

## Tour Central Europe

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# 2017 Jewish Heritage Tour: The Czech Republic

with Frank Fristensky, Durango, CO, Jeffery Deitch, Krakow, PL and Mike Zeman, Prague, CR

**Departure:** Tuesday, June 20, 2017\*

*\*From your point of departure in the USA for Prague.*

**Pick-up:** Wednesday 21, Prague's Vaclav Havel Airport (PRG)

**Returning:** Friday, June 30, 2017 from Prague.

**Join Tour Central Europe on an unforgettable excursion, guided by two sons of Holocaust survivors. This tour is unlike any other available. Allow us a moment to explain the inspiration behind it:**

**The stories of Holocaust survivors** fill millions of pages and thousands of hours of recorded interviews. Relatively few texts, however, have been devoted to the impact the Holocaust has had on the children of survivors. We, the children, call ourselves "The Second Generation." We were born into a safe, post-Holocaust world but nonetheless shared our families' experience. We will offer presentations by noted authors and lecturers who have devoted their lives to researching and writing about the Second Generation.

**On the Jewish Heritage Tour**, we will have the rare privilege of hearing presentations by survivors of the Theresienstadt (Terezin) concentration camp. It is important to note, though, that this is not a Holocaust tour. Instead, it is an all-encompassing adventure into the European Jewish experience. You will discover the richness and complexities of European Jewish history and will witness the renewal of European Jewish life.

Throughout the trip, you will enjoy the wonderful food and music of the Jewish and Czech cultures. You will marvel at the natural splendor of the Czech Republic, a land of magnificent forests, rivers, lakes and mountains, adorned by fairy tale castles, medieval villages and Renaissance chateaux.

## **DAY 1**

Arrival in Prague, pick up at the airport and check into our hotel.

**"The Mother of All Cities"** reads the ancient coat of arms of the capital of the Czech Republic. **Prague** is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Largely undamaged by WW II, Prague is all magic and romance - red roofs, cobbled streets, centuries old bridges and historic synagogues, charming old beer halls, and street musicians. It is also the home of the richest and best known Jewish history on the continent. The city is known for Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the Talmudic scholar and mystic who is the subject of the legend of the Golem of Prague. Franz Kafka, Max Brod, and Franz Werfel made Prague their home, producing works that would become mainstays of the western literary canon.

Depending on your arrival in Prague, you will have leisure time for some initial exploration.

*Overnight in Prague*

## **DAY 2**

With a professional guide, we will tour some of the most historic sites of Prague, including the Prague Castle District, located on the top of Hradcany Hill, which offers spectacular views of the town below. Next, we will walk down the hill toward the Lesser Town (Mala Strana) and will stroll amidst its picturesque streets and baroque houses. We will walk through the area below the Charles Bridge, where many artists and musicians used to live. It now houses small inns, restaurants, and galleries. We will cross the iconic Charles Bridge, which is flanked with statues of saints and a beautiful view of the Vltava River and Hradcany Hill. Across the bridge, we will reach the Old Town Square with its Astronomical Clock Tower. We will walk along the Vltava River, passing by the National Theater and other historical sites. We will then enjoy lunch at a classic local restaurant.

After lunch, we will have a presentation on the Jewish history of Europe and the Czech Republic.

In the late afternoon, we will return to the hotel and enjoy leisure time before gathering for a welcome dinner with musical entertainment.

*Overnight in Prague*

**(B-L-D)**

### DAY 3

We will dedicate this day to the Jewish history of Prague, beginning in the Jewish Quarter, also known as Josefov. Prague and the Czech Republic were largely spared most of the heavy bombing and destruction of WW II. Hitler decreed that Prague would serve as a post-war "museum of an extinct race." Consequently, the Jewish Town and its synagogues are completely intact. We will stroll the streets and visit the Maisel, Spanish, and Pinkas synagogues. Then we will visit the Ceremonial Hall, and the Altneuschul (Old New Synagogue), the world's oldest existing synagogue. We will also tour Prague's Jewish Museum and the inspiring Old Cemetery.

A meeting with local Jewish community members will be organized.

In the afternoon there will be leisure time and opportunities for personal exploration.

*Overnight in Prague*

(B-D)

### DAY 4

This morning, we will depart for **Terezin** Ghetto, also known as Theresienstadt. This former fortress and city was transformed during the war into a notorious "model" concentration camp, intended to promote Nazi propaganda. At Terezin, Jews from the Czech Protectorate and elsewhere in Europe lived under inhumane conditions while waiting to be transported eastward to be murdered, mostly at Auschwitz. Despite the camp's horrible conditions, creative artists, musicians and other prisoners produced and performed theatrical plays, music, poetry, and literary works. Frank's mother and uncle, their parents, grandparents, and other family members were imprisoned in Terezin from 1942-1944. Only Frank's mother and uncle survived. Late afternoon return to Prague. Free time.

In the evening opera or concert performance.

*Overnight in Prague.*

(B-L-D)

### DAY 5

After breakfast, we will travel to **Karlovy Vary**, also known as Carlsbad, a world famous hot springs town. It is literally built on water. There are fifteen hot springs in or near five colonnades along the Tepla River. Karlovy Vary was an internationally famed spa town for the gentry of Europe, including notables like Freud, Kafka, and Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first president. With a tour guide, we will stroll the promenade

while sipping therapeutic spring water and will enjoy the grand buildings along the Tepla River. Later on, we will meet with members of the local Jewish community.

