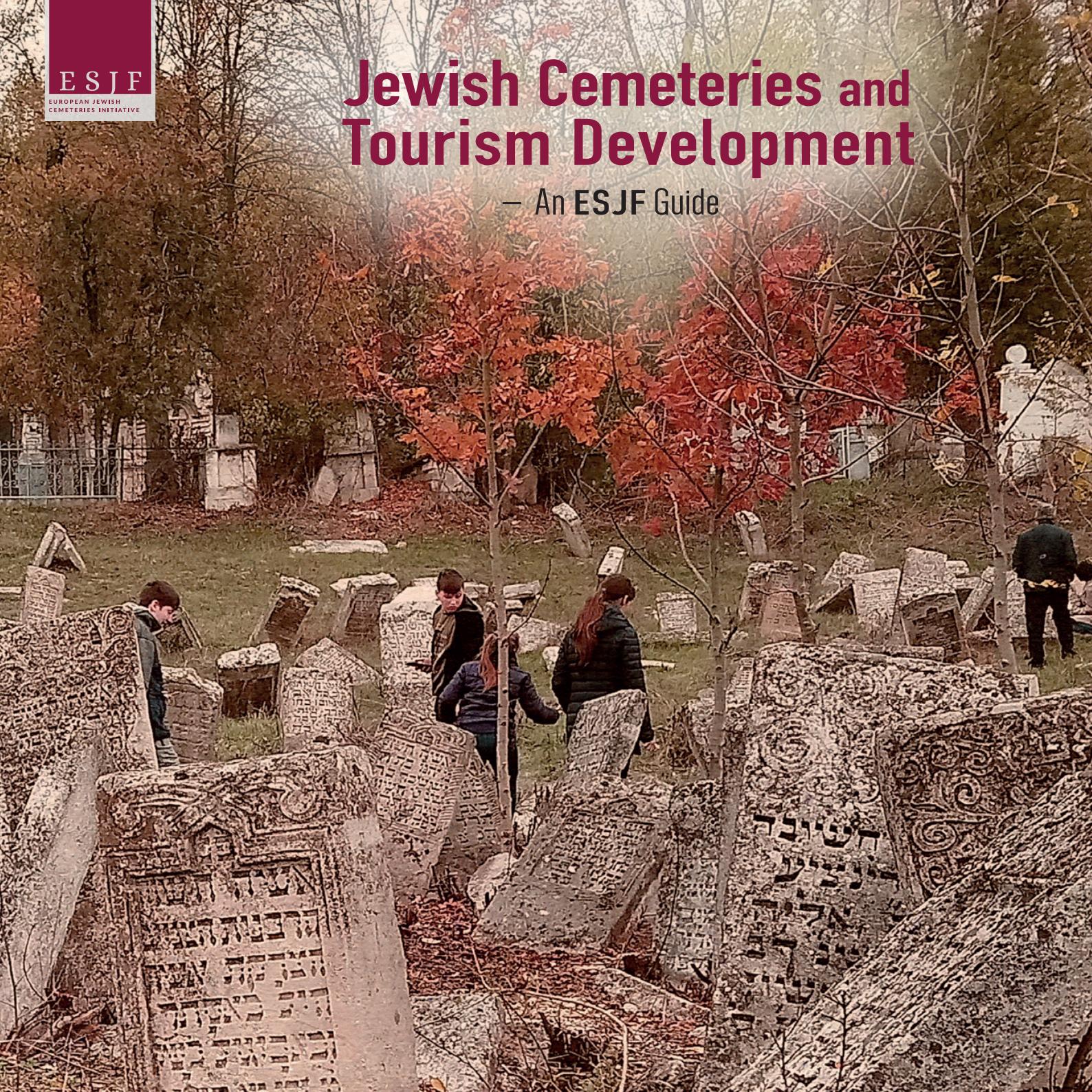


Jewish Cemeteries and Tourism Development

— An ESJF Guide



Guided Tours in the Jewish Cemetery

— An ESJF Guide



European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative

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Germany

This document was produced in the framework of the pilot project "Pilot project – Protecting the Jewish cemeteries of Europe: Continuation of the mapping process, stakeholders' involvement and awareness raising (EAC/S10/2019)" carried out by the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative, co-funded by the European Commission.

First published 2020

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ISBN 978-3-9822085-9-6



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Guided Tours in the Jewish Cemetery

— An **ESJF** Guide



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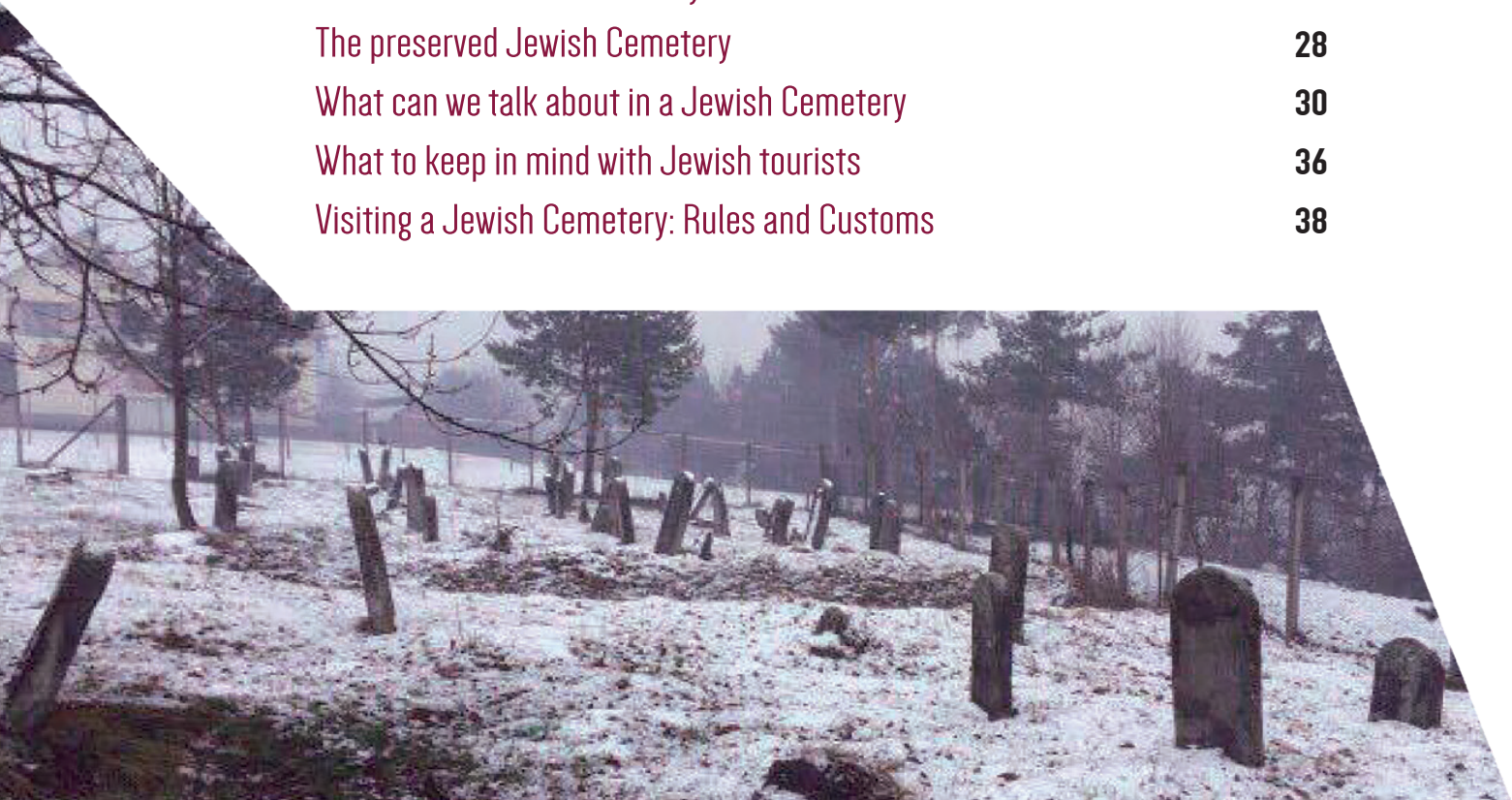
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Foreword

The ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative was set up in 2015 as an international non-profit public foundation registered in the Federal Republic of Germany with the core objective of protecting Jewish cemeteries in Central and Eastern Europe. Its mission has been to concentrate particularly on those Jewish burial sites in the thousands of towns and villages where Jewish communities were wiped out in the Holocaust. With no local Jewish communities to protect them, such cemeteries were destroyed, vandalised and neglected over the course of some 80 years. As of 2020, the ESJF has demarcated and fenced over 160 Jewish cemeteries across seven countries.

The mission remains vast. It is estimated that there are over 8,000 Jewish burial sites in these regions. Our task is therefore to continue fencing but also to search for methodologies to protect the thousands of sites we cannot yet fence. More than anything else, this requires the support of local communities in the towns and villages of Central and Eastern Europe. It further requires developing sustainable and cross-generational models in which local Jewish heritage becomes local historical heritage, owned by all, and where responsibility for its protection becomes a collective and partnered effort.

As part of this project supported by the European Commission in 2019-20, the ESJF physically surveyed some 1,500 Jewish cemeteries in five European countries – Greece, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovakia, and Ukraine – utilising state-of-the-art drone technology and creating an online database reflecting the current – and often perilous – the condition of these sites. This acts as a first point level of protection, mobilizing local authorities and communities by providing them with the physical evidence and direct contact with key parts of their local heritage, sometimes in settlements which were home to substantial and even majority Jewish populations up to World War II.

But walls do not protect cemeteries. People do. The ESJF is committed to raising public awareness about Jewish cemeteries, the shared history they embody, and the importance of preserving this. The project has included educational events, and we very much hope to contribute to raising a new generation of engaged citizens, who take active ownership of these sites. But we also want to pay attention to visitors and those who might support their journeys to Jewish cemeteries: tour guides, members of local administrations, activists. Building sustainable tourism projects, bringing visitors to learn about these sites with respect and care, keeping in mind the specific rules adhered to by the Jewish faithful is of paramount importance if we are to build a respectful society based on tolerance and opposed to racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism.

We are deeply grateful for the continued support of the European Commission for this work but also for the engagement of engaged local residents, NGOs, and municipal administrations.

Philip Carmel
Chief Executive Officer
ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative

Introduction

The manual you hold in your hands is a guide for tour operators, tour guides, engaged citizens, activists, and anyone else who wants to engage with local Jewish cemeteries and help visitors discover them. Offering advice and guidance to tourism offices, tour guides, and other stakeholders in the sector, it explains the value these sites hold for local communities, visitors, descendants, and the interested public; it offers ideas for the inclusion of Jewish cemeteries in the existing infrastructure of local and regional offerings, thematic routes, tourism-related publications, to help you get started in working with them.

Tourism can bring curiosity, attention, and funds to local heritage sites, but it has its dangers, especially when it comes to places of religious significance, or places that evoke complex, difficult histories — and Jewish cemeteries are both.

