

# Jewish History Tour of Prague, Vienna, Budapest and More

July 8 –16, 2019

Led by Rabbi Dr. Dovid Katz

## Itinerary

(All Details Subject to Change)

Ashkenazic Jewry came in two flavors: Western-Central Europe, and Eastern Europe. On our trip we visit the most famous communities of Central Europe, where Jews lived richly religious and cultural lives over the course of many centuries. Our tour will span a wide range of history and culture, from the modest, yet stately, ancient Alteneueschul in Prague to the magnificent palaces of the Hapsburg Emperors in Vienna; from the small communities of Eisenstadt and Nikolsburg, where the clashes between the Old and the New led to the rise of Modern Orthodoxy, to the once teeming Jewish center of Vienna-the capital of Central Europe-where we will experience Shabbos with members of the Jewish community; from Budapest, where we will tour the great synagogues of Hungarian Jewry, as well as the home of Theodore Herzl (in addition to enjoying a scenic boat ride on the Danube) to Schonbrunn, the magnificent palace of the Hapsburg Emperors. In spite of often hostile surroundings, the Jews of these cities built communities of remarkable inner-strength, faith and creativity. We will be there, and experience the actual places where so much of our Judaism today originates.



### 7 July, 2019 – Sunday – USA departure

- Depart the USA

### 8 July, 2019 – Monday – Prague

- Arrive at the Prague's International Airport.
- Meet your local guide at the airport.
- Transfer to the Jewish Quarter.
- Walking tour of **Jewish Quarter-AKA Josefov**. The oldest and most historic Jewish Quarter in Europe. For centuries, Prague was the main center of Torah scholarship in Europe, a proud community with ancient and unique *minhagim* which attracted the greatest rabbis of the day to serve there, including the **Maharal**, the **Tosafos Yom Tov**, the **Noda B'Yehuda** and many others. We are on the site of some of the most famous events in Jewish history. Prague was renowned for its famous nine synagogues (most communities had one!). Many have been destroyed, but we will visit the four that remain:
  - **Old-New Synagogue (Staronova synagoga)**  
The oldest preserved Synagogue in Central Europe. This is the famous **Maharal** synagogue, associated with the story of the Golem of Prague. It was built in the late 13th century and until now it has served as a house of prayer and the main synagogue of the Prague Jewish community.
  - **Maisel Synagogue (Maiselova synagoga)**  
The 16<sup>th</sup> century synagogue built by philanthropist **Mordechai Meisel**, before his entire fortune was "confiscated" by a rapacious Emperor.
  - **Klaus Synagogue (Klausova synagoga)** – The synagogue for "serious learners." It was in this synagogue that the Maharal directed his popular yeshiva and wrote most of his famous works before he was elected Chief



Rabbi of Prague. Though he was a candidate for the post many times, the Maharal's habit of blunt speaking caused him to lose elections repeatedly before he was finally chosen.

**Spanish Synagogue (Spanelska synagoga).** Under the influence of modern times, in the mid 1800s, Prague Jewry "crashed" religiously and lost all traces of its former glory. In its stead, Prague Jews built impressive synagogue structures, such as this one. Here, Prague Jews, who were well-educated secularly but ignorant Jewishly, wrestled with finding a new Jewish identity.

**Old Jewish Cemetery-** The oldest and most famous cemetery in Europe. The Maharal, the Kli Yakar and the Rav Avigdor Kara are among the great Torah luminaries buried here. The Noda B'Yehudah is buried nearby.



- **Packed Lunch**
- Check-in at hotel
- **Welcome Dinner in Kosher Restaurant**

Overnight in Prague.

### **9 July, 2019 – Tuesday – Grand Tour of Prague**

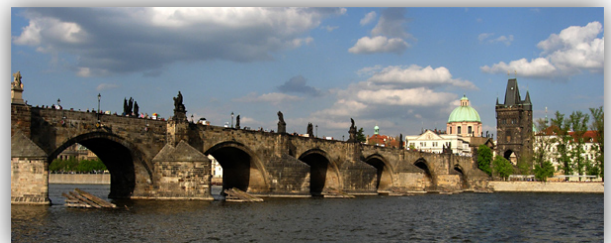
- **Breakfast**
- Depart hotel for a guided tour of Golden Prague, including the 1,000 year old Royal Castle of Hradcany, have a wonderful look at all Prague from **Castle Hill**, which provides a beautiful and breathtaking view of the city. **Prague Castle** is the most popular sight visited in Prague. It is the largest ancient castle in the world. Constructed in the 9th century by Prince Borivoj, the castle transformed itself from a wooden fortress surrounded by earthen bulwarks to the imposing form it has today. This castle was the site of the famous **Defenstration of Prague**, which led to the Thirty Years War (1618-1648)-a bloody conflict which had the most unusual effects on Prague's Jews, many of whom who were engaged in trying to get their Rabbi, the Tosafos Yom Tov, imprisoned and hanged!

