

# *Poland - the Story of Hope, Perseverance, and Human Strength*



*The program is inspired by the widely acclaimed films.*

A great number of films that have won recently international recognition, received awards and nominations, concerns the turbulent history of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. Many renowned film producers, have made Poland and the heroes of Polish and Polish-Jewish history, their point of reference. The notable examples are:

***"Schindler's List" /S.Spielberg***

***"The Pianist" /R.Polanski***

***"A Man Who Became Pope" /G. Battiato***

***"In Darkness" /A.Holland***

When we add to this list A.Wajda's newest and most eagerly awaited project dedicated to Lech Walesa, whose premiere is planned this year, we will receive a very moving story about confrontation with one's fears, bravery, human strength and survival, and a struggle for human dignity. Let us take you in the footsteps of the films' characters and present you the nation where 'so many angles were found'.



### DAY 1, LVIV

Arrival in Lviv, the city which has changed so many names throughout its long history. Today it remains one of the most charming beauties of Eastern Europe and is the only Ukrainian "Ensemble of the Historic Centre" included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Lviv is full of magnificent architectural landmarks: impressive temples, ancient squares, museums and galleries housing artistic masterpieces of different historical epochs.

### DAY 2, LVIV

#### ***Leopold Socha, a sewer worker "In Darkness" /A.Holland***

***Leopold Socha, saved a group of Jews by hiding them in the sewers of Lviv during the German occupation. What started out as a cynical business arrangement, turned into something very unexpected, the unlikely alliance between Socha and the Jews as the enterprise seeps deeper into Socha's conscience.***

Enjoy the guided tour of Lviv, the heart of the Western Ukraine, specific frontier between east and west, orthodox and catholic religions. The city tour starts at the Opera House, the first building in Europe built on a solid concrete base, then you will walk down Svoboda Avenue, laid out above the enclosed underground Poltva River. On your way you will have a look at historic building housing The Maria Zankovetska Drama Theatre that was once the biggest in Europe and is the oldest in Ukraine. The medieval atmosphere of Lviv will hark you back to days when Lviv was at the forefront of regional events, and it was once a wealthy trading center. You will see the oldest and most gorgeous churches in the Old Town including Baroque style Jesuit Cathedral, the Virgin Mary's Assumption church, the Armenian Cathedral with 16-17th century tombstones. There is a possibility of visiting the High Castle with a perfect view not only of the city but of its suburbs as well.



### DAY 3, LVIV-KRAKOW

A flight to Krakow, the first European city included in the UNESCO World Heritage List of the most precious places in the world. After some time to refresh, an orientation tour through its historical city center that has survived unchanged since the day of Krakow charter. Its surroundings contain buildings of high historic value such as St. Mary's Church with the fine wooden altar by Wit Stwosz, the Cloth Hall with many shopping stalls inside and the lovely burgher houses.

### DAY 4, KRAKOW

#### ***Oskar Schindler, German industrialist "Schindler's List" /S.Spielberg***

Podgorze district of Krakow is a reminder of a poor and harsh time, as it was the actual Jewish ghetto during Nazi occupation. Metal chairs scattered all over Zgoda Square, the main place for the deportation of Krakow's Jews, won't let you pass it without remembering its terrible past.

When Podgorze became the site of the Jewish Ghetto, many Germans set up businesses in the area. The Schindler's Museum, housed in the administrative building of the former Oskar Schindler factory, Emalia, tells the story of this German entrepreneur. A very enlightening and moving exhibition presents the two realities of the Holocaust. One involves the slaughter of millions of people. The exhibition will let you become aware of the pain and terror accompanying not only the Jews, but all the inhabitants of Krakow. But we also are heightened by sacrifice and heroic efforts of the thousands who risked lives to rescue friends and strangers from the horror. Oskar Schindler arrived in the city in hopes of making profits from the Nazi invasion of Poland. In the end though, he saved the lives of more than a thousand mostly Polish-Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, by employing them in his factories.