The manual is a result of the pilot project *Protecting the Jewish Cemeteries of Europe*, co-funded by the European Commission, carried out by the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative between 2018-2020 in five project countries: Greece, Lithuania,

Moldova, Slovakia, and Ukraine. At the core of this pilot project was an extensive survey of 1,500 Jewish cemetery sites with unmanned aerial vehicles, commonly known as drones, paired with research into their history, condition, ownership, as well as the potential stakeholders involved in their protection. The overwhelming majority of the Jewish cemeteries are unfenced and unprotected: many are in danger of decay, neglect, and sometimes vandalism. Knowing about them, documenting them, and sharing this knowledge is a key element in protecting them.

In creating this manual, we used content we gathered from visits to Jewish cemeteries in the above five countries. As such, we will discuss these countries. It is important to remember that this manual is universal. You can use it to develop a tour of Jewish and even partially non-Jewish cemeteries in other countries.

In assembling this manual we hope to demonstrate that it is worth taking a closer look at cemeteries in local tourism development, and to flag up some considerations worth keeping in mind. We hope to encourage locals and visitors to engage with the Jewish cemeteries which might not be stunning at first sight. We believe that all visitors are important, whether local or international, religious or secular, and their perspectives complement one another when it comes to Jewish cemetery tourism. Finally, we very much hope to promote a form of tourism that respects the regulations observed by the Jewish faithful and cherishes the right of secular visitors to engage with these burial sites as well.

Let this guide be a map to the treasure trove that is Jewish cultural history; something which has long been left out of discussions of European heritage but is just as much a part of it as the Parthenon, the great cathedrals, or the Eiffel Tower. Although the devastating events of the 20th century forever altered the fabric of European Jewry, its material history can still be found in many cities and towns. One remarkable fragment

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of this heritage is the Jewish cemetery – the unambiguous marker of a once-thriving Jewish presence, a rich source of texts, and even works of art that can shine a light on communities that might otherwise be entirely forgotten.

There are more than 10,000 Jewish cemeteries in Europe, many of which are unprotected and hardly known even by locals. Pushing for a change in this respect can help villages and capital cities alike look at their past with fresh eyes, and can provide tour operators and engaged citizens a new frontier to explore their vicinity. Through the creation of routes, small sites can be linked, and a half-forgotten history can be unearthed.

This manual will help you to organise an interesting tour of the Jewish cemetery without violating religious rules and traditions, regardless of whether you work with a Jewish or non-Jewish group.

We have made this material as accessible and enjoyable as possible, not forgetting the regional differences, which we will talk about at the end of the manual. Since this is a basic guide, we have not gone into all the details of regional differences between each country but have instead focused on the main features inherent to cemeteries. If you plan to study Jewish cemeteries in more detail, be sure to pay attention to local initiatives and online resources, which we have indicated at the end of the manual.

We have also developed two handbooks to help you learn more about Jewish cemeteries in Europe: *Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection: The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism* and *Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide*.

The first of these *Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection: The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism* was produced in the framework of the pilot project,

'Protecting the Jewish cemeteries of Europe', carried out by the European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative, co-funded by the European Commission. Tourism was chosen as its focus, as it represents a key component of cemetery engagement, whether it is local students or observant Jews, descendants, or the interested public, whether guided by faith, curiosity, or aesthetic appreciation.

The latter, *Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide* is a unique guide for middle and high school teachers and their students who wish to explore local Jewish cemeteries. All of these handbooks are intended as overviews and blueprints for action – as the groundwork for further protection, and we invite all kinds of stakeholders to join us in building on it together.

We sincerely hope that this manual will arouse your interest in the Jewish cemetery, help steer you towards a walk through the cemetery in your next excursion, that it will add a new item to your checklist of obligatory sights, and arouse your and your listeners' interest in the history of the multicultural heritage of your region.



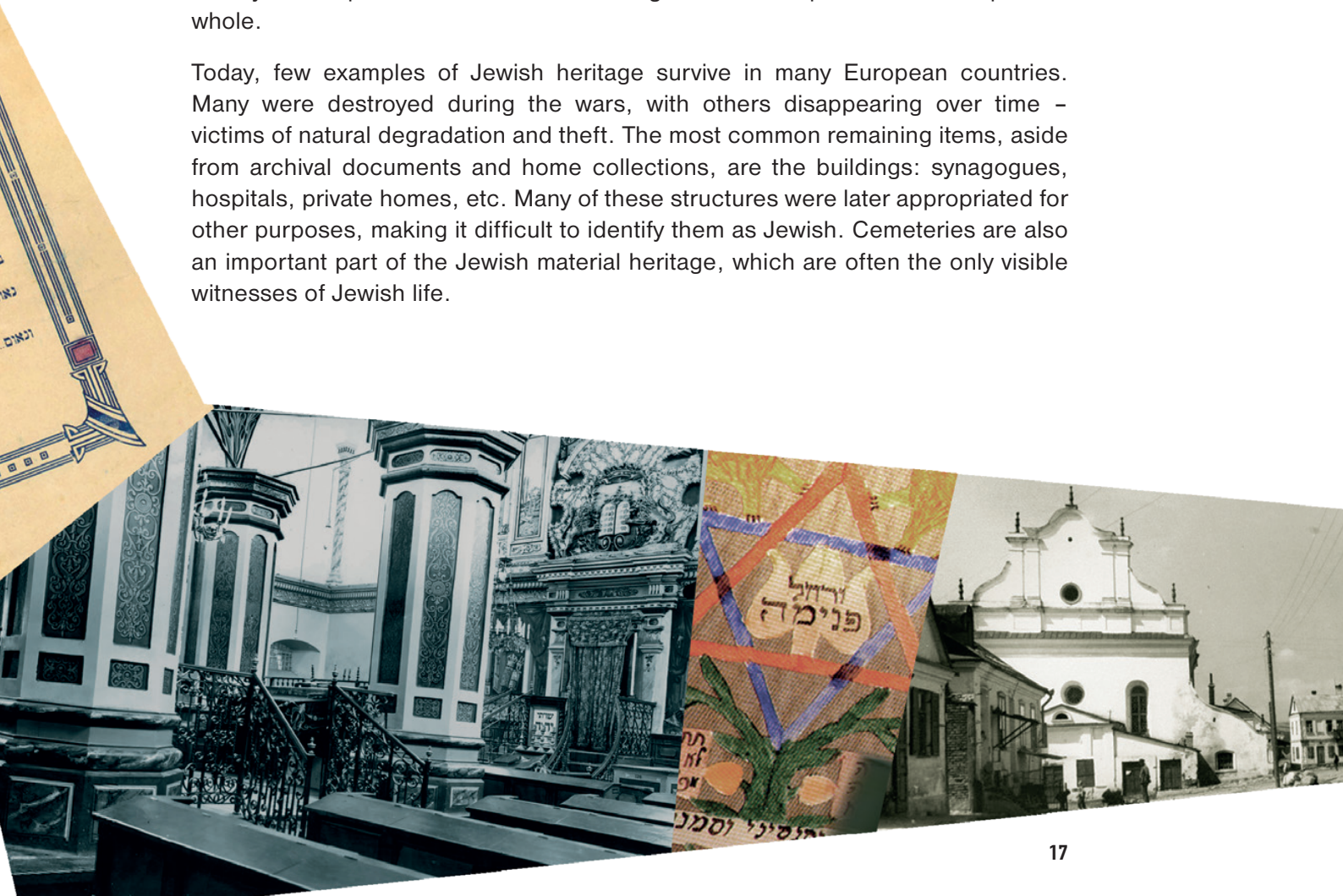
Jewish Presence in Europe

The Jewish Diaspora in Europe has been distributed throughout most of the continent for many centuries. During this time, Jews interacted with the peoples among whom they lived, and in the process of cultural influences, a culture uniquely inherent to European Jews was born, enriched with local traditions, habits, and cultural peculiarities. In turn, Jewish culture also influenced and penetrated into European culture.

In the Middle Ages in Christian Europe, Jews lived in closed communities. These communities engaged predominantly in crafts, trade, renting, and finance, due largely to the fact they were forbidden from other professions. As society began to modernise in the 18th and 19th centuries, Jews began to receive higher education, bringing with it access to previously barred fields such as medicine, law, the sciences, and the humanities. However, it is worth noting that Jewish society was not a monolith. While the Jews of Western Europe became more emancipated in this era, those in Eastern Europe still had only limited freedoms at the turn of the 20th century, and their occupations remained largely unchanged.

The 20th century brought with it devastating changes for the European Jewry. With anti-Jewish riots (*'pogrom'*); two world wars; the brutal genocide during World War II; pre and mid-war migration to the United States, the UK, and South America; and mass migration to the nascent State of Israel all leaving a vacuum in the former Jewish homelands. In the conspicuous absence of these communities, whose only remaining markers in many towns and villages are the pieces of material heritage they left behind, we now face the challenge of piecing together the centuries-long history of Europe's Jews and re-establishing its cultural importance to Europe as a whole.

Today, few examples of Jewish heritage survive in many European countries. Many were destroyed during the wars, with others disappearing over time – victims of natural degradation and theft. The most common remaining items, aside from archival documents and home collections, are the buildings: synagogues, hospitals, private homes, etc. Many of these structures were later appropriated for other purposes, making it difficult to identify them as Jewish. Cemeteries are also an important part of the Jewish material heritage, which are often the only visible witnesses of Jewish life.



Jewish cemeteries as heritage sites

Heritage sites gained tremendous popularity in the late 20th century, especially after the establishment of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) that championed the global list of World Heritage Sites from the 1970s onwards. With this momentum, heritage has become a key cultural and financial asset for nation-states and a source of pride and identity building. Beyond the most visible and highly acclaimed cultural heritage sites, many other monuments, historic streets, and archaeological sites are recognised nationally, regionally, and locally.

The Jewish heritage wasn't always been recognized as a part of the common heritage. This is partly due to the fact that heritage was so closely intertwined with national memory politics: with the exception of ancient Roman and Greek sites that were seen as a shared part of European heritage, sites which were not seen as inherent to the dominant national or ethnic group in a region were less likely to be documented, protected, or exhibited.






This tendency has slowly started to change in the second half of the 20th century, particularly in the past few decades. Jewish heritage is increasingly seen as an important element of our shared, transnational European heritage that deserves recognition on par with other forms of heritage. Within the EU, the annual European Days of Jewish Culture that exists since 2000, and the European Routes of Jewish Heritage have helped to bring Jewish heritage sites closer to citizens. Such large-scale projects also leave much room for independent, local heritage events, and infrastructural development.

The growing recognition of Jewish cemeteries as heritage sites offers a plethora of cultural, educational, and economic opportunities. It is worth mapping these out and thinking through the individual conditions and requirements of each site when we are planning to launch a local site as a tourist destination.

Heritage Beyond Monuments



In the European Union, the most recent event series was the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018, designed to draw together various heritage-related projects, give them more visibility, and to advocate for a new understanding of heritage. This new approach was built on the recognition that it is always **communities** that give heritage sites their importance: without locals and visitors for whom a site matters, no historic building, monument, or old town would retain their position and attractiveness.

Earlier conservation approaches often focused on the physical aspects of heritage sites, an attitude which inevitably favoured the most spectacular monuments, marginalising less ostentatious sites. The recent shift is a result of the development of **critical heritage studies**. Critical heritage studies is a discipline that starts from the recognition that it is not only experts and governments who should have a say in what a heritage site is and why it is important. Instead, it focuses on communities and local actors and supports their involvement in the recognition, maintenance, and preservation of heritage sites.

