

Jewish Heritage trip to Romania & Moldova 15th to 22nd September 2011

**Total cost £895 plus flights to be booked as follows – WIZZAIR Thursday 15th September Luton to Cluj-Napoca Flight No W63302 7.45am lands 12.35 return Thursday 22nd September on another airline BLUE AIR flight Bacau to Luton leaves 8.30am lands 9.55 am
[as of 27/12/10 return cost £70]**

Romania is a country with a rich Jewish heritage. It is the country that gave birth to the **Nobel Prize Winner – Elie Wiesel**, with many beautiful and well preserved synagogues: 98 synagogues and 802 Jewish cemeteries, at the last count.

We will start to explore the Romanian Jewish heritage in Baia Mare, the gate to Maramures County. Maramures, a cradle of culture and civilization which carved its history in wood, is the place where tradition, clothes and folk art are preserved like nowhere else in Romania. Maramures is a huge outdoor museum and the everyday life of the Maramures villages remains timeless in its simplicity. Northern Romania, in particular the regions of Maramures and the Bukovina, was once home to a large Jewish community unlike any other. Hasidic Jews first settled in the poorer mountain areas of the Habsburg Empire during the 17th and 18th centuries, in the aftermath of the Chmielnicki massacres and the resultant messianic confusion. The Jews in Maramures are from Bukovina and Galicia and were very different culturally from the Jews of the central and southern areas of Romania. Few Jews remained in this region but there are enough material remnants of this once large Jewish community.

1 day/ 15 September/Thursday: Cluj Napoca – Baia Mare – Baia Sprie – Vadu Izei

Arrival in Cluj-Napoca and departure to Maramures. Arrival in Baia Mare and the possibility to visit the functional Synagogue and to meet the Jewish community of the city. Further we will drive towards Sighetul Marmatei, the city with the most rich Jewish culture from Romania. On the way we will stop in Baia Sprie to visit the local Jewish cemetery – a relatively large cemetery with about 70 gravestones. Its size being 683-sq m.

Welcome dinner and Accommodation to 3*+ Pension Bella Doina in Vadu Izei (breakfast included).

Jewish Community Center (Baia Mare), Str. Somesului Nr. 5, 4800 Baia Mare, Jud. Maramures, Romania. Tel: (40-62) 211-231.

Synagogue - BAI A MARE (functional) Address: str. Somesului, 3 - Historic Monument

2 day/16 September/Friday: Sighetul Marmatiei – and surroundings

After breakfast we will drive to Sapanta village, whose name is linked to a unique objective: The Happy Cemetery that is a true original popular art museum. The Merry Cemetery of Sapanta (unique in Romania by originality) is one of the Romanian wonders. It owes its name to the vivid colors of the headboards on which are naively painted scenes narrating the biography of the deceased.

Jewish highlights from Sighet: Sighet Synagogue Vizhnitzer Klaus (Only one of the town's eight original synagogues still exists, serving the tiny Jewish population of 30; its address at Str. Bessarabia 10), The Cemetery with the Monument of the Soap, **Elie Wiesel House**.

First we will visit the synagogue, then the adjacent Jewish Community Center (tel. 0262/31-1652; Tues-Sun 10am-4pm).

Eliezer Wiesel House (commonly known as Elie - the man, who coined the word 'Holocaust') is a world-renowned Romanian Jewish, philosopher, humanitarian, political activist, and Holocaust survivor. Here in Sighetu there is the house where he was born and lived until he was deported with his family at the age of 15. He won the Nobel Prize for literature for his novel 'Night' about his father and his ordeal in the Nazi extermination camps. Sighetu Marmatiei was one third Jewish before the Nazis marched them to extermination camps.

Free lunch.

In the afternoon we shall visit the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of the Resistance from Sighet. A place for prayer and meditation which combines the antique style with a modern construction

this was built in one of the prison courtyards in 1977. The names of almost 8000 people that died in the prisons, concentration camps and deportation camps from Romania were engraved on the wall of a ramp that descends in the underground.

Dinner with the Jewish Community from Sighet.

Same accommodation.

4 day/17 September/Saturday: Resting Day. No meals included. Same accommodation

5 day/18 September/Sunday: Sighet – Humor – Falticeni – Suceava

After breakfast we will leave Maramures and will drive further to Bucovina, the most visited region of Romania – due to its unique outside painted churches.

