

## Heritage Journey to Latvia, Lithuania and Belarus

Riga • Kaunas • Vilnius • Minsk • Brest • Grodno

Dates: September 6 - 20, 2019

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### Overview Daily Itinerary

|                    |                                     |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Day 1, Fri, Sep 6  | Arrive Riga, Latvia                 |
| Day 2, Sat, Sep 7  | Riga                                |
| Day 3, Sun, Sep 8  | Riga                                |
| Day 4, Mon, Sep 9  | Riga • Siauliai, Lithuania • Kaunas |
| Day 5, Tue, Sep 10 | Kaunas • Vilnius                    |
| Day 6, Wed, Sep 11 | Vilnius                             |
| Day 7, Thu, Sep 12 | Vilnius                             |
| Day 8, Fri, Sep 13 | Vilnius • Minsk, Belarus            |
| Day 9, Sat, Sep 14 | Minsk                               |

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|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Day 10, Sun, Sep 15 | Minsk • Pinsk • Chomsk • Antopol • Brest |
| Day 11, Mon, Sep 16 | Brest                                    |
| Day 12, Tue, Sep 17 | Brest • Ruzhany • Grodno                 |
| Day 13, Wed, Sep 18 | Grodno                                   |
| Day 14, Thu, Sep 19 | Grodno • Navahrudak • Mir • Minsk        |
| Day 15, Fri, Sep 20 | Depart Minsk                             |

### **Descriptive Daily Itinerary**

#### **Day 1, Fri, Sep 6            Arrive Riga, Latvia**

Upon arrival in Riga, travelers are met at the airport and transferred to the city-center hotel.

Gather this evening for the **welcome dinner** at a restaurant in the city marking the beginning of the trip.

*Meals: In flight, D*

#### **Semarah Metropole Hotel or similar**

*Semarah Metropole Hotel, built in 1871, is the oldest hotel in Riga and is located in the Old Town near the Opera House and the central shopping area. This family-owned hotel is a perfect setting combining history, elegance and comfort. It was completely renovated in 1992 in the light colors of Scandinavian design.*

#### **Day 2, Sat, Sep 7            Riga**

Riga was first a fishing village founded by native Livonians, a Finno-Ugric people related to the Estonians and the Finns. When the proto-Balts, an Indo-European people, arrived, they gradually assimilated most of the Livonians. The resulting mix of people, now called Latvians,



lived in small kingdoms, easy prey for the German crusaders who came to spread Christianity to the pagans at the beginning of the 13th century. For the next 500 years, while the leadership of the country changed hands among the Swedes, Poles and Russians, the ethnic German aristocracy hung on to its autonomy and its feudal estates.

Peter the Great conquered Latvia in the early 1700s, and Riga began to grow as a trade and industrial center. Between 1857 and 1863, the medieval town walls were demolished, and parks and green belts were allowed to grow in their stead. Although the town was badly damaged during both world wars and neglected during its Soviet period, today Riga is Latvia's flourishing and lively center of the arts, Art Nouveau architecture and nightlife.

Following breakfast, take a guided walking tour of Riga's Historic Town Center, which has

been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1997, and is recognized as having the finest collection of art nouveau buildings in Europe, and some lovely examples of medieval and Gothic architecture. Among other sites, see the **Riga Castle**, built in 1330 on the banks of the Daugava River; the **Dome Cathedral**, the biggest working church in the Baltics; the **Swedish Gate**, a part of the Old Town's medieval walls that once fully surrounded Riga; the **Three Brothers**, the oldest stone residential buildings in town; and the **Freedom Monument**, erected in 1935 to honor the memory of those who fought and died for Latvian independence during the military's conflicts with Soviet Russia from 1918 to 1920.

Also visit some of the most important sites of Riga's Jewish community, including the site of the former Big Choral Synagogue, of which a metal menorah and a memorial stone are all that remain; the **Riga Synagogue**, also called **Peitav Shul**, the only remaining working synagogue in the city; **Bikur Holim Hospital**; the **Old Jewish Cemetery** dating from the 18th century; and visit the suburb of **Maskavas**, the former Jewish quarter and Riga ghetto.

After completion of the day's program, return to hotel for the evening at leisure. Dinner tonight is independent.

*Meals: B, L*

### **Day 3, Sun, Sep 8                      Riga**

Start the day with a visit to Riga's **Central Market**, the second largest market in Europe, established in the shelter of four obsolete zeppelin hangars.