Now even the Oxford English Dictionary defines heritage as: ‘valued objects or qualities such as historic buildings and cultural traditions which have been passed down from previous generations’.

The European Year of Cultural Heritage was organised in line with this recent turn, and it is this approach that is the most promising when it comes to the preservation and care of Jewish cemeteries.

In line with this turn, try to reimagine the local Jewish cemetery:

- Instead of thinking about it as a monument, incorporate the meanings, histories, and symbolic relevance of the site when you develop plans for its protection and promotion. In other words, **treat it as a tangible and intangible heritage site.**
- Instead of treating it as a stand-alone object, try to place it in the context of other Jewish and non-Jewish heritage sites. In other words, **think about the site as part of a heritage ecosystem.**
- Instead of receiving experts’ interpretations of why a heritage site is important and unique, you can **explore why its guardian community values it.**
- Instead of building management strategies that are run from afar, from capital cities or even abroad, you **can recruit locals to maintain and preserve the heritage site** in cooperation with far removed stakeholders.

If you develop the Jewish cemetery as a heritage site in this spirit, you gain practical and symbolic ownership hitherto rarely present in heritage projects. Local communities are the people who live with each and every heritage site, and their inclusion is very important in any sustainable heritage project. This helps to keep these sites alive, embedded in their cultural and institutional surroundings, while also respecting their difference from the contemporary majority.

Going through the Jewish Cemetery: Overview

Researchers have taken an interest in Jewish cemeteries since the 19th century. A cemetery is a place for the burial of the dead. The word "cemetery" is derived from the Greek κοιμητήριον, "the place where the dead sleep", and is applied almost exclusively to Jewish and Christian graveyards. In Hebrew, it is variously termed:

- **בית הקברות** – (*Beit Hakvarot*) the place of sepulchers;
- **בית עולם** – (*Beit Olam*) house of eternity;
- **בית חיים** – (*Beit Hayim*) house of the living.

The events of World War II cast the preservation of Jewish heritage in an urgent new light, with interest growing significantly in its wake. Nowadays, there is a large community of individuals who explore Jewish cemeteries from different angles: academic researchers, who treat cemeteries as a historical and archaeological source; descendants of European Jews, who search for their roots and relatives; volunteers who wish to preserve the Jewish heritage in their particular city or town; and individuals concerned for the sanctity of the



Going through the Jewish Cemetery: Overview

dead, an integral part of Jewish religious culture, who fight to defend the cemeteries from complete destruction. Thanks to this immense effort, the data already collected may contribute to the emergence of a new academic field. ESJF hopes that its database will provide a useful source of knowledge for this field.

A cemetery is often the only surviving Jewish heritage site in places where Jewish life has ceased to exist. Ironically, it can provide the most "living" evidence of Jewish life in a region where there are no other sources left. It is important to determine the dates on the tombstones if the text has not been affected by natural conditions or vandalism. The dates on the cemetery may provide important information about the existence of a community: at least that the community was established no later than the earliest date. In addition, the tombstone with the date may represent the oldest historical written source in the city and the oldest material object. Then the tombstone becomes important not only for the Jewish community but also for modern residents. However, many Jewish cemeteries were also destroyed, meaning we must rely on archival documents and maps to glean information about their existence.

In this guide, we offer you a set of building blocks and basic methods to prepare an exciting Jewish cemetery tour for different target audiences. Of course, we understand that cemeteries vary from country to country, sometimes even from region to region within the same country, but the principles of preparation for the tour will be the same for all countries.

Jewish Encyclopedia
(1901-1906).
Cemetery:
<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4168-cemetery/>



Demolished Jewish Cemetery

There are a few different forms in which a Jewish cemetery can be found. Let's consider the first of these with the **demolished Jewish cemetery**.

It should be noted that, at one point, most cities with a significant Jewish population had not one, but several Jewish cemeteries. However, it is often the case that only one is preserved. At this point the question arises: what happened to the other cemeteries, and what is their history?

In order to determine how many cemeteries were once in the city, you need to refer to the maps. On our website, you can find maps of the marked cemeteries that we found.

If you want to study these maps by yourself, there are several helpful resources on the Internet to help you do so:

- <http://igrek.amzp.pl/> – Polish research resource, with more than 150 Polish, Austrian, German, and Russian historical maps (it is possible to search by settlement name)
- <https://mapire.eu/en/> – detailed historical maps from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with automatic binding to modern satellite maps
- <http://www.etomesto.ru/> – several dozen historical maps, mostly of Ukraine and Russia, automatically linked to modern satellite maps

Moreover, in the manual 'Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide' you can read more information about how the cemeteries are marked on the maps (page 23).

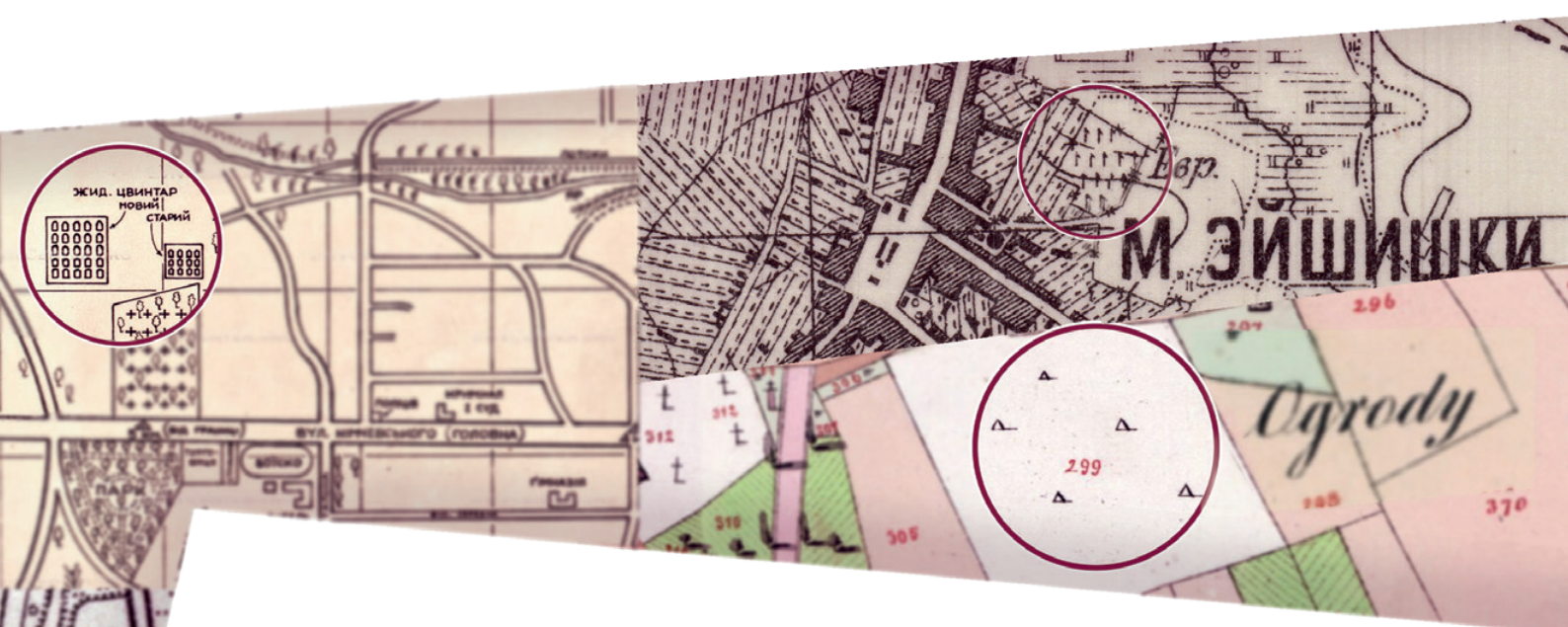
In addition to the maps that are available online, there are many local maps, which are stored in the state archives. These can be cadastral maps, city maps, or so-called "memory maps" – hand-drawn maps of neighbourhoods.

Please note that the borders of the cemetery may not always coincide with its current borders. Sometimes, the territory of the demolished cemetery is fenced, and even if there are no tombstones on the spot, you can draw conclusions and ask questions such as: Have the boundaries of the cemetery changed? If so, when? Why was this territory fenced off, who fenced it, and when? Based on what documents? etc.

Sometimes there may be signs marking a demolished cemetery. In this case, you should focus on the group for which you are conducting the tour (further on in the text we will speak in detail about groups of Jewish tourists). Be sure to read what is written on the sign: there may be important information such as who was buried in this cemetery, the period in which it was active, and when and by whom it was demolished. For religious groups, it can be especially important to know about the burial of rabbis, so it is important to clarify this information in advance.

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You now have a map, you have localised the cemetery site, and are able to understand how many Jewish cemeteries were in the city, how they were located relative to urban development, and important places for the Jewish community. Now you can try to find archived photos or postcards of the cemetery, and find the history of how it was laid down or demolished. Such information may be in the city archives, in newspapers from the period, in address-books, or in archives, if such an archive is kept in your city by local historians or volunteers.

If you are lucky and you have identified the location of a former cemetery, you can record the site's current condition. **Demolished cemeteries** can most often be demarcated into **two categories**: **demolished but not built over**, or **demolished and overbuilt**. In both cases, you can find locals who want to tell the story of this place: when the houses were built, what they know about the history of this place, the community, etc.

If there were two or more Jewish cemeteries in your city and you already know everything about the demolished cemeteries, the decision then remains: what should be done with the preserved cemetery?

