Itinerary For a Four Day Study Tour to Krakow & Auschwitz-Birkenau By Air. Prepared For The History Department.

Dates: To Be Confirmed.






The itinerary is designed to balance visits of the greatest interest with recreative activities. It aims to make the maximum use of time without exhausting participants. The itinerary we have proposed is flexible and is only finalised after discussion with the Party Leader(s). Flexibility is also built into the tour itself as changes can be made at very short notice according to weather conditions etc. The tour can be guided throughout. All excursions are well-prepared and are backed by notes and a commentary. The expert tour guide is able to run the tour according to Party Leader wishes. In this way Party Leaders will be free to concentrate on the care of their pupils rather than the organisation of the tour. The whole stay is underpinned by excellent accommodation, catering, transport and security.

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ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Alexander***

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The modern Hotel Alexander is ideally located in the very heart of Krakow, within 400 metres of the central square 'The Rynek Glowny'. All of the historical sites of the city can easily be visited by foot. All of the hotel's 35 rooms have en-suite bathrooms, satellite televisions, telephones & hair-dryers. There is a pleasant bar & meeting area as well as a conference room & a sauna for use by hotel guests. The hotel management are extremely friendly & helpful & we have found the Hotel Alexander to be a very popular & convenient base for our groups visiting the Krakow region.

CATERING

En Route
We ask parents to supply a packed lunch for the outward journey as dinner is the first meal provided. On the final day, lunch is the final meal provided by Varsity Travel so participants should keep £5 for an evening meal.

Breakfast
A continental breakfast of croissants, bread, butter, jam, coffee, tea or hot chocolate is served either in the main or the group dining room.

Lunch
For lunch, the Tour Guide will distribute lunch money to students before taking the group to a particularly good area of Krakow for cafes, restaurants & pizzerias. Participants will have a wide choice of food & can either purchase a sandwich & a drink, enjoy a bowl of pasta or try some of the local soup from one of the many good outlets. The use of lunch money has proved to be very popular with students as it provides an opportunity to explore, try the local food & converse with the locals who are always friendly & helpful. The Tour Guide will take staff to one of the local restaurants where they will be able to savour local or international dishes.

Dinner
Evening meals are a time for participants to experience authentic Polish food in several restaurants that we have researched all over the city. Depending on the itinerary for the day, we will either enjoy a hearty dinner at one of the local restaurants in the Old Town or dine at the hotel restaurant in a private room allocated for our group.

DAY ONE

08.30	Coach arrives at School.
09.00	Depart School. Transfer to Local Airport.
10.00	E.T.A. Local Airport. Commence check in.
13.10	Depart U.K. on Ryanair flight 7251.
16.45 *(Please note: Continental time is 1 hour in advance of British time)*	E.T.A. Balice Airport, Krakow.
17.30	Coach transfer to central Krakow.
18.30	E.T.A. Hotel Alexander, central Krakow. Allocate room keys & settle into rooms.
20.00	Dinner at restaurant in central Krakow.
21.30	**Evening Walk on The Rynek Glowny.**

Participants will get an initial taste of Krakow from an evening walk around the Rynek Glowny - the historic central square - after dinner.

22.30	E.T.A. Hotel Alexander.

DAY TWO

08.30 Breakfast.

10.00 **Guided Walking Tour of Krakow's Old Town.**

Starting at the Rynek Glowny Square, we will spend the morning visiting Krakow's Old Town, known as the 'Stare Miasto'. This area contains some of the most impressive Gothic, Renaissance & Baroque architecture in central Europe, ranking equally with Prague & Vienna as one of the architecural jewels of central Europe. Krakow was the only city in Poland to survive the Second World War essentially undamaged & we will concentrate on the Old Town before walking to the ancient Jewish Ghetto & concentration camp of Plaszow in the early afternoon.

Our walking tour commences with a visit to St. Adalbert's Church, the oldest building in the square & the first church to be founded in Krakow. Passing some of the mansions & aristocratic homes lining the square, we will then ascend 'The Tall Tower' - all that remains of the original fourteenth century town hall. From the top of the tower, pupils will enjoy spectacular views over the spires & rooftops of this ancient city. The Tour Director will point out various sites & buildings that we will be visiting later in the day such as the castle, the cathedral & the Jewish ghetto of Kazimierz.

13.00 Lunch

14.00 **The Jewish Ghetto of Kazimierz**

Formed in 1495, the Kazimierz ghetto was one of the main cultural centres of Polish Jewry. The Jewish population participated actively in the local community, frequently working as goldsmiths, publishers, furriers & butchers. Prior to the Nazi invasion of Poland the population of the Jewish ghetto was over 64,000. The ghetto possessed a unique atmosphere of a poor but vibrant community continuing the traditions of its forefathers almost unaware of the increasingly dangerous world outside.