Lunch on the way. Arrival in Humor and visit the Jewish cemetery.

Today we will visit also **Falticeni**. This small industrial city was home to some 13 Jewish houses of worship and 4,000 Jews before World War II. It was also the hometown of Moses Rosen, Romania's postwar Chief Rabbi. Today, the small remaining community is served by the only standing synagogue, the Great Synagogue, built in the 19th century on the site of the town's first synagogue from 1792.

Falticeni has two Jewish cemeteries. The newer one, with tombs dating from the 19th century, is located at the end of Brosteni Street, not far from the town center. The older cemetery, established in the 18th century and closed down during the 19th century, is located on nearby Victoriei Street. Most of the tombs here are overgrown and sunken into the earth.

Falticeni Jewish Community

Address: Str. Dr. Barbulescu 5

Telephone: (230) 540.090

Overnight in Suceava. Free dinner. One of the earliest sites of Jewish settlement in the region, Suceava was already home to an established community at the beginning of the 16th century. Some 18 synagogues and small Hasidic prayer rooms were in use before World War II, the majority of them taken down during the 1950s' communist "*urban renewal*" period. Only one synagogue stands today, beautifully preserved, along with two Jewish cemeteries.

Impressive tombs from the late 19th and early 20th centuries can be seen in the **newer Jewish Cemetery** (*address: Str. Parcului 6*). The **Old Jewish Cemetery** (*address: Str. Stefan Tomsa 18*), with its elaborately carved tombs bearing traditional Jewish symbols, dates back to the 16th century, making it one of the oldest in Moldova.

Gah Synagogue

Address: Str. Dimitrie Onciul 7

Richly decorated on the interior with symbolic representations of the Tribes of Israel and views of Jerusalem, this is the only remaining active synagogue.

Suceava Jewish Community

Address: Str. Armeneasca 8

Telephone: (230) 213.084

6 day/19 September/Monday: Suceava –Dorohoi - Botosani – Iasi.

After breakfast departure to **Dorohoi**. Only one of the two remaining synagogues is still in use in this little Moldovan town where Jews from Poland settled in the 17th century. By the beginning of World War II, some 5,300 Jews were living here, with Hasidism becoming a major force. On November 11,

1941, the majority of families were sent to labor camps in Transnistria. Today, fewer than 50 Jews live in Dorohoi. Visit of the synagogue, the Jewish Community office and the Jewish cemetery.



(In the remembrance of our sisters and brothers, which bodies were transformed in soap with the inscription “Pure Jewish Fat”, whose remains were buried here)

Further departure to Botosani. Jews settled in this historic market town in northeastern Romania in the 17th century and by the 19th century, the community had become one of the largest in the province of Moldova. Approximately 11,000 Jews were living in Botosani before World War II. Most emigrated to Israel at the onset of the war, with only a few dozen remaining. We will visit:

The Great Synagogue “Hoihe Sil”

The only remaining synagogue in the city and one of the oldest and most richly decorated in Moldova, the Great Synagogue of Botosani was built in 1834. The interior features lovely naïve representations of scenes of Jerusalem, biblical animals, and symbols representing the tribes of Israel. Intricate chandeliers adorn the lofty ceiling and a lavishly carved and brightly painted Aron ha Kodesh overhangs the sanctuary.