Continue on a tour of Riga's most famous **Art Nouveau** buildings, many designed by Mikhail Eisenstein (father of film director Sergei Eisenstein). The imaginative and decorative Art Nouveau style took root in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and resulted in beautifully decorated facades adorned with sculpture, ironwork, and stylized motifs drawn from nature. UNESCO has declared that Riga has the finest collection of Art Nouveau architecture in Europe.



In the afternoon visit **Kipsala**, Riga's quiet island district located on the left bank of the Daugava River. A former industrial zone, Kipsala has in recent years become one of the city's unexpected hotspots, particularly popular among expats. The island is a unique blend of old and new, full of charming wooden homes, cobblestone streets, and parks alongside trendy loft apartments and restaurants. Here visit the **Zanis Lipke Memorial** dedicated to the life of local Rigan Zanis Lipke, who during World War II saved more than 50 Jews by hiding them in a concealed bunker under his shed. The modern memorial and museum that stands near the old Lipke home allow visitors to experience the stark living conditions in the bunker, and contain a small exhibit on the life of Lipke himself.

End the day with a visit to **Bikernieki Forest** on the outskirts of Riga, the site of one of the largest mass murders in occupied Latvia during the Holocaust. Here between 1941 and 1944, the Gestapo killed an estimated 40,000 people, most of them Latvian and Eastern European Jews transferred from the Riga ghetto, but also Soviet POWs, political prisoners, and innocent civilians. A memorial was constructed here in 2001 to pay tribute to Bikernieki's fallen.

Enjoy a free evening for independent discovery.

*Meals: B, L*

#### **Day 4, Mon, Sep 9            Riga • Siauliai, Lithuania • Kedainiai • Kaunas**

Depart Riga this morning and drive south to Lithuania. A short distance after entering Lithuania, stop at the **Hill of Crosses**, a powerful symbol of faith and perseverance. This small hill, which in early times accommodated a defensive fortification, is totally hidden by a multitude of crosses planted in the ground by local believers. During the Soviet era, authorities regularly tore down and burned the crosses, though many of them were valuable examples of folk art. Undaunted, Lithuanian Catholics, artists and patriots would steal up the hill at night and plant more. The last major attempt at leveling the shrine was in 1975. Since then local people and travelers have placed thousands upon thousands of crosses on the hill. The evocative atmosphere of this sacred place draws thousands of believers and pilgrims each year.



Continue to **Siauliai**, once a center of Jewish learning and Haskalah. Here visit the **Frenkel Factory Synagogue**, the only surviving synagogue out of 15 that flourished in prewar Siauliai. The city's Jewish population of 8,000 was second only to that of Kaunas before the Nazis established a ghetto here in 1941. Today a museum of Jewish history is open at the site.

Continuing to Kaunas, make a stop in the town of Kedainiai (Keydan) to visit the **Kedainiai Multicultural Center** housed in a former synagogue.

Arrive in Kaunas in the evening and check in to hotel for dinner and a one-night stay.

*Meals: B, L, D*

#### *Hotel Kaunas or similar*

*Located in an elegant 19th century building in the heart of Kaunas, the four-star Hotel Kaunas features a fine restaurant serving Lithuanian and international specialties, and a fitness center with pool and sauna. Rooms include satellite TV, WiFi access, minibar and hairdryer.*

#### **Day 5, Tue, Sep 10            Kaunas • Vilnius**

**Kaunas** is the second largest city in Lithuania. Founded at the confluence of the Nemunas

and Neris Rivers and first mentioned in written sources in 1361, Kaunas is now an important business center and home to seven universities. Kaunas has a reputation for political protest, and a large Russian garrison was quartered here in the 19th century after several uprisings. In 1972, 19-year-old student Romas Kalantas set fire to himself in front of the Kaunas Music Theater to protest Soviet repression of Lithuania.

This morning embark on a **Jewish Heritage** and **Old Town tour**. Grand Duke Vytautas first brought Jews to Kaunas in the early 15th century. By the time the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, there were over 30,000 Jews living peacefully in a section of Kaunas called **Slobodka**. In 1941, the Nazis had walled off the area and sealed about 29,000 people inside. This was the Kaunas Ghetto, where a symphony orchestra of Jewish musicians played weekly in the years before the inhabitants were either killed or sent to other camps. One synagogue, built in 1871, remains from those times, with a memorial dedicated to the estimated 1,700 children killed during the Holocaust.

