

ECHOES OF (POST)MEMORY:

A JOURNEY THROUGH

JEWISH POLAND

JULY 2025



From the point of view of Jewish history, Poland is a unique place. Nowhere else in such a literal and visible manner do traces of Jewish life stand side by side with those of the Holocaust and destruction. Nowhere else in Europe is the presence of the

void created by the Holocaust as tangible as in the lands of modern Poland and Ukraine. Nowhere else is the evidence of destruction as lasting and ubiquitous as it is here—because nowhere else in Europe was Jewish life as developed as it was in the historic lands of Poland.

The political and social realities shaped by the Second World War caused those physical elements that survived the Holocaust to be forgotten for years. Instead of remembrance, the lack of memory appeared—a shared amnesia—which



Photo by Prof. Jason Francisco

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sanctioned further mass devastation of those fragments of the broken world that had somehow remained.

But Jewish life, which for decades smoldered under the surface during communist rule, has begun to recover and is proudly manifesting its presence in present-day Poland. This new, contemporary Jewish world is founded not only on remembering the Holocaust, but also on the awareness of the centuries of Jewish presence in this country and its contributions to every aspect and sphere of life. For the first time in over 70 years, Poland is filled with a polyphony of Jewish voices, an emphatic testimony to the resilience of the Jewish people.

Now, the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre invites descendants of the Survivors, as well as other members of the Jewish community of South Africa on a unique journey. We will travel across Poland to witness the remnants of a vibrant Jewish past, learn about the rich cultural heritage, and explore the haunting sites of destruction

The theme of the tour will be “Postmemory,” a term created in 1992 by Marianne Hirsch, Professor of

English and Comparative Literature, to describe the relationship of the second generation to powerful, often traumatic experiences that preceded their births but were nevertheless transmitted to them so deeply as to seem to constitute memories in their own right. Over time, the term ‘postmemory’ has been expanded by subsequent generations and now encompasses the transmission of memories between grandparents and grandchildren.

This extraordinary tour will be led by Jakub Nowakowski, the new director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre. Raised in Kazimierz, Kraków’s historic Jewish district, Jakub has a deep personal connection to the area’s rich heritage. With a degree in Jewish Studies and over a decade of experience as the director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, Jakub is a wellspring of knowledge about the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations.

This tour will offer a rare chance to explore significant sites and engage with influential activists who are shaping contemporary Jewish life in Poland. Join us for an unforgettable journey filled with history, culture, and meaningful encounters.



Photo by R. Zambrzycki

We are delighted to share with you the preliminary program for *Echoes of (post)Memory: A Journey to Poland*. This immersive experience will take us through Poland's rich Jewish heritage, the tragic history of the Holocaust, and the complexities of memory and post-memory. Over the course of the week, we will explore key historical sites, meet with experts and community members, and reflect on the lasting impact of these events on both Jewish and global history. We look forward to embarking on this meaningful journey together.

Tour will be preceded by a 6 hour long online orientation course on the history of the Polish Jews run by Jakub Nowakowski, Director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre.

Preliminary Program

DAY OF ARRIVAL | SUNDAY, JULY 20

EVENING: TOUR OF THE WARSAW OLD CITY AND A WELCOMING DINNER

We will begin our time together with a guided tour of the historical heart of Warsaw, the Old City, which holds the distinction of being the only urban area in the world to be entirely rebuilt after its destruction in World War II and to be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. As we walk through the cobblestone streets and past iconic landmarks such as the Royal Castle and the Old Town Market Square, you'll discover the incredible story of how Warsaw was meticulously reconstructed, brick by brick, to preserve its cultural

heritage. This remarkable feat of post-war restoration stands as a testament to the city's resilience and determination.

Following the tour, we will come together for a welcoming dinner at a charming local restaurant in the Old City. This gathering will offer a chance to introduce all participants, creating an open space for exchanging ideas and getting to know one another. It will set the tone for the days ahead, as we build the connections that will carry through the rest of our program.