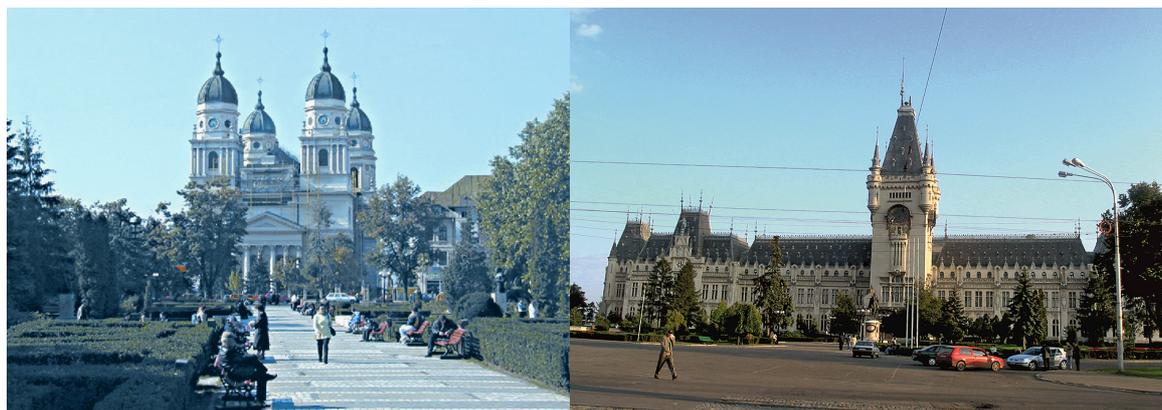
The Jewish Cemetery

Botosani’s large Jewish Cemetery includes a newer section with tombstones dating from the 19th century and an original old section which has wonderfully carved tombstones.

Lunch in Botosani.

Arrival in the evening in Iasi. Accommodation in Hotel Astoria 3*. Free dinner.

If time allows we will visit the Jewish Community, the Jewish cemetery, the Great Synagogue, we will pay a moment of remembrance next to the place where the pogrom took place and the first-ever Yiddish – language Theatre was opened.



In the 19th century, Iasi was one of the great Eastern European centers of Jewish learning, famous for its scholarly rabbis, intellectuals and skilled craftsmen, as well as for its Jewish schools, hospitals, publications and various organizations. In 1855, the city was the home of the first-ever Yiddish-language newspaper, *Korot Haitim*, and the birthplace of the Israeli national anthem. The world's first professional Yiddish-language theater was opened here in 1876 by Avram Goldfaden, who later founded New York's first Jewish Theater. From 1949 to 1964, Iași was also home to a second company of the State Jewish Theater.

Jewish merchants from Poland settled here in the 15th century and their numbers swelled with further waves of Russian-Jewish and Galician-Jewish immigration into Moldova. By 1930, Iasi was home to more than 30,000 Jews and some 127 synagogues. Today, only two synagogues remain open. During the early years of World War II, Iași was the scene of a pogrom by the Iron Guard, a nationalist Fascist organization. The majority of the city's Jewish population was killed or deported. A monument to the victims of the 1941 pogrom stands outside the Great Synagogue.

Great Synagogue

The Great Synagogue of Iasi, currently undergoing renovations, is the oldest surviving Jewish prayer house in Romania and the second oldest synagogue in Europe. It was founded in 1670, reportedly at the initiative of Rabbi Nathan (Nata) ben Moses Hannover, author of *Yeven Mezulah*. Located on Synagogues Street (so dubbed because of the many synagogues once found here) in the old Jewish neighborhood of Targu Cucului, the synagogue was built in an eclectic style with strong late baroque influences. Over the centuries, the Great Synagogue has undergone a number of major renovations.

Although called "the great," the synagogue's size is actually very modest. The floor is located below street level in keeping with a widespread tradition found in many Central and Eastern European synagogues. Jewish religious tradition requires that synagogues be the highest buildings in their neighborhoods but because Jews were not permitted to build high structures for their prayer houses, lowering the floor of synagogues represented an ingenious compromise between the two demands by creating an interior that is higher than the exterior elevation of the building. It also serves as a reminder of Psalm 130 ("de profundis"): "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, o Lord."

Iasi Jewish Cemetery

Many of the victims of the 1941 pogroms were buried in the Jewish Cemetery, located outside the city on Dealul Munteni. Over 100,000 graves, some dating from the late 1800s, stretch across the hillside; burial records date from 1915 to the present day and are kept in the community center. Iasi's second, smaller synagogue is also located here.

6 day/20 September/Tuesday: Iasi – Chateau Vartely - Chisinau

After breakfast we will finish the city tour of Iasi and further drive **to Republic of Moldova**. Lunch in **Chateaux Vartely – one of the best moldavian wineries**, we will enjoy a wine tasting and lunch.



Arrival to Chisinau and accommodation in a 4* Hotel Elat.

Kishinev - Capital of the republic of Moldova, became a flourishing Jewish center in the 18th century, when the growing economy presented new commercial and industrial opportunities.

By the turn of the century Jews owned a score of factories employing thousands of Jewish workers; there were 16 Jewish schools with 2,100 students, and 70 synagogues.