We pass by Kafka Museum and Statue and stop for a short talk on Kafka. **Franz Kafka**, one of the most renowned authors of the 20th century, is famous for his descriptions of the bizarre (hence, the term *kafkaesque*). A totally secular Jew, Kafka had an extremely interesting "brush" with Orthodox Judaism and nearly became shomer shabbos. This little known but remarkable tale of Prague's most famous writer will be explored by Rabbi Katz.

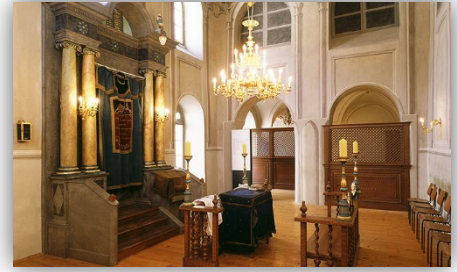


- **Packed Lunch**
- We walk across the **Charles Bridge** on the way to the City. The Charles Bridge is a famous historic bridge that crosses the Vltava River in Prague. Built in 1357 under the auspices of King Charles IV, and finished in the beginning of the 15th century, this bridge was originally called the Stone Bridge or the Prague Bridge but has been dubbed the "Charles Bridge" since 1870. Among the most notable sculptures, one can find the statuary of St. Luthgard, the Crucifix with the Hebrew inscription *קדוש, קדוש, קדוש* (*Holy, holy, holy...*) The story of this Hebrew inscription gives us an idea of the severe humiliation and persecution of Prague's Jews during the long era of the Catholic Counter-Reformation

- **Walking City tour of Prague**  
This relaxed tour covers the stunning Prague city center on both sides of the Vltava River and includes all the most popular sights. As you walk through the streets, along the river and cross the squares of Prague, immerse yourself in the stunning architecture all around. Among the sites you will see on this tour will be



the charming **Old Town Square** with the famous **Astronomical Clock**, riverside promenades, stunning **Malá Strana** and lush **Kampa Park** (an island in the Vltava River), **the National Theatre**- home of the Czech Opera and ballet, as well as one of the most important Czech cultural institutions in Czech society- **Wenceslas Square**- one of the main city squares and the center of the business and cultural communities in the New Town of Prague. Many historical events occurred there, and it is a traditional setting for demonstrations, celebrations, and other public gatherings. It is part of the historic center of Prague, a World Heritage Site.



- **Dinner at Kosher restaurant in Prague**

### **Prague at Night**

Overnight in Prague.

