

# Our Story – A Journey to Poland & Central Europe

## An Authentic Israel Experience in Europe

**Dzien dobry! Jo napot kivanok! Dobry den! Hallo! Hello and welcome!**

Thank you for choosing to travel with us to Europe on an Authentic Israel experience. We look forward to sharing 12 memorable days together as we travel from Poland to Hungary and on to Slovakia, Austria, and Czechia. Together we will explore, learn, bear witness, and share moments of joy – returning home with a new sense of perspective on Europe's Jewish history and world heritage.

We hope you will find the *Our Story* journey to be packed with varied activities, historical touring and cultural opportunities. Our days are full and on-the-go, with lots of walking (on lots of cobblestones), standing, seeing, imagining and experiencing. This is certainly not a through-the-bus-window style tour! We want you to have the fullest and most authentic experience possible where it happened.

We look forward to welcoming you, and we hope you are looking forward to all that awaits – new discoveries, new culinary delights, new connections, sharing in our Jewish narrative, and forming meaningful memories together.

*The Authentic Israel Team*



### **PRE-TRIP PREP CHECKLIST**

*Take the time to review this document in its entirety. For your convenience, here is a summary checklist to help prepare you for the travels ahead.*

- Checked your passport expiration date to ensure it does not expire within six months of arrival
- Sent your final travel plan, including your full flight itinerary to [register@authenticisrael.net](mailto:register@authenticisrael.net)
- Contact [register@authenticisrael.net](mailto:register@authenticisrael.net) to book an extra hotel night in Warsaw if arriving early
- Contacted your home cellphone provider to learn about their options for voice/data in Europe
- Considered travel insurance at [www.authenticisrael.com/group](http://www.authenticisrael.com/group) prior to paying your balance
- Notified your debit/credit card company of your travel plans to avoid a potential security hold

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### PROGRAM ITINERARY

An updated program itinerary will be posted 3-4 months in advance of the program start date and generally aligns closely to the projected itinerary available at [www.authenticisrael.com/ourstory](http://www.authenticisrael.com/ourstory).

### WHAT'S INCLUDED

- An educational guide escorts the group on a 24/7 basis
- Centrally located 4\* and 5\* hotels with portorage included
- Breakfast daily and additional meals according to the itinerary
- Luxury private air-conditioned touring bus (with a bathroom)
- All programming and site entrances according to the itinerary
- Wireless touring headsets (depending on group size)

#### What's not included

- Flights to/from Europe
- Airport transfers unless otherwise noted in the itinerary
- Travel insurance (optional, read below)
- Gratuities (suggested \$150 per traveler, read below)
- Meals not marked as included
- Hotel incidentals

### VISA & PASSPORT

Please check to make sure that you know where your passport is and that it is not expired or about to expire. Your passport must be valid for at least three months beyond your planned departure date – and validity of at least six months is recommended. If your passport expires within this period, please start the renewal process today. Many airlines will deny you boarding if your passport is not valid according to this policy. Information about ordering a passport is available at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>.

If you are traveling on a USA, Canadian, or European Union member country passport, a visa is not needed to enter the countries we will be visiting. If you are traveling on a passport from another country, you may need a visa, and our office will provide documentation as needed.

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### ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Travelers are expected to make their own flights arrangements to and from Europe, although we will be happy to review your booking before you finalize your tickets. Once your plans are set, send your details to [register@authenticisrael.net](mailto:register@authenticisrael.net) including your arrival and departure times, airlines, and flight numbers.

*NOTE: Get all the peace of mind from having a professional travel agency book your international flights without paying a premium. Get started at [www.authenticisrael.com/flights](http://www.authenticisrael.com/flights).*

#### **Arriving to Warsaw**

Travelers are responsible for arriving to our hotel in Warsaw, Poland. Taxis from Warsaw Chopin Airport to our hotel in the city center should cost about \$15 (can be paid by credit card). Uber rides are also available from the airport. Rooms will be available for guaranteed check-in by 3:00pm, and you will be able to stow your luggage if you arrive earlier. The hotel will have your reservation pre-recorded under your name. You will need to present your passport and credit card for incidentals.

We have scheduled complimentary pre-tour experiences on Wednesday morning and afternoon with fixed meeting times in the Warsaw hotel lobby per the itinerary. For those who can, we recommend arriving a day early on Tuesday. You will have extra time to acclimate and will be able to fully take part in the complimentary pre-tour on Wednesday morning. Contact us about extending your booking based on our group rates.

#### **Departing from Prague**

On the last day of the program, travelers should book return flights from Václav Havel Airport Prague at their discretion, but please consider that hotel checkout is at 11:00am, and no programming is provided that day. Complimentary group transfers to Prague Airport from our hotel have been arranged for 4:00am and 6:30am. Taxis to the Prague airport from our hotel will cost about \$30 (can be paid by credit card) and Uber rides are also available.

#### What happens if my flight is delayed?

Contact our North American emergency line at 240-668-4559 and email [register@authenticisrael.net](mailto:register@authenticisrael.net) if there is a chance you will be arriving later than expected in Warsaw. If necessary, we will make an alternative meeting plan and/or assist you with filing a trip interruption claim if you purchased travel insurance.

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### STAFF AND TIPPING

Program staff will be posted 3-4 months in advance of the program start date. Our program guide/educator will be joined by local guides who will support the tour in each city we visit. Many of the local staff are Jewish and will be able to provide unique insights on contemporary Jewish Europe. We will also be supported by a private coach bus staffed by two drivers (touring on Saturday is by foot).