Following the Nazi invasion, Krakow was occupied by Wehrmacht units in September 1939. Within days all Jewish commercial enterprises were instructed to daub a Star of David above the doorway & shortly afterwards Jews were forced to wear the notorious blue & white armbands.

16.30 Transfer to Wawel Hill

17.00 **Wawel Hill: Krakow Castle & Cathedral.**

Climbing Wawel Hill, pupils will be presented with the impressive view of Krakow's Castle & Cathedral which have remained unchanged for centuries. For over 500 years Wawel Hill was the home of the country's rulers & the burial sight of Polish monarchs even after the nation's capitol moved to Warsaw. Wawel Hill represents a source of Polish spiritual pride, containing the Royal tombs & cathedral Treasury. For the Poles, the cathedral has the same importance as Westminster Abbey or St. Peter's in Rome. On entering the cathedral, the Tour Director will point out a collection of prehistoric animal bones, located inside the door, which are reputedly the remains of a local dragon.

After visiting the cathedral we will enter the palatial castle courtyard & the castle itself. The Second World War represented the city's low point when the Nazi governor Hans Frank commandeered the castle as his personal residence & installed his Nazi henchmen in the royal apartments. Most of the valuable castle contents were spirited out of the country at the outbreak of the war, being returned from Canada in 1961. Many other ancient royal relics which dissapeared during the war often appear at local art auctions or markets.

Used extensively as a filming location in 'Schindler's List', students may recognise some of the locations such as the whitewashed walls, cobblestones & wooden attics of the dilapidated courtyards used by Spielberg in the scenes depicting the expulsion of Jews from the ghetto. While walking through the streets & courtyards of the ghetto, it is usually not long before students feel the weight of an absent culture. The soul of the ghetto perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau, located 70km west of Krakow. Remarkably, many of the buildings, synagogues, Yiddish inscriptions on buildings, old pharmacies & a ruined theatre have survived. Today there is an enthusiasm in highlighting the city's Jewish past, symbolized by the annual summer Jewish Festival that becomes more & more important every year.

19.00 Dinner in central Krakow.

21.00 Return transfer to Hotel Alexander.

21.30 E.T.A. Hotel Alexander.

DAY THREE

08.00 Breakfast.

09.00 Coach transfer to Concentration Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

10.30 **Day's Visit to The Concentration Camp of Auschwitz.**

Located 70km west of Krakow, the industrial town of Oswiecim is better known by the name that the Nazi occupiers gave the town - Auschwitz. Orders for the construction of the camp were given in April 1940, when the fearsome Rudolf Hoss was appointed as camp commander. In 1941 Himmler ordered that Auschwitz become the centrepiece of Nazi plans for the Final Solution. To this end a second camp, Birkenau was built 2km from the main camp with its own gas chambers, crematoria & its own rail link to enable the 'efficient' dispatch of arrivals to the gas chambers.

By 1942 Jews arrived from the whole of Europe, having been told that they would start new lives working in German factories or farms. After a tortuous ten day journey in sealed cattle wagons the survivors were lined up on the station ramp & divided into those deemed 'fit' or 'unfit' for work. The seventy-five percent who were deemed 'unfit for work' were marched into a 'shower room' & gassed with Zyklon B cyanide administered through special ceiling grates. The twenty minute process could murder two thousand people at a time & the process continued until the end of the war in 1945. During this period it is now generally believed in historic circles that between one and a half & two million people died in the camp, of which eighty-five to ninety percent were Jewish.

Our visit to the camp will start at the cinema, where students will watch a film that includes footage compiled by the liberating Soviet troops in 1945. Afterwards we will visit the camp itself which consists of many numbered cell blocks, the first of which contain 'exhibits' found after liberation - rooms full of clothes, suitcases, toothbrushes, glasses, shoes & a mound containing 70 tonnes of women's hair. Block 11 is where the first experiments with Zyklon B were made on Soviet prisoners in 1941. Between two of the blocks lies 'Death Wall', where thousands of prisoners were executed with a bullet to the back of the head. Block 27 contains hundreds of photographs of prisoners & the second floor contains an exhibition devoted to the Jewish resistance inside the camp. At the end of the prison blocks, visitors can view the gas chambers & crematoria which worked day & night between 1942 and the end of the war.