DAY 1 | MONDAY, JULY 21

TOUR OF THE JEWISH WARSAW

During the day we will embark on a profound and evocative journey through Jewish Warsaw—a city where pre-war Jewish life thrived, but whose physical remnants were almost entirely erased during the Holocaust. This tour will allow us to explore the layers of history that remain, both seen and unseen, in a city that once held one of the largest Jewish populations in the world. While much of the pre-war city fabric no longer exists, we will trace the memory of the lost Jewish quarter

and encounter the poignant echoes of its past. Our tour will take us through the former Warsaw Ghetto, a place marked by unimaginable suffering and acts of heroic resistance. We will visit the Nożyk Synagogue, the only surviving pre-war synagogue in Warsaw, a rare and poignant reminder of the Jewish community that once flourished here.

The tour will also include a visit to the Jewish Historical Institute, a key institution preserving

the legacy of Polish Jewry, as well as the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which chronicles the rich history and culture of Jewish life in Poland.

A particularly moving stop will be the Ghetto Fighters Monument, which stands as a tribute to the bravery of those who fought in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This powerful symbol of resistance and resilience will provide us with a moment of reflection on the indomitable human spirit in the face of oppression.

Throughout the day, we will have the

opportunity to meet with activists, members of the local Jewish community, and experts who will share their insights, offering a deeper understanding of the contemporary Jewish experience in Warsaw.

This tour is not only about revisiting the past but about connecting with the ongoing story of Jewish Warsaw, as the echoes of memory continue to shape the present. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on the role of memory in shaping identity, both personally and collectively, within the broader context of post-Holocaust remembrance and education.

DAY 2 | TUESDAY, JULY 22

JOURNEY EAST – KAZIMIERZ DOLNY AND LUBLIN

On the second day of our *Echoes of (post)Memory* program, we will leave Warsaw and head east toward Lublin, a city rich in Jewish history.

Along the way, we will visit the picturesque town of Kazimierz Dolny, considered one of the most charming small towns in Poland.

Once a thriving shtetl, Kazimierz Dolny's Jewish community dates back to the early 15th century.

On the eve of World War II, Jews made up more than 60% of the town's population. Tragically, the vast majority were murdered during the Holocaust. We will honor their memory with

a visit to the local Jewish cemetery, a place of reflection and remembrance.

Continuing on to Lublin, we will explore the city's Old Town and visit the area where its historic Jewish district once stood. Lublin was a major center of Jewish learning, home to one of the most significant yeshivot in Eastern Europe, Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin. This prestigious institution symbolized the intellectual and spiritual vibrancy of Jewish life before the war. As we walk through these historic spaces, we will reflect on the profound losses and enduring legacy of Jewish culture in Poland.

DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, JULY 23

ECHOES OF DESTRUCTION: MAJDANEK DEATH CAMP AND ZBYLITOWSKA GÓRA

The third day of our *Echoes of (post)Memory* program will begin with a visit to the former Nazi death camp at Majdanek, located on the outskirts of Lublin. Unlike many other camps, Majdanek was not hidden in a remote area, but shockingly close to the city itself. It served as both a concentration and extermination camp, where tens of thousands of Jews, Poles, and others were murdered. Today, Majdanek stands as one of the best-preserved Holocaust sites, providing a powerful and sobering reminder of the atrocities committed during the war.

From there, we will travel west to the town of Łańcut, home to one of Poland's most beautiful surviving synagogues. Built in the 18th century, this synagogue is a remarkable example of

Jewish architectural heritage, featuring ornate interior decorations that have been carefully restored. Its preservation stands as a testament to the once-thriving Jewish communities that were scattered across Poland.

Before arriving in Krakow, we will make a poignant stop at Zbylitowska Góra, a mass grave where nearly 10,000 people, including over 8,000 Polish Jews, were brutally murdered during the Holocaust.

From the beauty of Łańcut to the horror of Zbylitowska Góra, this day's journey will encapsulate the profound duality of Polish-Jewish history, allowing us to reflect on both the splendor of Jewish life and the tragic consequences of the Holocaust.