The preserved Jewish Cemetery

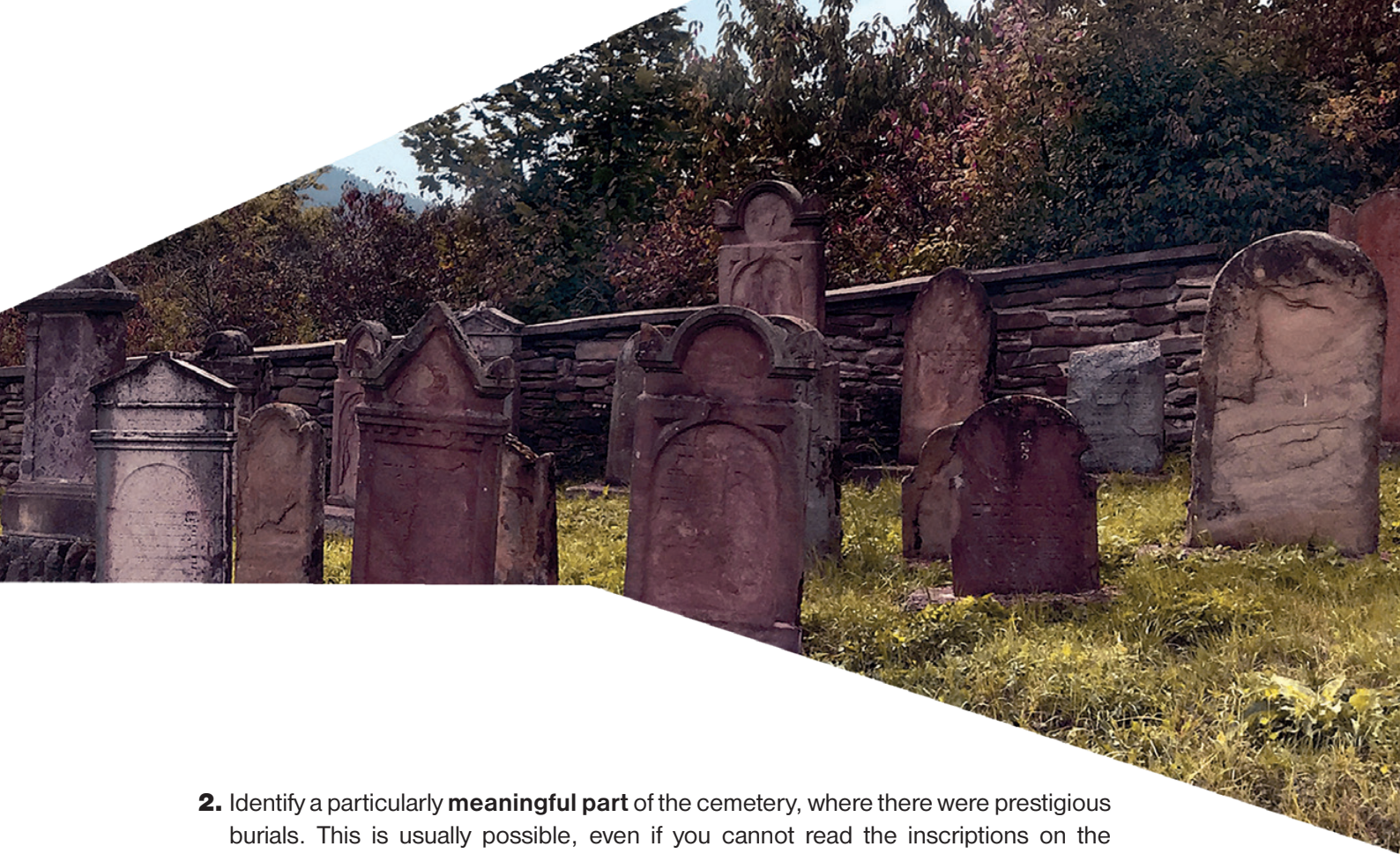


If you want to know more about the basic symbols, texts, and dates on the tombstones, you can consult the section 'Symbols and Ornaments on Jewish Tombstones' in our manual 'Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide' (pp. 42-51).

The preserved Jewish cemetery requires a special approach to route design. Before preparing for the excursion you should go and look at the cemetery. If it is overgrown with any vegetation, talk to the local (even if it is non-Jewish) community. Try to involve the local community in cleaning the cemetery. First, it will be easier for your guests to traverse the cemetery if it is cleaned. Secondly, cleaning a cemetery may generate interest among locals and may lead to continued efforts on their part to clean it, study it, and include it in the list of notable sites to visit in their region.

Site orientation.

- 1.** You need to determine the **geography of the cemetery**. What kind of territory does it occupy now? How many entrances are there to the cemetery? Can you see the main alley of the cemetery? Is there a visible division between sections? If you have this information, you will be able to devise an interesting route, determining what exactly you will show during the excursion and in what order.



2. Identify a particularly **meaningful part** of the cemetery, where there were prestigious burials. This is usually possible, even if you cannot read the inscriptions on the tombstones. In this area, the tombstones may be taller, look richer, or be specially decorated. Such parts are better visible in cemeteries laid in the late nineteenth century, but sometimes you can determine them in earlier sites. However, this does not mean that we should study only this part and talk only about it. In fact, in any part of the cemetery there may be interesting tombstones bearing special decorations or text. Moreover, the oldest tombstone may be in a completely different place and may not stand out from the others. On the contrary, it may be very simple in its design (for example, bearing only text).

What we can talk about in a Jewish Cemetery

A simple tour of the cemetery will not be interesting unless you fill it with information. **What can we talk about in a Jewish cemetery?**

Notable individuals who are buried here. If you locate the tombstone of a famous figure from the community, gather some interesting information about them. It will be useful to have a translation of the epitaph. To do this, you can get in touch with a specialist who can help you read the text and determine the date on the stone.

In addition, you can look at historical sources and find a portrait of this person, find out where they lived and then show their house during a tour of the city, pointing out the location of their business or significant places in their life. It should also be possible to find articles about this person and gather interesting stories from their life.

About a group of people. In each city since the second half of the 19th century, there have been various organisations which complemented the already existing traditional

What can we talk about in a Jewish Cemetery?

community organisations. You can talk about different political, artistic, scientific, or cultural movements, sports, business, or women's organisations, opinion makers, etc. If you have found information about any person who belonged to a certain organisation, you can find information about that organisation.

About styles of tombstone. Their type, design, text, etc.

Jewish tombstones usually fall into one of the following categories:

- vertical
- horizontal
- the *ohel* – a small building constructed above the burial, which protects the grave from natural phenomena. The ohel is placed over the graves of prominent figures in the community such as rabbis and Hasidic leaders (*tzadik*). In the 19th century, Jewish cemeteries were also affected by the trend of using sculptures in place of traditional tombstones. For example, in the Chernivtsi Jewish cemetery (Ukraine), one of the tombstones has been decorated with sleeping lion.

About the changing of architectural styles and about architecture. While exploring the Jewish cemetery you can try to search for a specific style of architecture in the tombstones. From century to century, the way tombstones were constructed evolved and shifted: there were new details, fonts changed, architectural trends were reflected in the design of the tombstone. You can also try to compare the appearance of non-Jewish and Jewish tombstones of the same period. Whether the tombstones had the same features, whether they were made of the same materials, or whether they were completely different.

Hasidim – Jewish religious group that arose as a spiritual revival movement in the territory of contemporary Western Ukraine during the 18th century. Today, most affiliates reside in Israel and the United States.

If you want to know how to read Hebrew texts, please refer to our manual 'Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide', which includes an introduction to the nuances of Jewish epitaphs.

About masonry schools and stonemasons. Tombstones are works of art. With tombstones from the 19th century, you can identify features which are characteristic not just of schools of masonry, but of the masters themselves, whose names are occasionally preserved. Some master tombstone carvers were so well known that their works were commissioned by individuals in other regions and transported. If you trace the tombstone from the workshop to the cemetery, you can gain an insight into the trade connections of the regions you are studying.

About the materials used to create tombstones. The availability of certain materials often influenced the type of carving and the extent to which the tombstone could be decorated. On a more amenable material (e.g., limestone or sandstone), ornaments and decoration could be richer and more extensive.

About what is represented on the tombstones. The richest variety of decoration styles can be found in the cemeteries of Ukraine and Moldova. This is due to the amenable materials with which the carvers worked in those countries. On the tombstones, you can see traditional images such as the menorah, the star of David, candlesticks, priestly hands, jugs, and other symbols.

About texts. The ability to read text on the tombstone is an important skill. You can surprise your guests even if you know how to determine the marker of the beginning and end of the text, find the date and/or name of the deceased. If you want to deepen your knowledge in this area, pay attention to the list of recommended literature at the end of this manual. Bilingual text can be found on tombstones of the late-19th century and 20th century, in Hebrew and in the local language where there was a Jewish Diaspora and cemetery.

If you told your group about the markers for the beginning and end of the tombstone inscription, how to interpret the date, or told them about the decorations, can challenge



What can we talk about in a Jewish Cemetery?

them to find several gravestones with a certain image or dates, or count the dates, or find certain phrases on the stone.

About Jewish burial. Everything concerning the preparation and organisation of funerals in the community is usually handled by the Funeral Bureau – "Chevra Kadisha".

The whole body of the deceased must be cleaned and washed. Shards of pottery or a pinch of soil from Israel may be placed over the eyes of the deceased. The body is wrapped in white cloth. Usually, no foreign objects are buried with the body. However, objects found with buried individuals include smoking pipes, keys, and locks, that were found during archaeological research in Poland, Lithuania, etc. Shards of pottery or soil from Israel may also be buried with the deceased (placed near the hand).

Here are some laws of mourning. A person must observe mourning for his parents, children, spouse, brother, or sister. Burials cannot take place on Saturdays or Jewish holidays. With the exception of these cases and a few other exceptions, such as delaying to allow for the only child of the deceased to attend the ceremony, it is frowned upon to postpone a funeral for even one day. Delaying a funeral is considered an additional torment for the soul. Immediately after the funeral, the seven days of mourning (*Shyva*) begin. The days of both the seven-day and thirty-day period of mourning are counted down from the day of the funeral, not from the day of death. On the 7th and 30th days, it is permissible to visit the grave of the deceased, read psalms and prayers, or give a donation. It is customary to leave pebbles on the grave before leaving the cemetery as a sign that it has been visited. It is permissible to commemorate the anniversary of the death of a loved one (according to the dates of the Jewish calendar).

About mysticism. Although it may come as a disappointment to those seeking the arcane in burial grounds, Jews do not view their cemeteries as mystical. However, the

Chevra Kadisha (from Aramaic "holy society") is a special burial fraternity – a group of people who prepare the body of the deceased for the funeral and conduct the burial. It is a crucial part of almost every Jewish community, and its members are treated with great respect.



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Mitzvah - refers to a commandment commanded by God to be performed as a religious duty, mitzvah has also come to express an individual act of human kindness in keeping with the law.

Jews believe that a cemetery is a holy place, and as such they treat it with great respect. It is believed that the cemetery is the best place to address the souls of the dead. This is reflected in a tradition which is inherent to only some Jewish communities, wherein a procession passes around the cemetery seven times, in order for any requests to be better heard by the dead, and conveyed to God.

In the Hasidic communities of Eastern Europe, the ritual of the "black wedding" emerged in the 19th century. It was believed that in order to halt the progress of epidemics such as cholera, a wedding had to be performed. For this purpose, those who agreed to get married in a very unusual place were chosen. According to Jewish tradition, the dead are saddened that they can not keep the commandments, including participation in the wedding celebration and pleasing the bride and groom on this special day. By performing a "black wedding", the inhabitants of the necropolis could feel welcome as guests and perform a great *mitzvah*. Accordingly, after the ceremony linking the living and the dead, the deceased were believed to joyfully testify in the Heavenly Court in favour of the community that invited them to the wedding, thereby gaining the organisers the favour of the Lord himself. It is believed that at the "black wedding", He acts as a matchmaker.

Chuppah - is a canopy under which a Jewish couple stand during their wedding ceremony. It consists of a cloth, stretched or supported over four poles. A chuppah symbolizes the home that the couple will build together.

The ritual got its name thanks to the colour of the *chuppah*; for the ritual, black materials were mainly used. Evidence suggests "black weddings" were performed in Europe in the 1920s, to combat the Spanish flu and typhus epidemics.

Also, during epidemics, it was customary to elect a "Cemetery Keeper" before organising a funeral procession and attempting to gain access to the cemetery. The "Cemetery Keeper" would refuse to grant access to the procession, speaking the words "There is no space, get out of here, all of the places are taken". Sometimes, the role of "Cemetery



What can we talk about in a Jewish Cemetery?

"Keeper" was performed by a non-Jewish person; however, if the "Keeper" played the role poorly, the ritual would fail.

The idea that the souls of the dead could be more easily contacted in the cemetery and could become messengers, passing on the requests of an individual or an entire community to God, led to the tradition of pilgrimage to the graves of notable rabbis.