## **10 July, 2019 – Wednesday – Mikulov and Eisenstadt**

- **Breakfast**
- Leaving Prague behind Prague, we journey through the Czech countryside toward **Vienna**.
- En route, located in the South Moravian part of the Czech Republic, we visit the capital city of Jewish Moravia- the town of **Mikulov, or Nikolsburg**, as it was called in the past. Here we encounter an entire separate world- the world of Moravian Jewry. Moravia was a unique and independent province of the Kingdom of Bohemia, whose Jews had distinct customs and culture, and a state-wide Jewish government which legislated for all the communities. The Fifty Moravian Jewish communities had a statewide constitution known as the *Shai Takkanot*, the 310 Articles of Confederation, which closely regulated Jewish life under the direction of a Chief Rabbi and an elected legislature. The capital-city of Moravian Jewry was Nikolsburg, famous center of yeshivos, scholarship, and philanthropy. The famous Hasidic master **Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg**, tried to introduce Hasidism into Moravia, but the solid misnagdim of the province, intensely proud of their minhagim and nusach, were not interested! Moravia was also a notorious center of Sabbatianism, as we will discuss. Among the famous Rabbis who served here was **Samson Raphael Hirsch**, who introduced his unique form of Modern Orthodoxy here in the 1840s, which provoked much controversy.
- **Synagogue:**  
As we walk through the **Jewish Quarter**, we will visit the only preserved synagogue of the Polish type in Moravia which dates from the mid 1500s.
- **Jewish cemetery:**  
Buried in the Jewish cemetery of this small town are some of the most famous Torah scholars in history, including the **Tzemach Tzedek**, **Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg**, **Rabbi Mordechai Banet** (who was so highly regarded that Nikolsburg fought other communities for the right to have him buried there).
- **Packed lunch**
- We continue to **Eisenstadt**, capital of the Jewish region known as the *Sheva Kehillos*, the **Seven Communities**. Jews were often not permitted to reside in Vienna due to its virulent anti-semitism. Not far away, however, they were welcomed in the territories belonging to the fabulously wealthy leading Hungarian noble family, the Esterhazys. The **Princes of Esterhazy** protected their Jews, who settled in seven communities and developed major centers of Torah, Chesed...and wealth. **Samson Wertheimer**, whose synagogue we will visit, was the richest Jew in the world! Here, we are in the heart of Western Hungarian Jewry, and many famous Torah scholars and yeshivos prospered for centuries under the benevolent protection of the Esterhazy princes. A blend of the very pious and the modern, Eisenstadt in the mid 1800s elected as its rabbi the famous **Azriel Hildesheimer**, who pioneered the first "**Yeshiva University**" in this small town, which attracted students from



all over the world...including the USA! Here we are on the site of Western Jews who were highly educated and cultured, and also extremely religious.

- Continue to Vienna
- Check-in at hotel in Vienna
- **Dinner in Vienna**

### **Vienna at Night**

Overnight in Vienna.

### **11 July, 2019 – Thursday – Grand Tour of Vienna:**

Welcome to **Vienna**, one of the leading cities in the world, famous for culture and history. Vienna was the capital of the sprawling **Hapsburg Empire**, which once ruled all of Central Europe. There are two “faces” of Vienna- the “Gentile” Vienna, and the “Jewish” Vienna, and we will tour both. Our day starts with the former, where we will pass-by many of the famous sites, culminating in the **Hofburg**, the famous palace of the **Emperor Franz Josef** (1848-1916) and his predecessors-a palace that has witnessed glory, tragedy and treachery. In the afternoon, we will visit “Jewish Vienna,” where Jews lived under the Hapsburgs for seven centuries in a relationship that ran the spectrum from the murderous (Albert V) to the sublime (Franz Josef). Vienna has seen every kind of Jew and every kind of Judaism, and we will explore them all, in the city in which they lived.

- **Breakfast**
- After breakfast we begin the Grand tour of the city. We will have a bus ride through the ring of Vienna and we will show you numerous grand buildings, such as the **MAK**, the **State Opera House**, the magnificent **Museum of Fine Arts** and the **Natural History Museum**, the cultural district, the **Museums Quarter**, the **Parliament**, the **City Hall** and the **Burg Theater**.

We then visit the **Hofburg** palace and the Heldenplatz.



- **Packed lunch**

### **Tour of Jewish Vienna**

- After lunch we begin our Jewish Heritage tour of Vienna. Our tour will take us to many famous sites, including the **Judenplatz** and the **StadtTempel**. The **Judenplatz** is the site of “frum” Vienna, where great sages in Medieval times resided and made the town a thriving center of Torah, and where the evil Hapsburgs later massacred the entire Jewish population in the fifteenth century under the notorious “**Wiener Gezerah**” (later Hapsburgs brought other Jews in to repopulate the Jewish Quarter). The **StadtTempel**, built in the early 1800s, is an architectural “face” of the modern Jewish community, more secure politically but more unsure of its Jewish identity – the classic dilemma of the modern Jew, a subject worthy of much reflection. Interestingly, it was just such a conflicted Jew of 19<sup>th</sup> century Vienna, **Theodore Herzl**, who founded the Zionist Movement which led to the creation of the State of Israel.
- **Dinner in Vienna**

### **Vienna at Night**



Overnight in Vienna.