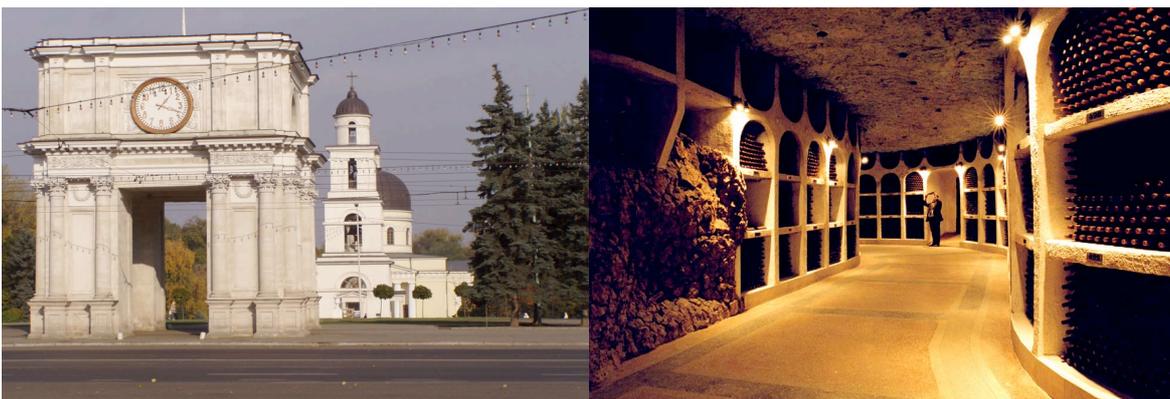
The name Kishinev, however, was thrust into the consciousness of the world on Easter Day, 1903 when 49 Jews were massacred by frenzied mobs. Hundreds more were seriously injured; thousands were left homeless and property damage was measured in millions of gold rubles. Public outrage was expressed in protests which echoed throughout every civilized capital of the world.

In 1905 Kishinev was again the scene of unspeakable horror and violent death when a second pogrom claimed the lives of another 19 Jews.

The Jewish community was shaken to its foundations, and a flood of emigration began, which continued through the interim war years.

All the while, government endorsed anti-Semitic propaganda stirred the never extinguished members of anti-Jewish hatred.

The devastation of the Jewish community of Kishinev was completed by the bestial Nazis who, annihilated 53,000 of the 65,000 Jewish inhabitants of the city. Communism brought even more difficult restrictions to the remaining Jews: In 1961 - bar mitzvas were forbidden; 1964, all Synagogues were closed, except one - the one which is used today; Jews were harassed and imprisoned on trumped up charges. Life for the Jews of Kishinev was bleak indeed. Today, the name Kishinev conjures up entirely different images...



City tour and visit of the local synagogue, the memorial dedicated to the victims of the Ghetto and meeting with the Jewish Organisation "Sohnut" - <http://www.sohnut.md/>.

OPTIONAL: In the evening departure by bus for a wine tasting and dinner in the underground wine city **Milestii Mici, registered in the Guinness Book of Records** for being the biggest Wine Collection in the world. It contains over two million bottles of wine highly appreciated by the winemakers from all over the world. The wines lie right there, at a depth of 80 meters, in bottles covered with dust and mould, in small elegant houses which are completed every year. Return to our hotel and for those who want we can do a club tour to the most famous clubs in Chisinau.

7 day/21 September/Wednesday: Chisinau – Roman – Bacau

On the way to Bacau we will stop in **Roman - Visit the Tailor's (Poel Tzedek) Synagogue in Roman**, also known as **Leipziger Synagogue**, because of the commercial ties to the German city of Leipzig. The Tailor's Synagogue is a medium type edifice erected in 1898 and features a wooden Aron ha-Kodesh, elaborately decorated with floral and animal motifs. The Jewish Community in Roman is at least four centuries old, as is shown on tombstones and documents. There were 16 synagogues in Roman at 1887 and a total of 15 synagogues and prayer houses in the 1930's . We will see also the Jewish cemetery on Str. Bogdan Dragos, that features laminated photographs of the deceased.

Lunch on the way.

Accommodation and dinner in Bacau.

8 day/22 September: Departure Home.

Price: £895 in double room, single supplement £195

Services:

Meals as per program – Kosher will be extra unless where we eat in the Jewish community centres

English speaking guide

All entrances paid

Minibus 16 or 18 seats in all the cases (up to 17 guests)