If you know that you will have a group interested in visiting the ohel of a famous tzadik, then find out if the ohel is locked. If it is locked with a key, then find out the phone number of the key keeper and arrange to enter in advance. If you arrive at the cemetery and head for the ohel, you should know that even non-religious visitors may want to spend time in prayer, making oral requests, or leaving traditional notes (*kvitelach*). Small notes with requests are left either near the tzadik's tombstone or in a specially adapted box.

Jews came to the Hasidic leader and addressed him with questions about Jewish laws and with personal requests for intercession to God. After tzadik's death, notes on intercession to God began to be left near his grave, with hope that his soul can carry the requests to God more quickly.



What to keep in mind with Jewish tourists

Yorzayt – death anniversary.

If you are a tourist operator and organise a tour for a Jewish group, be sure to clarify whether the tourists are religious Jews. If the group is religious, you should specify who will be in the group: men, women, or families. Usually, groups of religious Jews try to work with their accompanying guide. If a religious group is ready to take a guide other than their own, then find out which sex they are ready to work with. Usually, men would prefer a male guide and women would prefer a female guide. If you are invited to lead a group, be sure to dress modestly (for women, it is important to cover your knees by skirt only, as well as your elbows and collarbones, and preferably to wear a headdress; for men, it is important to have any headdress you may be able to wear with you out of respect for tradition, for example, when entering a cemetery).

Non-religious Jews may also join the tour. Very often these are people who travel to places where their ancestors lived. Occasionally, if descendants know the exact burial spot of their ancestors, they will come to observe the yorzayt.

Why do tourists visit Jewish cemeteries?

In order to understand who visits Jewish cemeteries, you need to understand why one might want to visit the cemetery.

Types of visitors include:

- Those who have come to pray. As such, you need to make time for prayer. Visitors hoping to pray may include pilgrims, as well as relatives.
- Those who have come to visit the grave of relatives. In this case, you may or may not know the location of the grave. In both cases, it is best to visit the cemetery in advance and try to find the right grave. If relatives do not know the location of the grave, then during the preparatory period before the tour you should try to find the right grave (speak to the cemetery keeper, try to find photos, check if the correct grave even exists on the site).
- Participants of memorial events. There are a large number of programmes for different participants (from teenagers to retirees), which offer to visit the sites of disasters of the 20th century. In addition to museum visits, these programmes usually involve cemetery visits. In teenage and student groups, participants usually do not know how to behave in a cemetery, even if they are Jews.
- Participants of educational trips to places where Jews once lived. Such participants go to the cemetery because it is beautiful and cognitive.
- Travellers who are interested in everything around them. They may want to see the cemetery because it is an unusual place.
- Individuals who do not fall into any of these categories. Here you will need to orientate yourself on the site and adjust to the requirements of the group.

Visiting a Jewish Cemetery: Rules and Customs

Any Jewish cemetery, active or inactive, is a place of special religious importance to anyone of the Jewish faith. As such, visitors to the cemetery, whether they came for personal reasons or research purposes, have to abide by a few simple rules. This section will focus on these rules, as well as some rituals related to visiting the cemetery.

On the one hand, the cemetery in Jewish tradition is a holy place. That is why, in the cemetery, men need to cover their heads. In Judaism in general, it is necessary for men to wear headaddresses at all times. In a Jewish cemetery, especially in a functioning cemetery, men (regardless of their religion) are likely to be asked to wear headgear out of respect for the deceased. Very often at the entrance to a cemetery there may be additional hats, in case the visitor did not bring their own.

Moreover, out of respect for the dead, it is prohibited to drink, eat, or smoke in the cemetery, as the dead can not join you.



Visiting a Jewish Cemetery: Rules and Customs

On the other hand, the Jewish cemetery is not a ritualistically clean place. Therefore, after leaving the cemetery you will be offered the chance to wash your hands. For that purpose, most cemeteries are equipped with hand-washing facilities.

Jews are not allowed to put flowers on the graves. Traditionally, they place small stones, meaning that the grave was visited. They may also light memorial candles. As in many other cultures, Jews associate a candle with the soul.

Jews also have special texts that they read in the cemetery. You can read more about these rules and other traditions in the book *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*.

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (by Shlomo Gantzfried, Uzhhorod, 1844-1864). The laws of burial and mourning paragraphs 193-218 https://www.sefaria.org/Kitzur_Shulchan_Aruch.6?lang=bi





Jewish cemeteries in countries surveyed by ESJF – Greece, Moldova, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Slovakia

Jewish cemeteries in each country have their special characteristics, and can vary greatly in appearance. Moreover, in different regions of the same country cemeteries can be significantly different. Since 2018, over the years the ESJF Foundation has collected material on the state of cemeteries in Greece, Ukraine, Moldova, Slovakia, and Lithuania. You can find detailed information about these cemeteries on our website <https://www.esjf-surveys.org>

In this section of the manual we have focused on the information that most emphasises the characteristics of cemeteries in each particular region. At the same time, these features may be characteristic of Jewish cemeteries. We have prepared links to useful resources and a brief note on the state of cemeteries in the country studied by ESJF team.

This information changes dynamically depending on the current situation in the cemetery and in the country, so follow the changes on the site.

We hope that this information will help you bring your excursion from the local to the global level and broaden the horizon of your understanding of Jewish cemeteries.

One characteristic of Jewish cemeteries in all countries is that they have absorbed certain features of their local culture. You can practice looking for these traits, as well as suggest that your guests look for such traits, depending on the purpose of their visit to the cemetery.

Here we need to say a few words about the “Dating” which is provided for each country.

The ESJF survey format does not allow for substantial epigraphic field research. However, an attempt was made to order and verify the available data, relying on the dating that can be obtained within the framework of a short survey.

Thus, the date of the oldest gravestone recorded during the ESJF survey is the *terminus ante quem* (upper limit) of the period of the cemetery’s emergence and not the exact date of the oldest preserved gravestone. In all cases, the older tombstones can potentially be found through serious epigraphic survey work. Of course, it should be taken into account that many tombstones found on newer Jewish cemeteries will likely have been transferred there from an older burial site, and that these figures cannot always be accurately established.

Nevertheless, in the face of the existing confusion surrounding dating, this approach may bear some fruit.

As a result, the dating of cemeteries and gravestones by professional expeditions is superimposed on the legends about the ancient origins of cemeteries, as well as on the dating of tombstones which were recorded at the beginning of the 20th century, but later lost.

Please consult the Useful Links section at the end of this manual to find more detailed information about the cemetery in your country/town/village.

Jewish cemeteries in each country, see ESJF’s 2018-2020 Country Reports: <https://www.esjf-surveys.org/publications/>

Greece



This section discusses the research and monitoring of Jewish cemeteries carried out by ESJF in Greece from 2018-20. During this period, a team of specialists investigated 45 sites: 23 of the surveyed sites were found to be demolished, and 22 were preserved.

Dating

The history of Jewish cemeteries and tombstones in Greece stretches back for 20 centuries. This is complicated by the destruction of cemeteries, the relocation of tombstones to other sites and museums, and the lack of systematic study.

The Jewish necropolis in Greece existed, apparently, in the first centuries C.E. Unfortunately, the Jewish necropolis of late Antiquity in Greece has not been preserved. Presumably, they were not cemeteries, but rather catacombs or other forms of cave burial. Most likely, they existed on Rhodes, Delos, Corinth, and other large ancient Jewish communities.

The earliest preserved Jewish tombstones and sarcophagi of the second to fifth centuries are now located in Greek archaeological museums. In particular, the Archaeological



Museum of Thessaloniki contains four Jewish tombstones from the old Thessaloniki cemetery, dating from 150 to 400 CE and several other museums contain tombstones from the Byzantine period. All of these bear Greek epitaphs.

The first documented tombstones in Hebrew date from the end of the Byzantine period (14th century). M. Schwab published the text and photograph of a Jewish tombstone from Chalkis from 1326 (not preserved today), and the tombstone from Patras, dating back to 1330 (not preserved). S. Bowman published two tombstones from the 14th century from Thebes.

The oldest known tombstones still in the cemetery include a tombstone from 1426 in Ioannina New Cemetery (discovered by a student expedition from Bar-Ilan University). The stone is believed to have been brought from an Old Jewish cemetery in Ioannina. A tombstone dating from 1453, which is presumably located on the old cemetery of Didymoteicho (which the ESJF team was unable to find) belongs to the same period. Tombstones from the 16th century exist in Chalkis (dated 1539, in a small museum at the cemetery), as well as at the New Cemetery of Rhodes (dated 1593, transferred from the Rhodes Old cemetery). 17th-century

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tombstones are recorded in the New Cemetery of Thessaloniki (1665, transferred from the Old Thessaloniki cemetery).

The oldest tombstone in situ recorded by the ESJF expedition was found in Zakynthos, dated 1671. The International Survey of Jewish Monuments database mentions the presence of 15th-century tombstones on this cemetery, but ESJF could not confirm this during the expedition.

Tombstones from the 18th century have been recorded in Chania Cemetery at Etz Chayim Synagogue (1710, in situ), Kos Old (1741, in situ, while Pinkasei Kehilot Yavan mentions the tombstone from 1715), Corfu New (1702, presumably relocated from the Old Sephardic Jewish cemetery in Corfu), Kos New (1772, most likely relocated from the Old or Oldest Kos Cemeteries), Trikala (1765, in situ. Jewishgen, mentions a tombstone dated to 1550, but ESJF could not find evidence to support this).

There are more cemeteries containing 19th century tombstones. These include Larissa New (1866, in situ, while the International Survey of Jewish Monuments reports the date of the oldest one as 1898), Alexandroupoli (1868, in situ), Didymoteicho New (1879, in situ), Drama Old (1885, in situ), the Athens 1st cemetery Jewish section (1892, in situ), Kavala New (1894, transferred in 1938 from the Old Kavala cemetery), and Volos New (1866, brought from Volos Old).

Text

The marker of the beginning of the text on the tombstones in Greece is the abbreviation of “**בִּדְה**” “blessed be the righteous judge” or “**מִצֵּק**” – “tombstone is erected”, but the marker of the end of the tombstones is typical for other regions: “**תִּנְצְנָה**” – “may his soul be bound in the knot of life”. One can also find the “strange” numbers beginning with five thousand – this is the date of death according to Jewish Calendar.

Design

Usually, Greek tombstones are modest, typically bearing floral or geometric decoration. There may be trees – cypresses, for instance – and classic Jewish symbols such as the Star of David and Menorah. A special decorative element found on Greek tombstones is the image of an oriental lamp, as a symbol of *ner neshama* candles of the soul.

Case

In Greece, the question of how to make a tourist site from the cemetery can be approached as follows.

It was decided to collect tombstones from the destroyed cemetery of Thessaloniki, which was located behind the fortresses, and there were about 300,000 tombstones. The few tombstones were moved to the Jewish Thessaloniki Museum and now occupy the first floor of the museum. In addition to tombstones, the exhibition includes photos of the cemetery before its destruction during the Second World War. This is a good example how you can mark up an object that no longer exists at the tourist map of the city.

Additional info

On new cemeteries, you can find tombstones transferred from the oldest demolished cemeteries (for example, in Rhodes, Kavala, and Volos).