Constructed in 1872, the neo-baroque **Kaunas Synagogue** was one of 35 synagogues in the city before WWII. With a glowing interior and rather neglected exterior, the synagogue still holds services, although it has been the target of anti-Semitic graffiti and nonviolent hate crimes.

Pay your respects at the **Ninth Fort**, the 19th century fortress used by the Nazis as an execution camp. Jews from the Kaunas Ghetto were systematically rounded up and forced to dig mass graves, where they were then shot and buried. Today a gigantic memorial stands near the field where the bodies were later disinterred and burned in an attempt to hide the murders.

In the afternoon make the short drive to Vilnius, arriving in time for dinner.

*Meals: B, L, D*

*Artis Centrum Hotel or similar*

*Hotel Artis opened in May of 2001 and is located in a renovated 18th century building in the Old Town center of Vilnius. This small hotel has 65 elegantly decorated air-conditioned rooms. Facilities include an elevator, a bar and restaurant. Each room contains satellite TV, phone, Internet access, in-room safe and minibar.*

**Day 6, Wed, Sep 11      Vilnius**

Following breakfast, spend the day exploring major architectural and historical monuments of Lithuania's capital city, as well as Jewish historical monuments.

From its founding in 1323, **Vilnius** has survived successive attacks by Crusaders, Crimean Tatars, Russians, Napoleon's armies, Poles and Germans. Nevertheless, structures in Gothic, baroque, Renaissance and neo-classical styles are still standing today. It is now considered to be the largest baroque city north of the Alps and is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The **Jewish Ghetto** in Vilnius was set up by the Nazis in 1941 in the city center on territory that had historically been a Jewish neighborhood. During the 2 years of its existence the



Jewish population was reduced to almost zero. Before the ghetto was even delineated, nearly 20,000 Vilnius Jews were rounded up and murdered.

Built in 1903 in the Moorish style, the **Choral Synagogue** is the only remaining synagogue in Vilnius. Converted into a metal-workers' shop by the Soviets after WWII, the building was damaged by the vibrations and then abandoned. With help from the World Monuments Fund, the synagogue was repaired and renovated from 2008 to 2010.

The exterior uses two different tones of brick, creating bands of color, and inside, the lovely prayer room features hand-carved wood and marble columns.

Explore the **Vilna Gaon State Jewish Museum**. Named for the 18th-century Talmudic scholar instrumental in making Vilnius a spiritual center for Jews, it is the only museum in Lithuania dedicated to the history, culture, and heritage of Lithuanian Jews. It consists of several branches, including the **Tolerance Center**, focusing on the rich history and cultural heritage of Litvaks (Lithuanian Jews); the Holocaust Museum, with its sobering interactive memorial of children who died in the Holocaust as well as those who survived; and the **Paneriai Memorial Museum**, located at the mass-grave site of 100,000+ people murdered in the Holocaust. A stunning museum branch that opened in 2017 is the **Samuel Bak Museum**, named for the internationally acclaimed Litvak (Lithuanian Jew) artist who began drawing in the Vilnius ghetto at age 9 and survived the Holocaust.

Visit the **Jewish Tolerance Center**. A branch of Vilnius' State Jewish Museum, the Tolerance Center features a permanent exhibition on the cultural heritage of Lithuanians Jews, as well as artifacts from the Great Synagogue of Vilnius and exhibits on fundamental human rights.

Pay a visit to the **Jewish Cemetery**. Vilnius has had three Jewish cemeteries. The first and largest was closed by the czarist authorities in 1831 and destroyed by the Soviets. The Soviets also destroyed the second, in the 1960s. The newest is in the **Šeškinė District**. Some of the graves were moved from the older cemeteries before they were destroyed - one of the most famous is that of the Vilna Gaon.

*Meals: B, L*



**Day 7, Thu, Sep 12            Vilnius**

Today pay a visit to **Paneriai Forest**, on the outskirts of Vilnius, the site where the Gestapo murdered over 100,000 people between 1941 and 1944, most of them Vilna Jews. Their bodies were dumped into large pits dug by other captives. A memorial and small museum stand here today to commemorate the lives lost and to keep alive the memory of Lithuania's



Holocaust. The pits where the victims were buried are still visible.

