

## UKRAINE – THE CRADLE OF HASIDISM

### Key Information:

*Tour Duration:* 7 day

*Destination(s):* Kiev-Belaya Tzerkov-Berdichev-Polonnoe-Khmelnitsky-Medzhibozh-Shargorod-Uman-Kiev

*Total Driving Distance:* 994 km

*Specialty Categories:* Jewish Ukraine, Cultural Encounters

*Tour Customizable:* Optional sightseeing available

*Meals:* Kosher options available upon request at all sites

*Price:* may vary depending on the type/class of accommodation, transportation, meals & spoken languages

*Contacts for inquiries:* <http://www.jukraine.com/contact-us.html> or [jewkraine@gmail.com](mailto:jewkraine@gmail.com)

Each year thousands of Jews come to visit the gravesites of Hasidic sages (*kvar'ot tzaddikim*), as the source of blessing and inspiration. Did you know that Ukraine is a true cradle of Hasidism and that majority of those righteous people are buried here? Whether you seek a health recovery, a good marriage prospect or financial prosperity, come, pray, leave Tzeddakah (gift of charity) and place a little note with your innermost wish on the top of the tombstones or insider the mausoleums. This 7 days package offers you the chance to combine spiritual encounters with kosher comfort:

- make a pilgrimage to gravesites of the Ba'al Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Nachman of Uman, Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef of Polonnoe, hoping that these revered sages carry your prayers to the Throne of Heaven.
- stroll the streets of ancient, ever-young Kiev, the city where "Torah and light emanate from", visit Jewish Podol & Bessarabka, see notorious Baby Yar and elegant mansions of famous Jewish magnates and Maecenas, and more...;
- explore the Jewish Heritage of Belaya Tzerkov, a typical Jewish town in the Pale of Settlement. As you walk by its synagogues and market place, imaging yourself to be your great-grandparent, who once fled Russian Empire looking for the better life across the ocean;
- visit Shargorod to see the oldest stone synagogue in Ukraine and barely preserved remains of the typical Jewish schtettle houses

*The treasures of Jewish Ukraine are just around the corner... Welcome to JUkraine!*

### Day 1. WELCOME TO KIEV, THE CAPITAL OF UKRAINE!

Arrive in Kiev and transfer to your hotel. Depending on when you arrive there may be time to explore the city.

Upon check-in, we explore some of the key sights of Kiev, including the ancient 'onion-domed' St Sophia Cathedral, its bustling main boulevard Kreschatyk, and the Golden Gates, the only remaining section of ancient Kiev's original fortifications.

After lunch we head the Lavra cave monastery complex, with its stunning churches and underground tunnels, and also Museums (of Microminiatures, of Treasures and other). Then we visit WWII Memorial complex with its famous "Mother Motherland" statute and unique collection of Soviet Union military equipment.



This evening we may have the opportunity to visit the opera, if you wish (depending on availability and dates of performance), or simply take a chance to ride a boat along Dnieper or relax at the Botanic Garden.

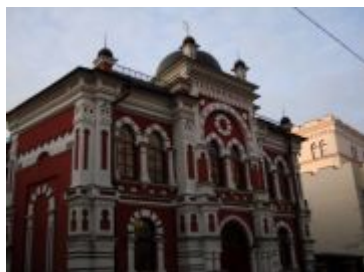
Overnight in Kiev. President Hotel or similar.

## Day 2. KIEV THE JEWISH

Start the day with visiting of Baby Yar, the steep ravine where over 100 thousand Jews perished during Holocaust, and pay tribute to innocent victims. Yet as you'll see, Jewish life goes on!

Explore two major areas where Jews were allowed to settle in late XIX - early XX century:

Jewish Podol ("Flat" Police District) - Discover the area where houses and mansions of Jewish rich merchants and industrial tycoons border with apartment buildings of the neediest strata of Jewish population. Learn a mysterious story of the construction of Podol Synagogue and also see typical prayer houses; immerse into the controversial world of Judeo-Christian relations (Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, a spiritual academy where Hebrew was one of mandatory subjects and Jews were preferred lessees, as well as the church of father Glagolev, the Christian priest, who was a principal defendant during the infamous Mendel Beilis case (blood libel); see the house of Fanny Kaplan (who allegedly attempted at Lenin's life and that case was used by Communists as an excuse to launch Red Terror), and more...