The following resources contain more information:

<https://www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org/cemetery/>

<https://www.jewishmuseum.gr/en/>

<http://www.jmth.gr/article-09032014-the-jewish-necropolis> – description of the museum section “The Jewish Necropolis”

Moldova

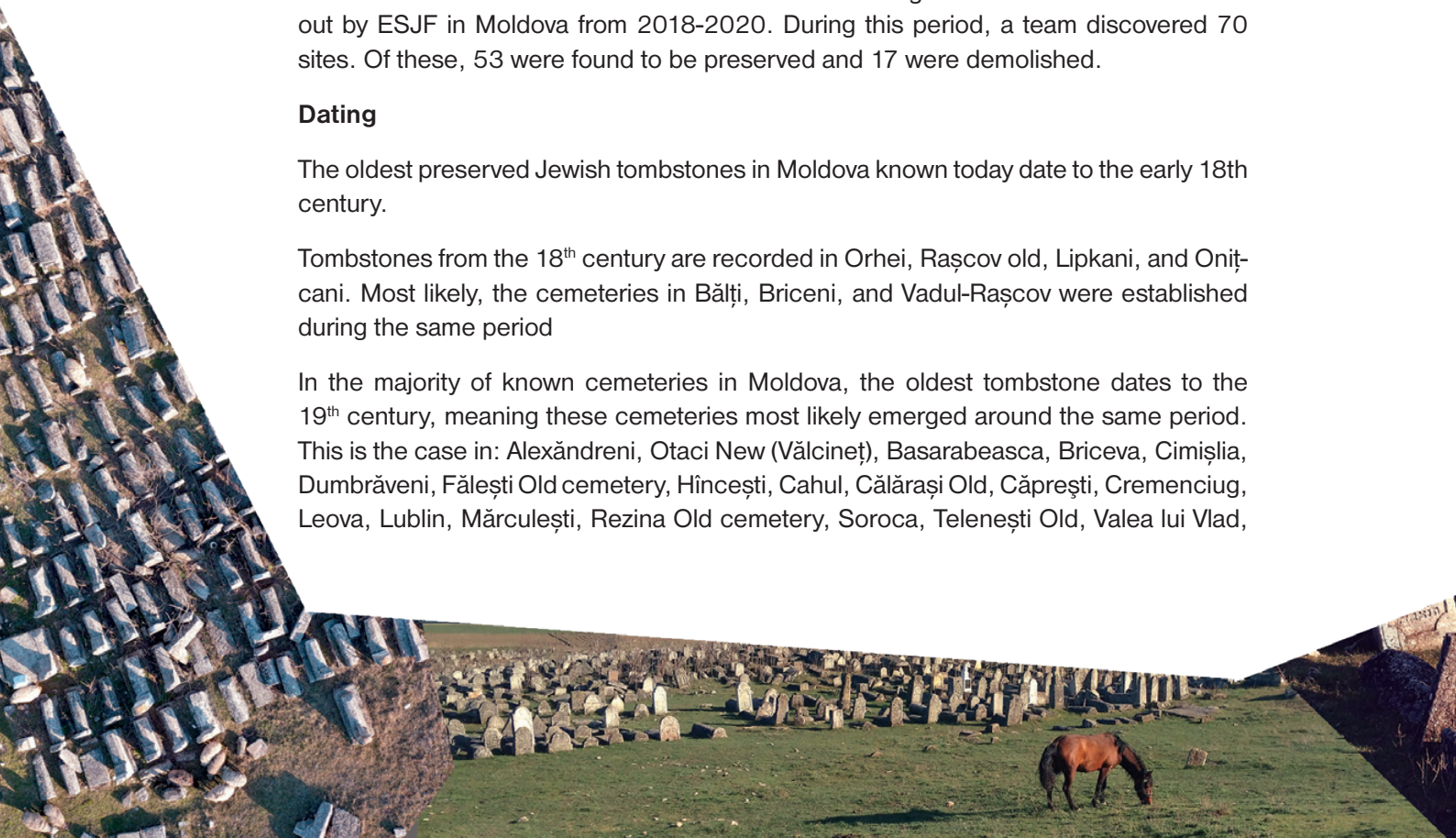
This section discusses the research and monitoring of Jewish cemeteries carried out by ESJF in Moldova from 2018-2020. During this period, a team discovered 70 sites. Of these, 53 were found to be preserved and 17 were demolished.

Dating

The oldest preserved Jewish tombstones in Moldova known today date to the early 18th century.

Tombstones from the 18th century are recorded in Orhei, Rașcov old, Lipkani, and Onițcani. Most likely, the cemeteries in Bălți, Briceni, and Vadul-Rașcov were established during the same period

In the majority of known cemeteries in Moldova, the oldest tombstone dates to the 19th century, meaning these cemeteries most likely emerged around the same period. This is the case in: Alexăndreni, Otaci New (Vălcineț), Basarabeasca, Briceva, Cimișlia, Dumbrăveni, Fălești Old cemetery, Hîncești, Cahul, Călărași Old, Căprești, Cremenciug, Leova, Lublin, Mărculești, Rezina Old cemetery, Sorooca, Telenești Old, Valea lui Vlad,



Vărzărești, Edineț, Zgurița, Dubăsari New, Camenca, Rașcov New, Rîbnița Old, and Țibuleuca.

The cemeteries which arose in early 20th century include: Ceadîr-Lunga, Florești, Chișinău Sculeanca Jewish Cemetery (preserved part), Comrat, Telenești New, Țirgul Vertiujeni, Bender New, Grigoriopol, and Tiraspol New.

Finally, eight cemeteries were established in the post-WWII period, all six of which are Jewish sections within municipal cemeteries: Fălești New, the Călărași Jewish section on the municipal cemetery in Vătămăneasa, the Chișinău Jewish section on St. Lazarus ("Doina") municipal cemetery, Rezina Jewish section on the municipal, Ungheni New, and the Jewish section on Rîbnița municipal cemetery. There is also a separate post-war cemetery in Rîșcani and, most likely, the Cinișeuți New Jewish cemetery (dating requires further investigation).

A particularly interesting find was the previously unlisted 18th century cemetery in Onițcani. The cemetery was destroyed and the site used as a garden. However, during the survey, four gravestones from the 18th century were found lying next to the garden, which, according to locals, were removed from the site.



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Distinctive features of Jewish cemeteries in Moldova:

Text

The texts usually begin with “פֿן” – “here lies”, and ends with “תנוצבה”. You can also find inscriptions from different Jewish cemeteries in Moldova on the JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR).

Design

Jewish tombstones in Moldova bear different types of decorations. There are the traditional symbols – the Star of David, *menorah* (*seven branch candelabra*), hands – the blessing of *kohanim* (priests) – but you can also find different animals and birds. The most interesting decoration found on the tombstones here is that which is designed to reflect the profession/craft of the deceased: a boot on the tombstone for a shoemaker, a coil of threads on the tombstone for a tailor, etc.

Significant research on tombstones in Moldova was carried out by David Goberman, who after World War II described hundreds of carved tombstones in different regions. Many of the cemeteries described by Goberman were destroyed and his photographs are a unique source for Jewish heritage researchers. Goberman’s photographs were first published in Russia and the United States in the 1990s. The edition *Forgotten Stones: Jewish Tombstones in Moldova* was published in Russian and English only in 2000.

Case

Irina Shikhova, PhD, senior researcher at the Institute of Cultural Heritage, director of the NGO Maghid, and coordinator of the Jewish Heritage of Moldova project, leads individual and group tours of the preserved parts of the Jewish cemetery in Chişinău. Through tourism, Irina Shikhova attracts the attention of Jews from other countries, as well as relatives of those who lived in Moldova before World War II, in order to keep the

cemetery in good condition. Irina Shikhova also accompanied the participants of the expedition from the Foundation ESJF during their arrival in Chişinău.

Additional info

In August 2019, a field expedition on Jewish epigraphy in Moldova took place. The expedition was organised by the "Sefer" Centre together with the Centre of Slavic-Jewish Studies of the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences with the support from the Genesis Philanthropy Group and the Russian Jewish Congress.

The object of study was the Jewish cemetery of Orhei, one of the oldest and most famous Jewish necropolis in modern Moldova. More information about the expedition can be found at the link: https://sefer.ru/rus/education/educational_programmes/Summer/orhei.php

In 2017, the "Sefer" Centre conducted a school expedition to Transnistria. The expedition took place in Raşcov, the location of one of the most important Jewish communities in Podolia during the 18th century. During the week, the expedition members (with the assistance of local residents) cleaned up the old Jewish cemetery in Raşcov and made an inventory of the tombstones found. In total, the researchers documented over 950 monuments from the early 18th to mid 19th centuries. The earliest of these date back to 1700-1720, the beginning of the heyday of the Raşcov Jewish community. At the same time, not only the texts of epitaphs are of special interest, but also the rich carved decorations on most of the tombstones, predominantly made up of traditional Jewish symbols. You can find more information about this expedition at the following link: https://sefer.ru/rus/education/educational_programmes/Summer/pridnestrovie.php

JOWBR Cemetery Inventory – <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/tree/CemList.htm>

Ukraine

This section discusses the research and monitoring of Jewish cemeteries carried out by ESJF in Ukraine from 2018-2020. During this period, surveyors visited only part of the territory of Ukraine, surveying 1005 cemeteries. Of the surveyed cemeteries, 647 were found to be preserved, and 346 were demolished. It is important to note that the territory of Ukraine has not been fully explored, so the information about Jewish cemeteries in Ukraine will change. You can follow the rapid changes on our website.



Dating

The earliest tombstone preserved on the territory of Ukraine is dated back to 1520 and is located at the Jewish cemetery of Busk (Lviv region). The same year gravestone from Ostroh (Rivne region), alas, has survived only at the photograph. Monuments dated back to the 16th century can also be found in Medzhybizh and Sataniv (Khmelnitsky region), Buchach, Skala-Podilska and Vishnevets (Ternopil region). Monuments dates to the 17th century have survived in Pidhaitsi, Kremenets and Berezhany (Ternopil region), Bolekhiv (Ivano-Frankivsk region), Nemyriv (Lviv region), Trostianets (Vinnytsia region), Korets (Rivne region). Monuments from the 18th century have been found in several dozen cemeteries.

This data was published by prof. M. Nosonovsky, who is an outstanding contemporary researcher of Eastern European Jewish cemeteries. Note that the cemeteries of the modern Ukraine have attracted researchers since the end of the 19th century. Among them are the publication of the gravestones inscription from Berdichiv and other communities in the special edition "Measef" published in St. Petersburg in 1902; the catalogue of gravestone inscriptions from Lviv published by Sh. Baber in 1895 and the catalogue of inscriptions from Ostroh published by M. Bieber in 1907. Tombstones from the 19-20th centuries one can found in numerous cities and villages in Ukraine.

Text

Due to the fact that the territory of contemporary Ukraine was divided by two empires and developed according to different traditions, there may be different bilingual epitaphs in Ukraine, which will include those in Hebrew and those in their local languages: Polish, German, Romanian, Russian, Hungarian, etc. depending on the region. In rare cases, epitaphs can be found in *Yiddish*.

Yiddish – is a High German-derived language historically spoken by the Ashkenazi Jews.



