*Join Zenia & Jeffrey Cohen*

**Litvak Jewish Heritage Tour**

*to Lithuania and Latvia*

March 10 – 14, 2024

*(Itinerary as of July 24 - Subject to Change)*

Led by Rabbi Mitchell Ackerson

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**Sunday March 10**

* Midday arrival in Vilna
* Visit the **Vilna Gaon State Museum Tolerance Center and Holocaust Exposition,**
* **Introduction to Lithuania and Litvak Jewish Identity.** There were 160,000 Jews in Lithuania before WWII making up 7% of the population. Over 100,000 lived in Vilna where Jews made up 45% of the population.
* **Dinner with members of the local Jewish community**

**Overnight:** Conti Hotel, *Vilnius*

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**Monday March 11**

* Breakfast
* Explore the Medieval streets of Vilna and learnhow Vilna became known as the ***Jerusalem of Lithuania*.**
* Visit the **Choral Synagogue,** *built in 1903 and currently the only active synagogue in Vilna*
* [](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwidxOGNp7fjAhVJ46QKHWulDSoQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https://www.lzb.lt/en/2014/09/09/invitation-to-shabbes-celebration-in-vilnius-choral-synagogue/&psig=AOvVaw3Txs3svcYaqH5Q8djp9Or_&ust=1563293179073461)See the **Ghetto Memorials** and other sites that testify to the significant Jewish history in Vilna.
* Lunch
* Visit the Jewish Cemetery in Suderve which includes the tomb of the Rabbi Eliyahu ben Sholom Zalman (1720-1790) the towering Rabbinic figure known as the **Vilna Gaon**
* Walking tour through **Vilnius Old Town** including **Vilnius Cathedral Square**
* **Dinner**
* Lithuanian Folklore Show

**Overnight:** Conti Hotel,*Vilnius*

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**Tuesday March 12**

* Breakfast
* Pack bus and depart Vilna to stand in solemn memory at the **Paneriai Forest Memorial** *(Ponar)* where most of the Jews of Vilna were murdered by the Germans and their Lithuanian allies
* Continue to **Trakai,** once home to important (Rabbinite) Jewish and Karaite communities.
* [](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwihocbEp7fjAhWHyKQKHXosBqcQjRx6BAgBEAU&url=https://www.youtube.com/watch?v%3DusnyTAYKIeI&psig=AOvVaw2Jg-ncxoE_TOuh8W_J-U5F&ust=1563293300752061)**Visit the Karaite Kenesa** (Synagogue) and Museum and learn about the history of the Karaite and Jewish communities of Trakai. *In 1897, the town population included 377 Karaites and 1,112 Rabbinite Jews, out of a general population of 3,240.*
* Packed Lunch
* Visit the **Trakai Island Castle** *whose construction began in the 14th century.*
* Continue to **Ziezmariai** to see one of the very few **wooden synagogues** to survive the Shoah. *In 1940 the 200 Jewish families of the town made up nearly 50 percent of the total population.*
* Continue to **Kaunas** *(Kovno). The 38,000 Jews of Kovno were 30% of the population before the Shoa*
* Stand in solemn memory at the dramatic **Ninth Fort Kaunas Holocaust Memorial** where the Germans and their Lithuanian allies murdered over 15,000 Jews.
* Dinner and session with members of the Jewish communityat the **Jewish Community Center**

**Overnight:** Radisson Hotel,*Kaunas*

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**Wednesday March 13**

* Breakfast
* Pack bus and depart hotel
* Learn the inspiring story of Japanese diplomat **Chiune** **Sugihara** at the museum which was established in the home where he lived with his family. *The museum tells the story of his efforts together with Dutch businessman and diplomat* ***Jan Zwartendijk*** *to save thousands of Jews.*
* Visit the neo-baroque **Kaunas Choral Synagogue** built in 1872
* Lunch
* Head to the **Kovno Ghetto** Memorial and see the site of the famed **Slobodka Yeshivah**
* Continue to **Riga,** capital of **Latvia**
* Dinner

**Overnight:** Welton Riverside Hotel,*Riga*

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**Thursday March 14**

* Breakfast at the hotel
* Visit the memorial site of the **Great Choral Synagogue** destroyed by the Nazis in July 1941 and the **Riga Ghetto** and **Latvian Holocaust Memorials***. Prior to the Holocaust, Riga was home to almost 44,000 Jewish inhabitants making up 11% of the city population*
* Tour the **Jews in Latvia Museum** at the **Riga Jewish Community Center**.
* Stand in solemn memory in the **Rumbula Forest** where 25,000 Jews (mostly from the Riga Ghetto) were murdered by Germans and Latvians in November and December 1941.
* Late lunch **with members of the Jewish community and learn about the challenges facing the community**
* Head to the airport for flights to Israel

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* Listed activities and speakers are subject to confirmation.
* All meals are included in the package price.

***Trip extensions before or after the trip can be arranged*** *(at additional cost)*



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