After savoring traditional Jewish cuisine during kosher or kosher-style lunch, we will continue with Jewish Bessarabka ("Lybedsky" Police District) – discover heritage of Brodsky family (Great Choral "Brodsky" Synagogue, Bessarabsky market, former Merchant's Synagogue); learn about Kiev days of Sholom Aleichem; find out more about the role of Kiev in the shaping of world Zionism (Houses Trumpeldor & Golda Meir) and more...

Evening is free. Optional attractions are available upon request (eg. Night Kiev Tour, etc.)

Overnight in Kiev



## Day 3 BELAYA TZERKOV - BERDICHEV

Today we leave Kiev and move on. Belaya Tzerkov (White Church) town is ahead.



As we arrive to Belaya Tzerkov, we see majestic of the Great Belaya Tzerkov Synagogue (one of the largest in Eastern Europe), historic site of Jewish market, the house of Sholom-Aleichem during his Belaya Tzerkov days. Also we visit Jewish section of Belaya Tzerkov cemetery to pay tribute to children shot by Nazi (the first registered case of Nazi killing children during Holocaust) and see peculiar designs of typical Soviet-style gravestones.

After kosher lunch at Chabad Lubavich Community School, we (optionally) meet the representatives of the local community and continue to Berdichev.

Upon arrival – check-in at the kosher hotel complex, free evening, relaxation, study or group discussion. Optional tour to the monastery of barefoot Carmelites (10 min walk from the hotel) is available upon request.

#### DAY 4. BERDICHEV - POLONNOE

We start the day with kosher breakfast, and then move on to explore Berdichev aka "Jerusalem of Volhynia province" for its rich Jewish history & heritage. Beginning in the 18th century, Berdichev was a center of the Hasidic movement, which transformed Jewish religious practice in much of Eastern Europe. Many of Hasidism's revered leaders are buried here. Among the most famous is Rabbi Levi Isaac, who died in 1809. As we arrive, we go straight to his *ohel* (mausoleum). Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev is one of the best disciples of the Maggid of Mezhrich, revered for his enthusiastic dedication to Torah and *Mitzvot* (commandments), but above all for his consuming love of God and his people. He became known as the defender of the people of Israel. He would argue with God, charging Him with being too stern a father to His children, pleading for an end to the long and cruel exile.



At that the Berdichev Jewish cemetery itself is one of the most important in Ukraine, in part due to the artistic quality of its gravestones. Approximately 5,000 stones are still on the site, some dating from as early as the 18th century.

After lunch relaxed bus-ride brings us to Polonnoe, the rest place of Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef..



Polonnoe, one of the largest, oldest and the most influential Jewish communities in the Volyn region, and in the region of Bukovina. Polonnoe was an acclaimed center of Hassidic learning between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It was there that the well-known Kabbalist, Rabbi Shimshon from Ostropol, was murdered by Cossacks in 1648. Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef wrote and published the first Hassidic book in Polonnoe, which had the first Hassidic publishing house in Eastern Europe. The old cemetery in Polonnoe has 30 eighteenth century tombstones, one of the earliest, seen at left, dated 1727, and another dated 1730, above. These tombstones have finely carved borders with animal, floral and architectural motifs. The block script resembles the printing styles of the same period. The gravesite of Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef, who is buried at this cemetery, too, is a place for pilgrimage of his follower from around the world.

We take a bus to Medzhibozh.

Dinner & Overnight at the Medzhibozh kosher hotel.

#### DAY 5. MEDZHIBOZH - KHMELNITSKY



Start the day with kosher breakfast and hurry to explore Medzhybizh, that once was the center of Jewish culture in its region in Ukraine. The first records of Jews in Medzhybizh date back to the early 1500s. These records state that various Jews were granted special privileges by the Polish kings, including a proclamation in 1566 by King Sigismund II Augustus that the Jews of Medzhybizh were exempt from paying taxes in perpetuity. The earliest known burial in the Jewish cemetery dates from 1555. Yet for us the special significance has the *ohel* of Rabbi Yisroel (Israel) ben Eliezer, often called Baal Shem Tov or Besht, who was a Jewish mystical rabbi and is considered to be the founder of Hasidic Judaism.