*The movie "Schindler's List" ends by showing a procession of now-elderly Jews who worked in Schindler's factory, each of whom reverently sets a stone on his grave—a traditional Jewish custom denoting deep gratitude or thanks to the deceased.*

The Schindler's Factory Museum along with the **Pomorska Street**, where there were the Gestapo headquarters during WW II, and the **Pharmacy under the Eagle**, dedicated to T. Pankiewicz, a Polish pharmacist who chose to remain in the ghetto dispensing free medicines to the suffering Jewish community, creates the Remembrance Route of the Historical Museum of Krakow. Tadeusz Pankiewicz has been honored by the Israeli Holocaust Memorial authority Yad Vashem, as one of the Righteous Among the Nation.



#### **HIGHLIGHT:**

**Lecture: "Oskar Schindler - The Man and the Hero"**

#### **DAY 5, KRAKOW-WADOWICE-KRAKOW**

**Karol Wojtyla, A Pope**

**"A Man Who Became Pope" /G. Battiato**

The Holy Father John Paul II was inspiring as a Pope and a human being. The major themes of John Paul II's papacy can be traced to the shaping events of his life deeply rooted in the Polish soil. Karol grew up in the small industrial town of Wadowice. We will see an apartment where Karol Wojtyla was born, now a museum. In the Basilica of the Presentation of Our Lady Karol Wojtyla was baptized and attended as a child. As a teenager Karol Wojtyla experienced, first-hand, the horrors of Nazism and soon thereafter, communist totalitarianism. These events marked the start of Karol's long journey from a worker to a poet, a teacher, to the man who has made history as Pope John Paul II.

*Piotr Adamczyk, who portrayed the future Pope: As I was reading about John Paul II, I was struck by his determination. Since early age, he behaved as if he knew his destiny. He had a strong character, a strength that we can envy but also try to emulate it.*

There are many people for whom the remembrance of Karol Wojtyla is a life goal. Visit the Wawel Royal Cathedral, where in crypt of St. Leonard, Karol Wojtyla conducted his first service for his brother and his dead parents and see the famous Pope's window where John Paul II used to show up to talk with Cracovians during his pilgrimages to Poland.



**HIGHLIGHT:**

*Concert of poetry and music.*

*Poems by the Holy Father are an important key to getting to know his personal relation toward God,  
His vision of the world and way of understanding values.*

*War, life under Communism, and his pastoral responsibilities all fed His poetry and plays.*

*Enjoy meeting with representatives of John Paul II Generation to share about God and man in poems by Pope.*



**DAY 6, KRAKOW-OSWIECIM-WARSAW**

Transfer to Warsaw via Oswiecim with the German Nazi Concentration and Death Camp Auschwitz & Birkenau, the largest death factory in the history of humanity and the symbol of the holocaust. John Paul II was the first pope to visit Auschwitz (1979). For Wojtyla, who in his childhood had Jewish friends, it was not an abstract tragedy but it formed part of his life. As the Holy Father he showed his deep sympathy toward Jewish suffering, working ceaselessly towards Christian –Jewish reconciliation.

Pope: *"Oswiecim is a place which cannot be just toured. On visiting we have to think with fear about where the limits of hatred are set".*

Continue to Warsaw for overnight.

**DAY 7, WARSAW**

***Wladyslaw Szpilman, Polish-Jewish virtuoso concert pianist and composer***  
***"The Pianist" /R.Polanski***

The career of Wladyslaw Szpilman was abruptly broken off by Germany's attack on Poland in 1939, when he and his family, were forced to move to the Ghetto. When the rest of his family was deported to Treblinka extermination camp, Szpilman managed to flee from the transport. He miraculously survived the war with the help of friends from Polish Radio and German captain, Wilm Hosenfeld. In his last interview given to Tadeusz Knade, two months before his death, Szpilman said, 'Let us remember that participation in some action aiming at saving Jews was punished by death [...]. I was saved by at least 30 Poles. At least 30 people risked their lives [...]'