Photo by J. Karczmarz



Photo by D. Zolopa

DAY 4 | THURSDAY, JULY 24

JEWISH KRAKOW: THE HEART OF CENTURIES-OLD JEWISH HISTORY AND CULTURE

We will begin the day by exploring Krakow's medieval Old City, including the historic Market Square and Wawel Castle, once the royal residence of the Polish kings. These sites represent the grandeur of Poland's past, setting the stage for the deeply layered history we will continue to uncover.

Next, we will move to Kazimierz, the historical Jewish district, where seven preserved synagogues remain. Among them is the Remuh Synagogue, named after Moshe Isserles, one of the most significant Jewish scholars of the 16th century. We will also visit his grave, a pilgrimage site for Jews from around the world.

Following Kazimierz, we will tour the former

Krakow Ghetto, established in 1941 and tragically liquidated in 1943. We will visit one of the two remaining fragments of the ghetto wall, which still stands as a haunting reminder of the confinement and suffering experienced by Krakow's Jewish community during the Holocaust.

Our final stop will be at the site of the notorious Plaszow concentration camp, made infamous through Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. While thousands were murdered here under Nazi occupation, the post-war reality in Poland saw sites like this one turn into places of non-memory, where Jewish suffering and pain were neither commemorated nor even acknowledged for many years.

DAY 5 | FRIDAY, JULY 25

BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKEANU AND SHABBAT DINNER AT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE

On our final day, we will visit Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest of the Nazi concentration and extermination camps, where over one million people, the vast majority of them Jews, were murdered. It remains one of the most harrowing symbols of the Holocaust and human cruelty.

Before returning to Krakow, we will explore the history of the Jewish community that thrived for centuries in the town of Oświęcim—known

today as Auschwitz—before the war. We will visit the only remaining synagogue in the town and meet with local activists and historians who are dedicated to preserving and commemorating this rich, yet tragic, history.

To end our day on a note of resilience and hope, we will join Krakow's small but vibrant Jewish community for a Shabbat dinner at the Jewish Community Centre—a powerful testament to Jewish survival and continuity.



Photo by C. Puisney

DAY 6 | SATURDAY, JULY 26

FAREWELL BREAKFAST AND REFLECTIONS

The program will conclude with a farewell breakfast and a reflective session, where we will share our thoughts on the past week and the powerful emotions it has stirred in each of us. This will be an opportunity to process the profound experiences we've had and to discuss how we can carry the lessons learned into the future.

For those wishing to extend their stay in Krakow, we will arrange a relaxing trip to the nearby Ojcow National Park, known for its stunning natural beauty, offering a peaceful retreat amidst forests, rivers, and limestone cliffs—an ideal way to unwind after an intense and meaningful journey.

PROGRAM SUBJECT TO CHANGE

The cost of the program will depend on the final number of participants and the PLN-ZAR exchange rate. As is typical with group travel, the more participants we have, the lower the overall cost per person. Below are approximate costs based on different group sizes:

- 35 participants: 27,271 ZAR ≈ \$1,515 USD
- 32 participants: 29,828 ZAR ≈ \$1,657 USD
- 30 participants: 31,816 ZAR ≈ \$1,768 USD
- 28 participants: 34,089 ZAR ≈ \$1,894 USD
- 26 participants: 36,711 ZAR ≈ \$2,040 USD
- 24 participants: 39,770 ZAR ≈ \$2,209 USD

For more details or to make a booking, please be in touch with admin@holocaust.org.za

WHAT IS INCLUDED:

- Entrance fees to all Sites
- Meals
- Accommodation in 4 Star Hotels (based on twin occupancy)
- Private Bus Transportation
- Audio Headset Guiding System

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED:

- Flights
- Travel and Medical Insurance
- Single Room Supplement
- Visa Costs



ABOUT JAKUB NOWAKOWSKI

This extraordinary tour will be led by Jakub Nowakowski, the new director of the Cape Town Holocaust & Genocide Centre. Raised in Kazimierz, Kraków's historic Jewish district, Jakub has a deep personal connection to the area's rich heritage. With a degree in Jewish Studies and over a decade of experience as the director of the Galicia Jewish Museum, Jakub is a wellspring of knowledge about the Holocaust and Polish-Jewish relations.