Ba'al Shem Tov literary means "Master of the Good Name", and some see here an honorific epithet to the man, while others interpret Baal Shem Tov as "Master of the [Divine] Name", ascribing him ability to create miracles with the name of God. Hassids from all over the world arrive to his gravesite to pray are obtain the blessing and protection of their Master.





After visiting Besht's ohel, we continue to another city with rich Jewish history, Khmelnitsky (formerly Proskurov). Ironically that this city that once was densely populated with Jews, today bears the name of Kossak Het'man Bohdan Khmelnitsky, whose Kossaks perpetuated terrible Jewish pogroms during Ukrainian-Polish war of 1648-1654. At that no wonder that Khmelnitsky is the only city in Ukraine where we may see the Memorial to victims of Pogroms. We continue our meeting with Jewish Khmelnitsky with visit to the Butcher's Synagogue, Community Holocaust museum and cemetery complex, created by community activists.

After lunch we return to Medzhibozh. Upon arrival - free evening, relaxation, study or group discussion. Optional tour to the Medzhibozh castle and ethnography museum (10 min drive from the hotel) is available upon request.

Overnight in Medzhibozh



## DAY 6. SHARGOROD

In the morning we are ready to continue our acquaintance with Jewish heritage of Ukraine, and leave Medzhibozh for Shargorod, as it is another town worthy of a visit if you're interested in Jewish heritage sites. Shargorod strikes at the first sight with the homes in the Jewish neighborhood that laid virtually untouched over the past century. Most are the same ramshackle structures constructed from a combination of wood, stone, mud and thatch. It doesn't take much imagination to conjure up the Jewish life that Sholom Aleichem etched in his touching tales. Regrettably, in the recent years locals start to occupy the houses and dwell there, so hurry to see the real shtetl neighborhood, while it is still there.



Shargorod also has the oldest stone synagogue in Ukraine, dating from 1589. Its massive, 3-foot-thick walls and pointed crenellations were part of the town's military defenses before the Soviets converted it into a juice factory. The sanctuary entrance has been replaced by enormous stained barrels plugged with tubes. In 2009 the Shargorod Jewish Community succeeded in the restitution of the Synagogue building and launched a restoration project. Visit a community museum and meet activists of the community which is quite small, but striving.



After lunch we leave for Uman.

Dinner and overnight at kosher hotel.

## DAY 7. UMAN - KIEV

In the morning we will hurry to the grave side of the world known Tzaddik, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. Years ago he willed to be buried in Uman, to rectify the souls of innocent victims of one of the most horrible pogroms in the Jewish history of Ukraine, known as "Koliivschina", when in June 1768 over 20 thousand Uman Jews were ruthlessly killed by Kossaks. Whether you chant *Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman* or not, you too may receive Rabbi Nachman's blessing by praying at his grave and leaving the gift of charity.





Depending on your departure time and place you may whether take kosher lunch-boxes and depart to Kiev airport or have a lunch at the site of Sophiivka Park - one of the most gorgeous parks in Europe. This park, a masterpiece of world garden-park art of end XVIII - begin XIX ages has a romantic story behind its creation: it was founded in 1796 by rich polish magnate Stanislav Schensny Pototsky in honour of Sophia, his beauty-Greek wife, and was presented her at day her name-day at May 1802. The idea of creation of park in romantic stiletto with use of Roman and Greek mythology belonged to most Sophia.

After a romantic walk (or a horse ride!) along the shady alleys of Sophiivka park, we depart to Kiev, to make sure we are on-time aboard!

*This tour is over, yet we are eagerly looking forward to your next visit, as JUkraine has yet a lot more exciting and thrilling adventures for you!*

*To obtain more details with regard to the itinerary above, send us the inquiry*

*Via website:* <http://www.jukraine.com/contact-us.html>

*Via email:* [jewkraine@gmail.com](mailto:jewkraine@gmail.com)

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