Karlovy Vary is also home of the world famous **Moser Glass Factory** that was founded in 1857 by the engraver Ludwig Moser, who was from a prominent local Jewish family. Moser glass has been acclaimed for its outstanding quality and artistry and is known worldwide as the “glass of kings.” All products are handmade in an array of shapes and Moser signature colors.

Karlovy Vary also produces a popular herbal liqueur called **Becherovka** (sometimes also referred to as "the 16th spring"). This bittersweet classic is based on a secret recipe originally concocted in 1807 by Jan Becher in a Karlovy Vary pharmacy (now the Jan Becher Museum). Word has it that today, only two people know the recipe. The ingredients are simple and purely natural: Karlsbad water, alcohol, sugar, and a mixture of herbs and spices. The precise combination, though, is a closely guarded secret.

*Overnight in Karlovy Vary*

(B-L-D)

## **DAY 6**

This morning, we continue our travels to **Plzen** (Pilsen), the capital of the western Czech Republic that was liberated by General Patton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Army in 1945. In 1295 A.D., the city of Nova Plzen (New Plzen) was founded by Czech King Wenceslas II on the confluence of the Radbuza and Mze rivers, 6 miles northwest of the original Old Plzen. Plzen is an important cultural, transport, commercial, and industrial center, known primarily for the products of Plzen Brewery (**Pilsner Urquell Beer**) and Skoda Engine Works.

We will visit the **Moorish Revival Great Synagogue**, the second largest in Europe (after the Dohany Synagogue in Budapest). Plzen was also influential in the life of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, who later traveled to America and founded Hebrew Union College, the main seminary for training clergy in Reform Judaism.

Following the Great Synagogue, we will proceed to **General Patton's Museum**, which includes more than a thousand exhibits from private collections. It documents the advancements and deployment of the US Army in Czechoslovakia until November 1945.

Later on, a meeting with the members of the local Jewish community will be organized.

*Overnight in Plzen*

(B-L-D)

## DAY 7

This morning, will continue due south to the town of Cesky Krumlov. On the way, we will stop in the small town of **Klatovy** (23,500 pop.) in the Plzen Region. King Premysl Otakar II founded Klatovy from 1260 to 1263. We will explore Klatovy's central old square with its important historic sites such as the Black Tower, reaching a height of 81 meters (245 feet) and built between 1547-1557 of unplastered ashlar blocks; the Baroque Pharmacy, "U Bileho jednorozce" (At the White Unicorn), a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in business from 1776 to 1966, complete with rococo furnishings and apothecary supplies; and the Catacombs, where 30 mummies are preserved.

**Cesky Krumlov** is a small ancient city in the South Bohemian Region (UNESCO World Heritage Site). Construction of the town and the castle began in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century at a ford in the Vltava River. The core of the old town, full of preserved medieval history and architecture, is Located within a horseshoe bend of the river. The famous **Krumlov Castle** contains a preserved **Baroque theater** (dated at 1776), complete with original stage machinery, scenery and props. We will have dinner with musical entertainment at a local restaurant.

*Overnight in Cesky Krumlov*

(B-D)

## DAY 8

This morning we will have a guided tour of Cesky Krumlov, followed by a spectacular private tour of the castle, including the Baroque theater. The afternoon is reserved for your leisure to visit the numerous galleries, shops, and museums or to relax by the river or stroll through the narrow streets of this mystical historic town.

*Overnight in Cesky Krumlov*

(B)

## DAY 9

Following breakfast, we will depart for Prague (3 hours driving time). Arriving in Prague early in the afternoon, we will have time to get ready for the next day's departure and for some last minute shopping in town.

Early farewell dinner followed by a final discussion.

*Overnight in Prague*

(B-D)

## DAY 10

Morning departures to Prague airport.

(B)

## **TOUR SPECIFICATIONS:**

We will be traveling in a private air-conditioned small bus and staying in nice country/spa places with the usual comfort. The tour price includes all accommodations with **all** breakfasts, **4** lunches, **7** dinners (beverages are not included), all land transportation, transfer from/to the airport (only on tour's arriving and departing days), tickets for all planned events, local guides where needed, services of Tour Central Europe's Tour Directors, and special events. *Round trip airfare from your point of departure is not included.*

- \* **All land arrangements as described above:**
  - **Double room occupancy:       \$3,325.00/person**
  - **Single room occupancy:       \$3,625.00**
  
- \* **The prices are based on a minimum of 10 travelers. We reserve the right to cancel the tour due to an insufficient number of travelers.**
  
- \* **Booking this trip early is advised. Space is limited.**
  
- \* **Deposit of \$700.00 per traveler is due with registration. This will secure your spot.**
  
- \* **We would like to suggest arranging your own round trip air travel from your hometown to and from Prague (PRG). Please contact us first prior to finalizing your reservation. If you are not able to make your own travel plans we can assist you.**
  
- \* **In order to get full benefit of this trip, adequate physical conditioning is recommended due to a good amount of walking, hiking/biking and exercising. If you require assistance getting around, this tour may not be appropriate for you. Please contact us prior making decision to discuss it further.**
  
- \* **We are strongly recommending to purchase a travel insurance to protect yourself and your investment in case you have to cancel or interrupt this tour. In order to provide you with the most effective coverage, the policy exclusion for "Pre-Existing Conditions" will be waived if you purchase a plan within 14 days of making your initial deposit payment for your trip. Please let us help you with securing your travel insurance.**
  
- \* **Please consult the "Reservations" and "Terms & Conditions/Travel Insurance" on our website, [www.TourCentralEurope.com](http://www.TourCentralEurope.com) for more detailed information.**

*(If there is still space available, late registration is possible).*