In the afternoon visit **Trakai** and explore the **Trakai Castle**. The 14th century town of Trakai was one of Lithuania's first capitals, and has two lakeside castles. The peninsula castle was destroyed in the 17th century, and only ruins remain. The restored island castle was built in the style called Brick Gothic on a little island in Lake Galve. (Brick Gothic took root in places like the Baltics where there was little native stone to build with.) At the end of the 14th century,

when Lithuania expanded its territories as far as the Black Sea this castle became the residence of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes. Grand Duke Vytautas brought some 400 families of Karaites (Turkic adherents of Karaite Judaism) from the Crimea to serve as his castle guards. An active kinessa – a Karaite house of prayer – is located here, as is the **Ethnography Museum of Karaites**.

Return to Vilnius for the free evening in preparation for departure to Belarus the following morning.

*Meals: B, L*

**Day 8, Fri, Sep 13            Vilnius • Minsk, Belarus**

Following breakfast, transfer to the railway station for departure to Minsk by a morning train. Upon arrival in Minsk, check in to the city center hotel, break for an independent lunch, and take an introductory tour of the city in the afternoon.

**Minsk** is the capital of Belarus and is also the headquarters of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The city is a living testimony to the atrocities of World War II; nearly half of the city's population perished during the war.

The tour of the city includes the **Square of Independence**, the older parts of the city, **Victory Square**, the **Square of Yakuba Kolosa**, the **Central Road**, **Kupalovski Park**, **Komarovsky Market**, and a ride on **Minsk subway**.

Following dinner at a restaurant in the city, return to hotel.

*Meals: B, D*

*Hotel Minsk or similar*

*Hotel Minsk is situated in the heart of Minsk on Independence Square. Within walking distance are various historical monuments, theaters, museums and the circus. The hotel underwent complete renovation in 2003. All rooms are equipped with A/C, direct international phones, satellite TV, minibar, room safe and hair dryers.*

**Day 9, Sat, Sep 14            Minsk**

Spend the day on a guided tour focused on places of Jewish heritage. Jews have lived in Minsk since the 16th century. A vital and flexible community, the Minsk Jews were able to adapt and thrive as the city changed hands from the Kingdom of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to the Russian Empire. Minsk became one of the largest and most important Jewish communities in Russia, with a Jewish population of over 50,000.

By the beginning of Nazi occupation in 1941, 90,000 Jews lived in Minsk. The Minsk Ghetto was established on the outskirts of town soon after, and the majority of its inhabitants were killed in its first years. What set Minsk apart, however, was the existence of a strong Jewish underground resistance movement, which was able to save nearly 10,000 Jews, a record during the years of the Holocaust.

The **Jewish Heritage tour** of Minsk includes visits to the **Jewish History and Culture Museum**, which features photos, documents, artifacts and films chronicling the Minsk Jewish community since its earliest years; the original **Choral Synagogue**, which is still standing, but was totally redesigned as a neo-Gothic Russian Drama Theater; the orthodox **Beit Israel Synagogue** on Daumana Street; and the **Yama Memorial** on Zaslavska Street built in memory of the 5,000 or more Jews from the Minsk ghetto whom the Nazis killed in this place on March 2, 1942.

Also, during the course of the day, study the **places connected with poet Moyshe Kulbak's life and work**, including the building where he lived, places he worked, and the theater where his plays were performed.

In the afternoon pay a visit to the **Kurapaty Memorial Complex** on the outskirts of the city. In a wooded area here, between 1937 and 1941, thousands of Belarusian citizens were killed and buried in unmarked graves by the Soviet NKVD, the secret police. Made public in 1988, the mass killings were the result of Stalin's repressions, and the victims were accused of being anti-Soviet spies or comparatively well-to-do farmers branded as "kulaks," a class that Stalin wanted to liquidate. The number of the dead has been estimated at from 7,000 to 250,000 people, according to different investigations.



After completion of the day's program, return to hotel for the free evening. Dinner tonight is independent.

*Meals: B, L*

**Day 10, Sun, Sep 15      Minsk • Pinsk • Chomsk • Antopol • Brest**

Following breakfast, check out from the hotel and depart for the western Belarusian city of Brest with stop en route in Pinsk, Chomsk and Antopol.