The cost of your program does not include gratuities for the local European staff. Because the local staff will be with the group on a rotating basis by country, we highly recommend pre-paying \$150 per traveler in gratuities through our office so that it can be distributed directly on your behalf to our guide, driver, and local staff by country. You will be given the option to pre-pay your gratuities when the final balance for the program is due.

### OUR ACCOMMODATIONS

Final accommodations will be posted 3-4 months in advance of the program start date and generally align closely to the projected itinerary available at [www.authenticisrael.com/ourstory](http://www.authenticisrael.com/ourstory).

### INSURING YOUR TRAVELS

Insure your investment and plan ahead for the unexpected with a group-discounted policy. Travel Insured International provides a comprehensive policy backed up by a dedicated customer support team wherever your travels take you! The policy includes coverage for medical-related cancellations, travel delays and luggage loss, trip interruption, and medical care. If your home medical insurance does not cover you abroad, travel insurance can be an effective solution for obtaining coverage during the program. The cost of the policy is a function of the total cost of your trip, including airfare booked on your own (our group policy is not age-rated).

Learn more and order online at [www.authenticisrael.com/group](http://www.authenticisrael.com/group)

*NOTE: The policy can be issued up to a day prior to departure, however, medical care for pre-existing conditions is only covered when the policy is purchased prior to making final payment for the program.*

### PACKING & WEATHER TIPS

- Typical weather this time of year ranges from daytime highs in the 80's to night time lows in the 50's – pack a range of clothing accordingly

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- Rain is common in the summer – pack a raincoat and/or umbrella accordingly
- Pack your medication, toiletries, and a change of clothes within a carry-on bag in case your checked luggage is delayed in transit.
- Consider bringing a small traveling bag on the bus each day to store extra clothing, personal belongings and a light jacket/sweater for the evenings if we are not returning to the hotel earlier.
- We will be doing a great deal of walking, so packing comfortable walking shoes (e.g. tennis shoes) is essential.
- If you plan to attend Shabbat services on Friday evening, please bring clothing appropriate for a synagogue. Women should have covered shoulders and a dress or skirt. Men should wear a nice sport shirt and casual pants – but no jeans.
- Laundry services are available in most of the hotels where you will be staying for an extra cost
- In the interest of maximum cautiousness, we recommend not dressing in a way that is recognizably Jewish or North American.

*Contact us if you have any more specific packing related questions.*

### ELECTRICAL CURRENT

If you plan to bring small electrical appliances, Europe and Israel use a 220 volt electrical current and the outlet types are different as well (two 4mm circular prongs). You will need an adapter to plug your items into the wall. In order to avoid "frying" any electrical items, you may also need to bring a voltage converter (note: this is already built into most laptop computers, iPhones, and digital camera battery chargers).




### FOOD AND WATER

The program costs include a daily buffet style breakfast in the hotels – which is typically comprised of salads, cheeses, and hot breakfast dishes. Some dinners will be kosher as noted and other restaurant/hotel dinners will include vegetarian and non-kosher beef/chicken dishes. Packed lunches as noted will be kosher. All other meals are at your own discretion. Tap water in Europe is perfectly safe to drink. If you prefer bottled water, it is widely available.

Travelers should be sure to note any special dietary needs as part of your registration. We will

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coordinate with our hotel and restaurant meal providers to arrange special accommodations as necessary. We make a good faith effort to accommodate food allergy considerations, however, we can not make absolute guarantees on behalf of our meal providing partners.

### MONEY MATTERS

The currencies vary widely according to the countries we visit, and we encourage you to check the updated local exchange rates ahead of the trip at [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com):

- The local currency in Poland is the Zloty (US\$1 = 3.75 Zloty)  
*We recommend obtaining Zlotys for spending money on arrival at the Warsaw Airport*
- The local currency in the Czech Republic is the Koruna (US\$1 = 22.50 Koruna)
- The local currency in Hungary is the Forint (US\$1 = 275 Forint)
- The local currency in Austria and Slovakia is the Euro (US\$1 = 0.87 Euros)

You can exchange your home currency for local currency prior to departure or by using ATM machines throughout Europe. You can also exchange money during free time when we are traveling in cities, although the rates may not be as advantageous.

If you choose to use your personal ATM card or credit card, consider this advice:

- If your ATM card has a Visa, MasterCard, Star, Cirrus, or Maestro logo imprint, there should not be a problem withdrawing money. Other ATM network cards may work, but we encourage you to check with your local bank if you have any doubts. ATM machines have instructions in several languages including English. The money withdrawn will be in the local currency of the country.
- Major credit cards like VISA and MasterCard are accepted throughout Europe. We advise that you contact your bank to inform them you are traveling abroad and using your cards to make purchases to ensure fraud alerts and security holds are not placed on your accounts.
- Check with your bank for exact fees charged when using ATM and credit cards. Some credit card companies, such as Capital One, do not charge foreign transaction fees.
- Bring your bank's contact information and place it in a separate, secure location in the unlikely event your wallet or purse is lost or stolen.

*NOTE: Public bathrooms in Europe generally are not free, which makes small change in the local currency especially useful when traveling.*

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## STAYING CONNECTED

### **Phone & Internet**

Prior to using your cell phone abroad, contact your cell phone provider to understand the costs associated with international roaming. You may also want to explore the possibility of purchasing a local European SIM card in advance of your travels. Our hotels will have varying degrees of Wi-Fi availability – sometimes complimentary and sometimes for an extra fee.

### **Time Zones**

Plan on staying connected back home while in Europe? All of the countries where we will be traveling are six hours ahead of eastern time.

### **Group Communication**

During the program itself our travelers and staff often communicate as a group via Whatsapp. We recommend downloading the app (or updating the software) prior to your arrival in Europe.