You can find thousands of tombstone photos from different cemeteries here <https://cja.huji.ac.il>

Design

The carved decor of Jewish tombstones in Ukraine amazes not only with the variety of patterns, but also with the quality and professionalism of its implementation. The golden age of carved art belongs to the Baroque period in Ukraine. Often motives hewed on tombstones can be found in the decor of synagogues of the region. It is important to take this into account while preparing for a tour. Jewish cemeteries were beautiful. They often appeared at photographs and even postcards, thanks to this, we have documentary evidence of richness of demolished cemeteries.

Case

Since most of the research within the project took place in Ukraine, we present here more extended examples of conservation cases, Jewish cemetery research, as well as revealing the potential of the Jewish cemetery as a tourist site.

Further examples, collected from across Europe, beyond the scope of the project can be found in our handbook *Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection: The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism*.

Below, we include two examples from activist-researchers, who worked towards the launching of Jewish cemetery-based projects in their ancestral cemetery and their local cemetery, respectively.

Tetiana Fedoriv, Zbarazh Jewish Cemetery

Tetiana Fedoriv is a historian from Zbarazh whose interest in the local cemetery was sparked by simple encounters with its gravestones. This led her to learn Hebrew and explore the site further, eventually publishing a book about the Jewish history of Zbarazh. Tetiana worked actively with the local City Council to protect the site.

Tetiana's case can be taken as an example of how volunteer work to preserve the Jewish cemetery led to the idea of making it a tourist site, through writing a book, creating a route, and working with the Jewish heritage of the city.

“My involvement with Jewish cemeteries started with a visit to the already cleared Jewish cemetery in Zbarazh. Works on landscaping of the Jewish cemetery were organised in 2014 by the then newly elected mayor of Zbarazh, Roman Polikrovsky. It was a titanic work, because the cemetery was neglected for years.

Thanks to the cleaning of our cemetery, I was able to work with this monument on the spot. The work I have done over the last few years has been summarised in my little book.

Unfortunately, there is not much literature on Jewish cemeteries, especially for guides. How can guides, who are often non-Jews themselves and do not know much about Judaism, respectfully prepare their tours? Usually the Jewish aspect of the history of towns is studied by local historians, who are usually non-Jews in Ukraine. This is not very different in other countries either. I do not have any universal advice on how to prepare a tour. By myself, I started with the Jewish cemetery and then "added" other sites of the city of Zbarazh related to the Jewish community to this monument.

What advice would local mayors and city officials have if they want to include a Jewish cemetery in local tourism? The main thing is to work together: authorities together with activists, civil society and other actors. Zbarazh is a good example. If such work is done, the Jewish cemetery will definitely become one of the objects of local tourism”.

Tetiana Fedoriv

Marla Raucher Osborn, Rohatyn Jewish Heritage

Los Angeles native Marla Raucher Osborn has been researching her family history in Rohatyn, now in Western Ukraine, for a number of years. She made her first visit there in 2008 and returned almost a dozen times in 2011 while living in nearby L'viv. Her research led to a hands-on project to recover scattered gravestones from Rohatyn's destroyed Jewish cemeteries. <https://rohatynjewishheritage.org/>

Her work provides an example of what can be achieved when a Jewish descendant returns from another country to work on a Jewish heritage site.

Marla's experience is important in connection with the two output points:

1. How to transform a destroyed cemetery and an empty place into an object of Jewish heritage.
2. How to work with the local community, and how to motivate the local community to create a tourist and heritage site in a mono-national space, which belongs to the culture of the disappeared former inhabitants of a location.

“Suggestions for local activists and municipal staff for building projects around Jewish cemeteries: First, mark the burial sites with signs in at least the local language plus English (the lingua franca of travellers), and some kind of physical marker at the boundaries, if known; this shows that the place is recognised and appreciated for its historical and current significance, and marked and labeled local Jewish heritage creates and amplifies identity: by adding another "family branch" to the local community ("our town had a vibrant Jewish past, in addition to my own culture and others"), and by creating a familiar and welcoming site for foreign Jewish visitors who can then reconnect with a place and a community important to their ancestors.

Finally, maintain contact information for knowledgeable guides who have visited the town and all of its heritage sites (Jewish and non-Jewish)”.

Marla Raucher Osborn

Additional info

Ukraine is a difficult region for Jewish tombstone research. Since different parts of Ukraine existed for a long time under the influence of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire, the tombstone carving traditions differed depending on their fashion, carving traditions, the influence of local traditions, and the materials used.

Since Ukraine is the homeland of Hasidism, in Western Ukraine (and partly in Central Ukraine), many cemeteries contain the grave of a leader of the Hasidic movement, so the cemeteries of Ukraine are of particular interest to pilgrims.

More information about Jewish communities in Ukraine and their cemeteries can be found through the following online resources:

Shtetl Routes. Vestiges of Jewish cultural heritage in cross-border tourism in borderland of Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine: <http://shtetlroutes.eu/en/towns/>

A Guide to Jewish Cemetery Preservation in Western Ukraine led by Marla Raucher Osborn for Rohatyn Jewish Heritage (RJH): <https://jewishheritageguide.net/en/guid>

JOWBR Cemetery Inventory: <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/tree/CemList.htm>

Further examples, collected from across Europe, beyond the scope of the project can be found in our handbook *Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection. The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism*.

Lithuania

This section discusses the research and monitoring of Jewish cemeteries carried out by ESJF in Lithuania between 2018-2020. During this period, surveyors visited 105 sites, half of all Lithuanian Jewish cemeteries (the register includes 230 Jewish cemeteries). Of the 105 cemeteries surveyed and analyzed in Lithuania, 86 were found to be preserved and 19 were demolished.



Dating

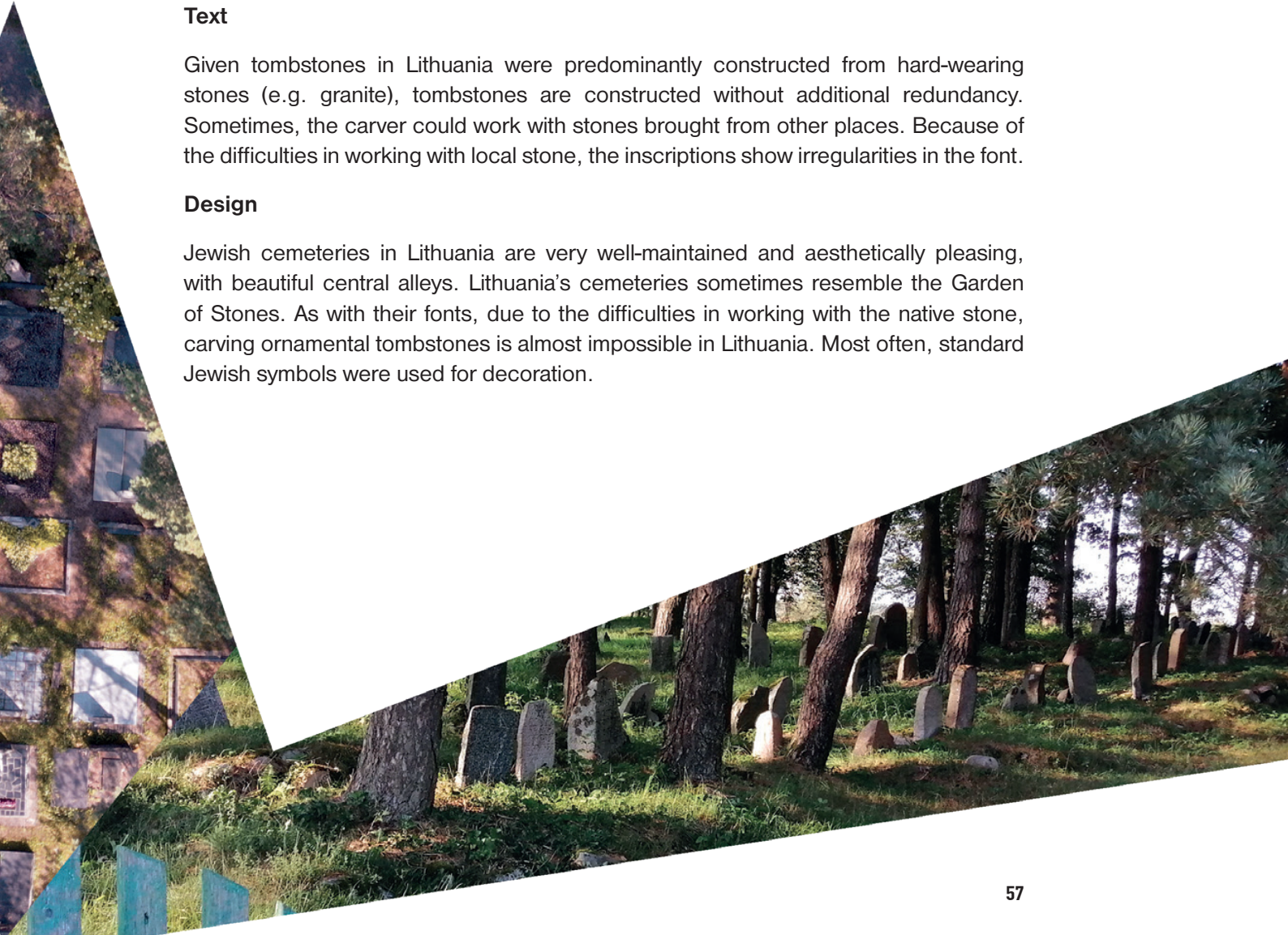
Jewish communities appeared in Lithuania no later than the 15th century. There are no known surviving cemeteries from this period. Most of the known cemeteries in the country were founded between the 19th and 20th centuries.

Text

Given tombstones in Lithuania were predominantly constructed from hard-wearing stones (e.g. granite), tombstones are constructed without additional redundancy. Sometimes, the carver could work with stones brought from other places. Because of the difficulties in working with local stone, the inscriptions show irregularities in the font.

Design

Jewish cemeteries in Lithuania are very well-maintained and aesthetically pleasing, with beautiful central alleys. Lithuania's cemeteries sometimes resemble the Garden of Stones. As with their fonts, due to the difficulties in working with the native stone, carving ornamental tombstones is almost impossible in Lithuania. Most often, standard Jewish symbols were used for decoration.



Case

In Lithuania, Vilkaviskis natives carried out a family project yielded impressive results. By tracing the routes of a Yiddish letter and memory maps (a hand-drawn memory maps done by witnesses of prewar life), the organisers were able to gather incredible insights into the town's heritage, leading to the recovery of the names of more than a thousand individuals who had lived in the town prior to World War II. More information about this project can be found at the following link: http://www.jewishvilkaviskis.org/Jewish_Cemetery.html

Additional info

This attitude towards Jewish cemeteries is part of a well-developed policy for the preservation of historical monuments in Lithuania. Having been incorporated into the State Register of Cultural Values, all cemeteries are protected by the state and their maintenance is financed by the state budget. The condition and maintenance of the preserved cemeteries, as well as the memorialisation of the demolished cemeteries, is much better in Lithuania than in the other countries studied in the framework of the project.

If you want to learn more about Jewish cemeteries in Lithuania, visit Maceva, the Litvak Cemetery Catalogue: <http://www.litvak-cemetery.info/>

The Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization published the collection of papers "Jews on the Map of Lithuania: Biržai. Problems of preserving Jewish heritage and historical memory". The edition includes materials on Jewish history, ethnography, sociolinguistics, and epigraphy, collected in the city of Biržai and its surroundings, located in the north of today's Lithuania.



