



Odessa / Kishinev

May 31st – June 5th 2012

With Jeremy Leigh

“I have never seen such a light-hearted city; and I don’t say that as an old man who believes that the sun went dark in the heavens because it doesn’t warm him like it used to. I spent the best of my youth in Rome, and I lived in Vienna when I was young and could have compared the spiritual “climate” using the same standard: there is nothing like Odessa.... the gayness and light-heartedness that permeates the air, without any hint of emotional complication or moral tragedy.”

Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880-1940), Zionist leader, born and raised Odessa

There is great irony in Jabotinsky's words! Whilst it is true that Odessa was indeed a city that projected a sunny and cheerful disposition, 'enlightened and unencumbered by the world of tradition', it was nonetheless a city overflowing with heavy duty Jewish intellectuals. Each one of them determined to play their part in the reinvention of the Jewish People.

Maybe it was the very sunny light-heartedness of this sea port that inspired its Jews to think creatively. Just over a century ago, Odessa represented for Jews, the impulse to dream and think of the future.

The irony is therefore deepened when, as 21st century 'Jewish Journeys we contrast the dreams with the way things turned out. The twentieth century has bequeathed Odessa a complicated and tragic legacy. Through the turmoil of revolutions and the traumas of war, the city now rebuilds itself, both outwardly and inwardly. And if Odessa is remembered with some nostalgia by some of the Jewish People, Kishinev, now the capital of Moldova, Chisinau, has a very different place in our history. We will visit Kishinev with Bialik's monumental poem, the 'City of Slaughter' in some way as both our guiding light and that which fogs our vision of every stone we see.

As ever with Jewish Journeys, our purpose is to move between the iconic markers of the past at the same time as seeking out the people and places that represent present day Jewish life.

Thursday May 31st

1600 Meet in the lobby of the [Londonskaya Hotel](#): Welcome and introductions

1630 **Odessa: Frontier City**
(walking tour: Statue of Duc de Richelieu; Alexander Pushkin statue, City Duma; Literary Museum; Opera House; former Ashkenazi Bank; Passaz; City Garden)

1900 Dinner, 'Franzol' in the City Garden

[Overnight Londonskaya Hotel,](#)

Friday June 1st

0845 Depart Hotel

0900 **'Awake My People': Odessa's Jews on their own new frontier**
(walking tour: Office of the Society for Promotion of Culture amongst the Jews; Brody Synagogue; Great Synagogue; Ahad Ha'am, Bilu)

For many Jews, Odessa was a city that above all expressed the aspirations of the modern world, and amongst other things the inspiration for the Jewish city *par excellence*, Tel Aviv. A city teeming with radical ideas, discussed endlessly by its writers and intellectuals, for some Odessa was the 'Paris of the East' and for others it was a godless and sinful city. We revisit that period to seek out the sites of this special chapter of the East European Haskalah (Enlightenment).

1300 Lunch

1900 Shabbat Tfilla with Reform community Imanu-El

Despite the long history of a modern and progressive Jewish community in Eastern Europe, in the post Soviet era, the religious revival has had a distinctively Orthodox flavor to it. Nevertheless, the growing community of Imanu-El is an energetic and slowly growing Reform community, complete with a branch of Netzer (as in RSY-Netzer) and a member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

2030 Dinner at La Veranda, ul. Bunina 21

[Overnight Hotel Londonskaya](#)

Saturday June 2nd

0900 Shabbat Morning Tfilla, Great Synagogue (optional)

1100 **For Whom Do I Toil? (Walking tour)**

We continue the Haskalah (Enlightenment) story at the sites of ideological conflict that characterized Jewish debate in the early 20th century. This includes examining the impact of the 1905 revolution, symbolized by the iconic Battleship Potemkin and Sergei Eisenstein's 'Odessa Steps'.

1330 Lunch

1600 'Babel to Bialik': Café Society and the awakening Odessa's literary scene.

We turn our attention to what many would claim to be the essence of Odessa's claim to Jewish greatness, its literary scene. In the quiet of the afternoon, we will select a few choice locations to read the classics.

1800 Break

2230 Meet for Havdalah outside Hotel Londonskaya

[Overnight Hotel Londonskaya](#)

Sunday June 3rd

0830 **Odessa's Jews and the Holocaust**

Sadly and predictably we visit the sites of destruction from the war period. The majority Jews of Odessa were killed by Romanian forces who occupied the city at the end of 1941. Given the complexities of Soviet attitudes towards Jews, many of these sites have only been recognized fully in recent years.

1100 **Revival and Innovation: Meeting and performance with Migdal, Jewish Dance Troupe**

Within months of the fall of communism, activists in Odessa began to plan for a new type of Jewish cultural life. Having celebrated its 20th anniversary earlier this year, the Migdal network is one of the most impressive examples of post Soviet efforts to reconstruct Jewish culture in the FSU.

- 1330 Lunch in Kosher restaurant (optional)
- 1500 Depart for Kishinev
- 1900 Arrive and check in

Hotel Leogrand, Kishinev (Chisinau)

Monday June 4th

- 0830 **Kishinev 1903: 'Two days that shook the (Jewish) world'**
It is argued that for Jews, the 20th century began in Kishinev around Easter time in the year 1903. For 2 days in late April, rioters ran amok killing Jews and destroying property. The brutality far outstripped that of previous pogroms in the previous century, shocking Jews and non Jews across the world.
The pain and tragedy notwithstanding, the true significance of these events lay in the way they galvanized Jewish communities to confront the future with eyes open wider. The pogrom was an overture to a century of ideological redefinition.
We will visit the key sites of the pogrom as well as read the literary reflections from that time.
- 1100 **Revival and Innovation II: Programme with World Jewish Relief / JDC**
The 'meta' events that characterize so much of the Jewish history of this area should not divert our attention from the remarkable efforts made by Jews here and abroad to ensure that Jewish communities are rebuilt and developed. We join a team of leaders who under the auspices of World Jewish Relief in London and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the US ensure regular Jewish education and welfare programmes thrive in post Soviet era.
- 1300 Lunch
- 1500 **Optional Wine Tour:** Stepping out of Jewish Journeys mode, an opportunity for those wishing to explore the world famous Milesti Mici wine city.

Overnight Hotel Leogrand, Kishinev

Tuesday June 5th

- 0900 **Lessons and Legacies (walking tour: sites of Jewish community new and old)**
- 1100 Depart for the airport