**Pinsk's** Jewish community was established in 1506, when a charter from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania granted them legal protection, personal and religious freedoms, and the right to self-government, a rarity among Eastern European Jewish communities at the time. Benefitting greatly from the city's strategic location and status within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Pinsk Jews thrived as merchants, moneylenders and craftsmen, and played a vital role in the city's commercial and economic development from the 16th century well into the start of the 20th, despite setbacks under czarist Russian rule.

By the beginning of World War II, about 30,000 Jews lived in Pinsk, constituting nearly 90 percent of the city's total population. Nazis invaded the city on July 4, 1941, and within a matter of weeks murdered 11,000 Jews, burying them in mass graves. A ghetto was established on the outskirts of town in May 1942, which was "liquidated" later that year, killing 10,000 inhabitants in just one day. Nazis executed the majority of the remaining Jewish community during the "final solution."

A number of Jewish residents from neighboring Belarusian cities arrived in Pinsk after the war in an effort to revive the community. A group of Hasidic Jews from the United States arrived in 1991 to help revive the community, and since then, work has been finished to restore the city's one remaining synagogue. Today, there are nearly 500 Jews living in Pinsk.

Make stops in small former Jewish towns of **Chomsk** and **Antopol**, before arriving in Brest in time for dinner.

*Meals: B, L, D*

*Hermitage or similar*

*With an ideal location in the city center, the four star Hermitage features a fine restaurant serving Belarusian, Polish and European cuisine, a cozy lobby bar and a fitness center. Rooms include air conditioning, satellite TV, free Internet access, minibar, in-room safe and hair dryer.*

**Day 11, Mon, Sep 16      Brest**

**Brest** is located near the Polish border on the Berlin-Moscow railway. Founded by Slavs, the city was captured by the Germans in WWI and became part of Poland until the Soviet Union annexed it in 1939. After the war, Brest remained a part of Soviet Belarus.

Spend the day exploring Brest with a visit to the **Brest Fortress and Museum**. Czar Nicholas I had the Brest Fortress built between 1838 and 1842 on the territory of the Old Town. The crenellated red brick citadel became the main Russian outpost on the western border. During the interwar period the fortress was mainly used to house soldiers and did not have much military importance. But that changed with the sudden German invasion, when two regiments stationed at the fortress defended the fort for a month - a heroic defense making Brest one of the 11 "Hero Cities" of the former Soviet Union. Visit the ruins of the White Palace where the Brest-Litovsk negotiations were held, and visit the Defense of Brest Fortress Museum.

Tour Jewish historical sites in the city including the former Great Synagogue (now a movie theater) and the newly restored former Jewish Hospital.

Also visit the **Saved Art Treasures Museum**, an eclectic art exhibition that consists of contraband paintings, sculptures and ceramics confiscated by Belarusian border guards.

Enjoy dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

*Meals: B, L, D*

#### **Day 12, Tue, Sep 17      Brest • Ruzhany • Grodno**

Following breakfast at the hotel, depart for Grodno. The drive lies through the **Belovezhskaya Puscha preserve**. This vast forest situated on the Polish border near Brest was the first site in Belarus to be inscribed onto UNESCO's World Heritage list. It is home to thousands of animal and plant species, many of which are endangered. Originally royal hunting grounds, Belarus' half of it became a National Park in 1932 and the wisent (European Bison) was reintroduced after being hunted to extinction in the area. Now the park is home to one of the last herds of these rare creatures, along with bears, deer and lynx.

Along the way, stop for lunch in Belovezhskaya Puscha, as well as make stops at several small former Jewish towns along the way – **Ruzhany, Pruzhany, Vaukavysk and Lunna** – before arriving in Grodno in time for dinner.

*Meals: B, L, D*

#### *Hotel Neman or similar*

*Opened in 2012, the pleasant three-star Hotel Neman is situated in the center of town and features a restaurant, bar and parking. Rooms include air conditioning, flat-screen TV, minifridge, WiFi and international phone.*

#### **Day 13, Wed, Sep 18      Grodno**

**Grodno**, today a city of nearly 400,000 near the borders of Poland and Lithuania, was founded sometime in the 10th century as a protective fortress and trading post on the Neman River. Poland's Stefan Batory built the New Castle here, and Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas was the city's prince from 1376-1392.

