10th and 18th centuries,

including Lower and Upper Castles and the remains of Gediminas' Tower, the traditional symbol of Vilnius. Overnight: Radisson Astoria Hotel, Vilnius.

DAY 9: Thursday August 13 (B, D)
VILNIUS-VOLOZHYN-MINSK

Enjoy a free morning then travel to Belarus. Cross the border and arrive to Volozhyn. Visit the renowned yeshiva, established in 1803 by Rabbi Hayim Volozhiner, a disciple of the Vilna Gaon. In the middle of the 19th century, a devastating fire swept through Volozhyn, but miraculously the “mother of yeshivas” was untouched. Continue to Minsk. Check in and dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Hotel Europa, Minsk



Minsk

DAY 10: Friday August 14 (B, D)
MINSK

Start with a visit to “Yama”, the memorial for Jews who were perished in Minsk during the Nazi occupation. The obelisk was built on the exact spot where five thousand Jews were slaughtered. Visit Minsk Synagogue, the only one that survived the war. We’ll walk through the Old Town and the area of Minsk Ghetto. Celebrate Kabbalat Shabbat at the synagogue followed by dinner at the hotel. Overnight: Hotel Europa, Minsk.

DAY 11: Saturday August 15 (B)
MINSK-KHATYN

Minsk city tour visiting The National Academic Bolshoi Opera and Ballet Theatre, one of the few buildings in Minsk to survive WWII, the Victory Monument and The National Library, one of the most outstanding buildings in Europe completed in 2006. Continue to The Great Patriotic War Museum is an enormous, futuristic building. It's 11 gigantic metal "rays" represent the 1100 days that Minsk was under occupation. In the afternoon visit Khatyn Memorial located 35 miles from Minsk. On 22 March 1943, almost the entire population of the village was massacred by the Battalion 118. The battalion was formed in July 1942 in Kiev and was made up mostly of Soviet prisoner-of-war volunteers, Ukrainian collaborators and deserters, assisted by the Dirlewanger Waffen-SS special battalion. Khatyn became a symbol of mass killings of the civilian population during the fighting between partisans, German troops, and collaborators. Among the best-recognized symbols of the memorial complex is a monument with three birch trees, with an eternal flame instead of a fourth tree, a tribute to the one in every four Belarusians who died in the war. There is also a statue of Yuzif Kaminsky carrying his dying son, and a wall with niches to represent the victims of all the concentration camps, with large niches representing those with more than 20,000 victims. Return to Minsk. Overnight: Hotel Europe, Minsk.



Grodno Castle

DAY 12: Sunday August 16 (B, D)
RADIN-GRODNO-MINSK

Travel to west Belarus we'll visit the famous yeshivas that existed here before the Holocaust. Stop in the small town of Radin, where Chafetz Chayim's Yeshiva attracted students from all over Europe. We'll visit the Jewish cemetery, the tombstone (matzevah) of Chafetz Chayim and the memorial to the local Jews murdered during WWII.

In the afternoon, arrive in Grodno, home to the Old Grodno Castle that was built by Grand Duke Vytautas around 1390-1400. One of Vytautas' decrees were an issue of a "Permit of Residence" for Jews in Lithuania. Walking tour in the old part of Grodno includes the medieval castle and the streets of the former Jewish quarter, the territory of the Ghetto, the old Jewish cemetery, and finally, the fascinating Great Synagogue of Grodno. Drive back to Minsk for farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

Overnight: Hotel Europa, Minsk.

DAY 12: Monday August 17 (B)
DEPARTURE

Check out of the hotel. End of the tour.



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Trip scholar: Raquel Orenszajn

Raquel Orenszajn was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, second generation to Jewish immigrants from Poland and the Ukraine. Studied History and Contemporary Jewry in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and has dedicate most of her professional life teaching the Holocaust and its significance in Jewish memory and identity. Raquel works in the International School for Holocaust Studies, Yad Vashem and has participate as a trip scholar throughout Jewish Europe.



Tour Leader: Ariel Goldstein

Ariel Goldstein, Tiylul-Jewish Journeys, Founder and CEO, was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, studied Latin American history in Montevideo and then studied tourism at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has led more than fifty tours throughout Israel, Europe, Persian Gulf, Latin America, China, India, Africa and United States.



Tour Coordinator and Latvia Guide: Julija Pahomova

Julija Pahomova was born in Riga, Latvia, and studied English Language and Literature at the University of Latvia, graduating with honors. She has worked as a tour guide since 1995 and during that time has visited the United States on several occasions. Besides English and Latvian, she also speaks Russian. She has already cooperated with Tiylul and Lehrhaus Judaica on two occasions in the Baltics.