### 12 July, 2019 – Friday - Schönbrunn Palace

- **Breakfast**
- We will visit the **Schönbrunn Palace**, one of the most magnificent palaces in the world. It was built by the most famous of the Hapsburg rulers, the brilliant and bigoted **Empress Maria Theresa** (1740-1780). In typical Austrian fashion, this Hapsburg, who could barely tolerate the presence of a Jew, financed the building of the magnificent complex with Jewish money...raised by her Jewish banker! As **Mozart** composed and performed so brilliantly on the grounds of this "Austrian Versailles," the Empress and her son **Joseph II**, experimented with different ways of exploiting her Jewish subjects, from oppression to tolerance and acceptance. Her successors, particularly her great, great grandson **Franz Josef**, was much more favorably inclined towards his Jewish subjects, and during his long reign, Vienna came to have one of the largest Jewish (and Hasidic!) communities in the world.
- **Packed lunch**
- After lunch free time to prepare for Shabbos.
- **07:00 p.m. – Shabbos Service at the Stadtempel Synagogue**
- **Shabbos Dinner at restaurant**



Overnight in Vienna

### 13 July, 2019 – Saturday – Shabbat Shalom

- **Breakfast**
- **Shabbos Service at the Stadtempel Synagogue.**
- **Shabbos Lunch at restaurant**
- After lunch we will have a walking tour led by Rabbi Katz of the Jewish Quarter of Vienna.
- **Havdallah and Dinner in Vienna**

#### Vienna at Night

Overnight in Vienna.

### 14 July, 2019 – Sunday – Welcome to Budapest

- **Breakfast**  
Check out of the hotel.
- **Kosher packed lunch**



- Continue to **Budapest**, Hungary's "new" capital (after 1867, the old capital was Pressburg/Bratislava). Renowned as one of Europe's most beautiful cities, in the modern era Budapest became one of the largest Jewish communities, with over 100,000 Jews. Hungarian Jewry (which numbered a million before Hitler) was incredibly diverse, from extreme right to extreme left, from Satmar Hasidim to the assimilated, from the intermarried to the numerous converts to Christianity. Here the Jews created a life for themselves, as well as for European culture. In true Hungarian fashion, the Jews here were highly organized and boasted model Jewish institutions, but divided into two communities that barely spoke to each other! Here we encounter a unique Jewish story, which in its end witnesses the savagery of the Holocaust and the heroism of Raoul Wallenberg.



Here too we will visit "Gentile" Budapest and "Jewish Budapest." The Hungarians fought the Hapsburgs for centuries until they worked out a deal, "the Compromise of 1867," which left them free within the Empire. The Hungarians then built a magnificent set of buildings and bridges to celebrate their independence. Among them are the **Chain Bridge**, **Elisabeth Bridge** over the Danube River and the **Parliament Building**.

#### Jewish Tour of Budapest

- In the afternoon we are in "Jewish" Budapest, visiting famous sites, from the **Dohany Street Great Synagogue** (Europe's largest) to the birthplace of **Theodore Herzl**, to **Raoul Wallenberg's** "safe-houses," the Shoes Memorial on the Danube Promenade and much more. Here we encounter the unique Hungarian Jewish situation, where religious differences were so strong that Hungarian Jews legally "divorced," with the law recognizing two distinct religions: the Jewish religion and the Orthodox Jewish religion. Of course, to Hitler, none of this mattered!
- **Dinner in Budapest**



#### Budapest at Night

Overnight in Budapest

#### 15 July, 2019 – Monday – Grand Budapest sightseeing.

- **Breakfast**
- We will drive to the **Gellert Hill** and enjoy the great view to the city, see the **Citadel** and the **Statue of Liberty**. Our next stop will be the **Castle District**, walking along the cobblestone streets and discover the Hungarian and **Jewish Medieval heritage**. See the **Fishermen Bastion**, visit the small **Medieval Synagogue**. (After the Turkish occupation, from 1686 until 2018 this was not used for a Synagogue – and just very recently re-opened!)
- **Packed lunch**
- Drive along the elegant **Andrassy Avenue** to see **Opera House**, **Heroes Square**, **City Park**, **Szechenyi Thermal Bath** and many more.
- **Dinner in Budapest**

#### Budapest at Night

- After dinner we will enjoy a **Boat Cruise** and a sightseeing show on the **Danube River**.

Overnight in Budapest

**16 July, 2019 – Tuesday – Departure day**

- **Breakfast**
- Check-out of hotel in Budapest
- Transfer to the airport.

---

▪ **All meals catered and are included in package price**

*\*Subject to availability*