Spend the day exploring city's highlights, including the **New Castle**, and the **Cathedral of Saints Boris and Gleb**, built before 1183 and surviving mainly intact until 1853, when one of its walls collapsed. The walls are clad in clay jugs, whose open throats were used long ago to improve acoustics. The 16th century **Great Choral Synagogue** is considered the oldest in the former Soviet Republics, and is under renovation. The baroque **Church of St. Francis Xavier** was consecrated in the presence of Peter the Great.

Located in the center of town, the **Grodno Great Choral Synagogue** has stood in this place for nearly 500 years. Though the synagogue has suffered multiple fires, desecration and neglect, its exterior has been refurbished and repainted, and the interior is beginning to reflect some of its former glory. When renovations are complete, the building will house a community center, soup kitchen, a mikvah, a canteen with a kosher menu, and classrooms.

Stop at **Zamkova Street** and site of **Ghetto Wall**. Grodno's Jewish population was near 25,000 before the German occupation during WWII. The German Army reached Grodno on the first day of the invasion of the Soviet Union, and soon set about creating the city's first ghetto, around the synagogue. Called Ghetto A, it was meant for skilled workers only. The entrance was on Zemkova Street, between the sidewalk and the roadway.

Also stroll and shop along the pedestrian street, **Sovyetskaya**, the center of activity in Grodno. Small crafts shops, cafés, and restaurants line the street, and performers vie for attention on every corner.

Visit the Grodno **Jewish Cemetery**. Of the three Jewish cemeteries in Grodno, only one remains. The main city center cemetery was destroyed by the Soviets, who dug it up and built a sports stadium over it. The existing cemetery dates from the 18th century and is located across the Neiman River below the New Bridge.

Explore the **Museum At Troitskaya**. Located within Grodno's synagogue, this Museum of the History of the Jews in Grodno opened in 2012. Through photos, DVDs, letters, documents, and films, the exhibits show how the Jews of Grodno lived from the time they began to arrive, in 12th century, up to the present day. Also featured are stories and documents about some of the Righteous of Grodno who helped their neighbors to survive through the Holocaust.

*Meals: B, L, D*

#### **Day 14, Thu, Sep 19      Grodno • Navahrudak • Mir • Minsk**

Today drive back to Minsk with stops in Navahrudak and Mir.

**Navahrudak** is a city of some 30,000 first founded in 1044 during the Kievan Rus. Like much of the rest of the region, Navahrudak was successively ruled by Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and the USSR, and served as a prosperous commercial and administrative hub well into the 20th century. It was a renowned center of Jewish life and culture, home to one of the biggest and most important yeshivas in pre-WWII Europe, and one of the leading centers of the Musar

movement, which stressed ethical, educational, and spiritual discipline within the Orthodox Jewish community. Before WWII, there were nearly 10,000 Jews living in Navahrudak, about 50% of the town's population.

Continuing to Mir, visit the **UNESCO-listed Mir Castle**, begun near the end of the 15th century, using the Gothic style of bricklaying, which alternated the long and short sides of the bricks and divided the façade with plastered niches. Part of its appeal today is that, as time passed, sections of the castle were destroyed and then rebuilt in newer styles, while somehow retaining the compound's harmony and balance. Massive and powerful, Mir Castle is a physical representation of the history of this region of Eastern Europe.

The **Mir Yeshiva** has had a precarious existence, moving here and there from 1914 to nearly 1950 to escape from persecution. Founded in 1815, the yeshiva was forced to move to Ukraine during WWI, then moved back to Mir, where it flourished until the German and Red armies clashed in the region. Relocating to Lithuania, the teachers and pupils remained until they were able to receive the help of the Japanese Consul to Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, who was later named Righteous Among the Nations for allowing thousands of Jews to flee using travel visas. Expelled from Japan, the yeshiva moved to Shanghai, and after the war, finally dispersed to Palestine and the U.S.

The old **Jewish Cemetery** in Mir was founded in 1598. Inside its stone walls, overgrown grasses hide some 100 intact tombstones. Within the cemetery is a new marble grave belonging to a famous spiritual teacher.

Upon arrival in Minsk in the evening, check in to hotel for a one-night stay. Celebrate the journey tonight at the **farewell dinner** marking the conclusion of the trip.

*Meals: B, L, D*

*Hotel Minsk or similar*

**Day 15, Fri, Sep 20      Depart Minsk**

The program concludes this morning with transfers to the airport for international departures.

*Meals: B (flight time permitting), in flight*

## Why MIR?

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