13.00 Lunch.

13.30 **Transfer to The Concentration Camp of Birkenau.**

We will have a coach transfer between Auschwitz & Birkenau. Birkenau is less visited than Auschwitz but it is here that the majority of captives lived & died. Covering 170 hectares, the camp was composed of three hundred buildings, of which approximately sixty still remain. We will ascend the tower above the entrance gate to appreciate the view of row upon row of barracks fenced off with barbed wire & overlooked by watchtowers. On descending the tower, we will pass the barracks which housed up to 100,000 prisoners. We will visit the enormous gas chambers, at the far end of the camp, which were capable of killing up to sixty thousand people per day. The final part of the visit to Birkenau will be to the rail lines, station ramps & rail sidings which have been left exactly as the Nazis left them when they fled. In the far northern corner of the camp is a pond where the human ashes from the crematoria were dumped. To this day the colour of the pondwater remains a murky grey.

Our visit to these two camps gives a strong impression of the absolute terror & degradation that the inmates were subjected to & the day's visit will be a sombre, stark but essential experience for any student studying the subjects of The Third Reich & The Holocaust.

16.00 Coach transfer to central Krakow.

17.30 Rest & relaxation time in hotel.

19.00 **Dinner at Central Restaurant, Krakow.**

21.00 Walk to Hotel Alexander.

21.15 E.T.A. Hotel Alexander.

DAY FOUR

08.00 Breakfast.

09.00 Load suitcases & prepare for departure

09.30 **Shopping Time in Central Krakow.**

Pupils will enjoy visiting the many shops, cafes, churches ancient buildings around the central Rynek Glowny square.

12.30 Coach transfer to The Wieliczka Salt Mine.

14.00 **Visit to The Wieliczka Salt Mine.**

The Salt Mine at Wieliczka is a unique phenomenon & is listed among UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage Monuments. The mines extend to a length of 327m with 300km of tunnels extending over an area 10km wide. We will have a two hour tour through approximately two miles of tunnels. The further a visitor descends, the more spectacular & strange are the chambers. As well as underground lakes there are carved chapels & rooms full of eerie crystalline shapes & chandeliers. We will visit the highlight of the mines - The Blessed Kinga's Chapel - 135m underground, everything in this ornate fifty metre-long chapel is carved from salt including stairs, bannisters, altar & chandeliers. This visit is often a highlight for our groups visiting the Krakow region of Poland.

18.00 Coach transfer to Balice Airport, Krakow.

19.00 E.T.A. Balice Airport. Commence check-in.

21.15 Depart Poland on Easyjet flight 7254.

22.55 E.T.A. Local Airport.
(Local Time)
(Allow 30 minutes for luggage to arrive in the arrivals hall)

23.30 Coach transfer to School.

00.15 E.T.A. School.

Please note that we make hotel & airline bookings upon receipt of the initial deposit payments. The airline timings & airports contained within this itinerary serve as a guide only & may change. The choice of airport & flight timings are confirmed upon receipt of initial deposits.

ALTERNATIVE EXCURSIONS TO CONSIDER:

Visit to The Sukiennice - The Ancient Cloth Hall.

After our descent from The Tall Tower, we will visit the medieval Sukiennice. One of the most distinctive sights in Poland, this is an enormous cloth hall covered in gargoyles. This ancient building has recently benefited from a comprehensive clean, leaving it looking at its very best. Pupils will have the opportunity to visit the cavernous indoor market which offers tourist items & craftworks within an ancient central arcade. The area around the Sukiennice contains many elegant terrace cafes which formed the centre of the city's social life prior to the First World War & was a popular haunt of Lenin. During the Second World War many of the coffee & cakes cafes were limited to Germans-only but nowadays pupils will receive a warm welcome should they wish to purchase a drink or a cake.

The Wartime Jewish Ghetto

The situation deteriorated in 1941 when a new ghetto was created further south, across the river. Jews from the whole Krakow area were herded into the cramped & unsanitary ghetto, surrounded & sealed off by two metre high walls. From June 1942 the Nazis conducted fearsome & bloody mass deportations to Belzec & Auschwitz-Birkenau. A new labour camp was built in 1942 at Plaszow, just south of the ghetto, under the feared rule of the notorious commander Amon Goeth.

A major SS operation on March 14th 1943 removed or murdered what remained of the ghetto. Those not murdered in the street were either transported to Plaszow Concentration Camp or to the gas chambers of Auschwitz. Thus 700 years of Jewish presence in Krakow was uprooted & destroyed. By the end of the war, only 6,000 Holocaust victims survived to return to the city.

The Emalia Enamel Factory.

Ran during the war by Oskar Schindler, the Emalia Enamel Factory is today used to produce electronic component parts. With permission from the caretaker, we will be able to enter the factory which was used by Spielberg in the filming. Inside the entrance to the building is a small exhibition outlining the story of the 'Schindlerjuden'