Our guided tour of Warsaw will include the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes, Mila 18, the Jewish Fighters Organization main bunker during the Warsaw Uprising, Umschlagplatz from which Jews were sent to Treblinka, the Jewish Historical Institute with an extensive collection of acts and documents from the Warsaw Ghetto, Warsaw Rising Museum and the plaque in memory of Wladyslaw Szpilman, on the facade of the building at 223 Al. Niepodleglosci Street, commemorating his last hiding place. It was unveiled by Halina Szpilman, a wife of the pianist, his son Andrzej and a daughter of Wilm Hosenfeld. The inscription on the plaque reads: "Wladyslaw Szpilman – the outstanding pianist and composer of classical, film and light music. Author of occupation memoirs 'The Death of a City'. Hero of Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist*."

After the war, Szpilman served as director of Polish Radio's music department for 18 years. It was him who played last on the airwaves of Polish Radio in 1939 and he was the first to play in 1945.



### **HIGHLIGHT:**

***F.Chopin concert featuring the composer's masterpieces, among them "Ballade in G-Minor, Op. 23"***

***Szpilman subsisted in the ghetto by practising his art in his mind, or occasionally with his fingers hovering a few tantalising inches above the keyboard he dared not sound. Upon questioning Szpilman and discovering that he is a pianist, Hosenfeld asks Szpilman to play something for him on the grand piano that happens to be in the building. The decrepit Szpilman, still a musical genius, plays "Ballade in G-Minor, Op. 23" by Frederic Chopin.***

### **DAY 8, WARSAW-TORUN-GDANSK**

Depart for Torun, a fortified city of the Teutonic Order, home town of Nicolaus Copernicus, the founder of modern astronomy. The city enchants with medieval atmosphere, a number of cozy alleys, cobbled streets, market stalls, monuments and the Old City Town Hall symbolizing the glory of Torun, as the former trade empire of Hanza. The wonderful Gothic architecture has brought the name of this city in the list of World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Continue to Gdansk for overnight.

### **DAY 9, GDANSK**

***Lech Walesa, former President of Poland, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient, the Solidarity founder***  
***"Walesa" /A.Wajda***

***Oscar winner Andrzej Wajda said that his new film on Lech Walesa, will be his greatest challenge in 55 years as a director. He said "I don't want to, but I have to," quoting a famous Walesa's line.***

### ***Lech Walesa***

***"The electrician from Gdansk, the carpenter's son from the Vistula valley has managed to lift the banner of freedom and humanity so high that the whole world can once again see it. " (Egil Aarvik)***

In the late 1970s, the city's Lenin Shipyard saw the birth of the Solidarity Trade Union, the first independent trade union in the Eastern Bloc countries, which made Lech Walesa a household name, and began the process of transformation across the entire region. A photo stop by the Monument to the Shipyard Workers, erected in memory of the workers killed in the riots of 1970. The words from the poem by a Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, grace the monument:

*"You) Who have harmed a simple man*

*Laughing at his suffer*

*DO NOT BE SAFE, the poet remembers*

*You may kill him-a new one will be born*

*The actions and the talks will be written down"*

Poem of Cz.Milosz on the Memorial of Fallen in 1970 Shipyards Workers.

The Nobel Prize for Milosz in 1980, became a symbol of hope for anti-Communist dissidents.



Wałęsa was appointed the first chairman of the Solidarity. As a result of a number of opposition actions he took part in, he was detained several times and put under surveillance of the security service. During the martial-law he was interned in Arłamów. As much of the energy began to fade away, hope was brought back to Poland in 1983 when Lech Wałęsa was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize. The combined efforts of Solidarity, Pope John Paul II led to significant changes in Poland's political climate. After almost a year of direct negotiations with the Communist government, the Solidarity Movement signs the Round Table Agreement with the Polish government, ushering in an unprecedented era of political freedoms and civil rights. In 1990 in Poland's first democratic elections, Lech Wałęsa is elected president, ending more than four decades of Communism.

The exhibition „Roads to freedom”, is a moving tribute to the Solidarity movement.

A lecture by Lech Wałęsa, most famous Pole alive, named by the *Time* magazine one of the 100 most influential people of the past century, will be a treat today.

**HIGHLIGHT:**

***By special arrangement, President Lech Wałęsa will address Poland's peaceful transition to democracy.***

**DAY 10, GDANSK**

Transfer for departure flight.

*the end*