The book is not limited to the presentation of the results of a large international two-year project of ethnographic, epigraphic and archival research on the history of the Jewish community of Biržai, where the Rabbinic Jews and Karaites existed as neighbours. An important part of the research was the experience of preservation of Jewish heritage and memory in the region of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

About Karaites and
others Jewish sects use
Salo W. Baron.
A Social and Religious
History of the Jews:
High Middle Ages,
500-1200. Columbia
University Press, 1952.
(V.5.) p. 209-289

Slovakia

This section discusses the research and monitoring of Jewish cemeteries carried out by ESJF in Slovakia from 2018-2020. In Slovakia, ESJF researchers visited only three regions: the Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica regions. During the survey, it transpired there are many small cemeteries in Slovakia. This suggests that there were many small communities in Slovakia. The fact that the cemeteries are small may have contributed to their going “unnoticed” and may have saved them from demolition. Most of the cemeteries in Slovakia have been preserved. Of the 211 cemeteries surveyed and fully analyzed in Slovakia, 196 were found to be preserved and only 15 were demolished.





Dating

Since Jewish communities in Slovakia have been recorded since the 17th century, there were most likely Jewish cemeteries in this era. Unfortunately, it is impossible to document this. Preserved tombstones in Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia date back to the 19th-20th centuries.



Text

The marker of the beginning of the text on the tombstones in Slovakia is mostly the abbreviation “פֿט” “here lies” or “מִצֵּק” – “tombstone is erected”, but the marker of the end of the tombstones is typical to other regions: “תִּנְצְבֶה” – “may his soul be bound in the knot of life”.

Design

The main feature of Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia is the strict design of its tombstones. There is no superfluous decor on the tombstones, the inscriptions are made uniformly. However, Slovakian cemeteries tend to favour other decorative elements such as columns and porticos.

Case

The Jewish community of Bratislava (Slovakia) has been restoring the appearance of the Jewish cemetery for ten years. It is a cemetery with over 7,000 tombs. Among the individuals buried here are well-known rabbis, writers, and leaders of various organisations. This place has become a tourist destination not only because of its good care. An online map of the cemetery was made, which points to all 18 sectors, and the tombstones of that sectors. More information about the project can be found here: <http://www.jewishcemetery.sk/orthodox-cemetery/>

Additional info

Notable features of Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia are their small size and high density. This is significant because, during the Austria-Hungarian control between the 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the Jews in these regions existed in small rural communities, and were responsible for their own institutions, including cemeteries.

The list of surveyed sites was compiled based on the list of the restitution of Jewish cemeteries provided by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Slovakia (UZŽNO). Beyond this list, international databases (IAJGS, JOWBR) were used, with additional field research conducted in settlements where there was once a significant, documented Jewish population. These lists represent the first comprehensive list of Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia.

If you want to read more about Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia, you can use the resource <http://iajgscemetery.org/eastern-europe/slovakia/> and look at short descriptions there.

Turning your local cemetery into a sustainable tourism site

Tourism has become increasingly important in the local economy of cities, towns, and villages across Europe, creating jobs, bringing investment and attention to local sites, and the surrounding infrastructure. As visitors discover local attractions, they often gain new significance in the eyes of local residents.

Nevertheless, tourism comes with many challenges that are crucial to address when grassroots projects are developed. Tourist attractions require maintenance and care, they need to gain and maintain visibility, have a clear vision of their audience — and they should have a long-term managerial and financial vision to be able to achieve this. Tourism projects should aspire to develop a model that is sustainable in terms of human and financial resources, management, and maintenance.

Projects never exist in a vacuum, and this comes with benefits as well as challenges. Ideally, attractions should form part of a local or regional network of sites: standalone sites are at risk of being neglected, and therefore their infrastructure can become difficult to maintain. Imported expertise might enhance a project, but it also makes it dependent on

the availability of this expertise. Such dilemmas need to be weighed up when one decides to develop tourism-focused projects around Jewish cemeteries as well.

Each cemetery, each locality and community is different, and therefore there is no bulletproof recipe for successful projects.

However, when you make an initial assessment, there are many things to think about:

1. Look at the local Jewish cemetery in the context of local and regional heritage

- Assess local Jewish heritage: is there a synagogue or any other Jewish monument beside the cemetery?
- Assess local non-Jewish heritage: are there museums, historic buildings, or archaeological excavations that might interest visitors?
- Assess similar regional sites: would it make sense to create a Jewish cemetery route in your region? Could you team up with neighbouring towns or villages to do so?

2. Look at local expertise and enthusiasm

- Is there willingness in the local council to preserve the local Jewish cemetery?
- Are there local Jewish residents for whom the cemetery is important? Is there maybe a local Jewish community?
- Is there a local tourism agency?
- Are there local historians who are interested in collecting information, consulting the archives, or perhaps interviewing elderly locals?
- Are there school teachers and students who would explore the site and help to preserve it?

Conclusion

We are grateful that you have read this manual to the end. We hope that the information provided here is useful to you. Of course, we have not taken into account all the aspects related to each individual region in the countries described. Our main task was to show you that the Jewish cemetery is interesting and there are many ways to turn a visit to the cemetery into a fascinating tourist attraction. Now we hope that your imagination and the hints you will find in your cemetery, in archives, libraries, etc. will help you create an interactive excursion, and that the preparation of these materials will turn into an exciting detective story.

In this manual, we have tried to sketch out a number of key considerations, show important questions that could be asked, and to explain why it makes sense to foster engagement with these heritage sites. Together with our handbooks, *Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection – The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism*, and *Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide*, we hope this material will offer adequate support for those who seek to participate in the process of putting all of the Jewish cemeteries of Europe on the map, to benefit locals and visitors, secular and religious alike.



Conclusion

Tourism is one of the pillars of heritage preservation today, and a useful tool not only for supporting local economies, but also for community engagement, and reinvigorated discussions about history and memory. Jewish cemeteries have started to find their place in the growing niche of sustainable, community-driven heritage tourism, but there is a long way to go if we want to reach beyond metropolitan centres and the most spectacular historic monuments.

Developing Jewish cemeteries as destinations for heritage comes with many challenges, the most important of which is the need to balance the beliefs and faith of those who erected the sites, with those of contemporary visitors. Jewish cemeteries were traditionally not meant to be visitor attractions, and it is a delicate process to allow this type of engagement, to bring together religious regulations and considerations with the inclusion, reflection, and simple curiosity of non-Jewish or non-religious visitors. Another challenge is to address the difficult, often traumatic histories that Jewish cemeteries were witnesses to, without reducing them to the bearers of this history. In other words, it is paramount to preserve the complexity of Jewish cemeteries and to reveal this complexity to the many kinds of visitors who might come to explore them.

We wish you success in developing and conducting your tours!



Recommended literature

Brown, Ryland. *If The Stones Could Speak: A Guide to the Shapes and Symbols in Your Local Cemetery*. Gateway Seminars, 2014.

Goberman, David Pinsky, Robert, and Hundert, Gershon David. *Carved Memories: Heritage in Stone from the Russian Jewish Pale*. New York: Rizzoli, 2000.

Goberman, David. *Zabytyye kamni: yevreyskiye nadgrobiya v Moldove. Forgotten Stones: Jewish Tombstones in Moldova*, Spb: Isskustvo, 2000.

Jacobs, Joachim. *The heritage of Jewish cemeteries in Europe. // Jewish cemeteries and burial culture in Europe*. – ICOMOS Hefte des Deutschen Nationalkomitees. International Conference, Berlin-Weißensee, 3.–6. April

Menachemson, Nolan. *A Practical Guide to Jewish Cemeteries* Bergenfield, NJ: Avotaynu, 2007

Rath, Gideon. “Hebrew Tombstone Inscriptions and Dates”, in *Chronicles* (Newsletter of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Philadelphia), Vol. 5, No. 1 (Spring 1986), pages 1–4.

Schafer, Louis S. *Tombstones of Your Ancestors*. (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 1991, 2007).

Schwartzman, Arnold. *Graven images: Graphic Motifs of the Jewish Gravestone*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1993. 144 pages.

Strangstad, Lynette. *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*. Nashville, Tenn.: Association for Gravestone Studies, 1988, 1995, 2013.

Useful links

A Guide to Jewish Cemetery Preservation in Western Ukraine led by Marla Raucher Osborn for Rohatyn Jewish Heritage (RJH) <https://jewishheritageguide.net/en/guide>

Development of materials of excursion "Walking on Jewish Uman". <https://reherit.org.ua/material/rozrobka-materialiv-ekskursiyi-progulyanka-yevrejskoyu-umannyu/>

ESJF European Jewish Cemeteries Initiative The largest database of Jewish cemeteries sites in Eastern Europe (including maps, historical overviews, descriptions, and photographs) <https://www.esjf-surveys.org/surveys/>

Rhodes Jewish Museum <https://www.rhodesjewishmuseum.org/cemetery/>

Rhodes Jewish Museum <https://www.jewishmuseum.gr/en/>

Jewish Encyclopedia (1901-1906): <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/>

Jewish Cemeteries and Sustainable Protection – The ESJF Handbook of Sustainable Heritage Tourism <https://www.esjf-surveys.org/publications/>

Jewish Cemeteries in the Classroom – An ESJF Guide <https://www.esjf-surveys.org/publications/>

Country Reports: Greece, Lithuania, Moldova, Ukraine, Slovakia <https://www.esjf-surveys.org/publications/>

Guided Tours in the Jewish Cemetery – An ESJF Guide

International Jewish Cemetery Project (by the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies) <http://iajgscemetery.org/eastern-europe>

Maceva. Lithuanian cemeteries <http://www.litvak-cemetery.info/>

Online Worldwide Burial Registry by Jewishgen (JOWBR) <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Cemetery/tree/CemList.htm>

Project Medzhybozh http://sambation-map.ru/m_old/

Shtetl Routes. Vestiges of Jewish cultural heritage in cross-border tourism in borderland of Poland, Belarus, and Ukraine <http://shtetlroutes.eu/en/towns/>

Maps

Mapster. A Polish research resource, with more than 150 Polish, Austrian, German, and Russian historical maps (it is possible to search by settlement name) <http://igrek.amzp.pl/mapindex.php>

Mapire. Detailed historical maps from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with automatic binding to modern satellite maps <https://mapire.eu>

Etomesto. Several dozen historical maps, mostly of Ukraine and Russia, automatically linked to modern satellite maps <http://www.etomesto.ru>

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Printing House

LLC "Sofia-A" LTD

04053, Kyiv, Observatorna street, 12-B

+380442722877

Circulation: 300 copies

Heritage preservation sits at the nexus of many different fields, from the technological to the pedagogical. The work of the ESJF encompasses many of these fields. With these manuals, we hope to support various professionals working in the protection of Jewish cemeteries, and in doing so to share the expertise necessary for achieving long-term preservation.

Tourism can play an important role in the long-term preservation of a heritage site, bringing with it attention, renewed interest in the site's operation, and increased funding, but it also has its pitfalls, particularly with sites of religious significance, or those which evoke complex histories – and Jewish cemeteries are both.

With sections on the different types of Jewish cemetery, the best features to draw attention to in your tour, and the rules and customs which must be observed, this manual provides you the template for organising an engaging, informative tour of the Jewish cemetery without violating religious rules or traditions.



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