



THE CHASSIDIC ROUTE

The Chassidic Route is a trail following the traces of Jewish communities across southeastern Poland and soon also western Ukraine. The Foundation's partners in the project include local authorities and non-governmental organizations from 23 townships in the lubelskie and podkarpackie provinces: Baligród, Biłgoraj, Chełm, Cieszanów, Dębica, Dynów, Jarosław, Kraśnik, Lesko, Leżajsk (Lizhenski), Lublin, Łańcut, Łęczna, Przemysł, Radomyśl Wielki, Ropczyce, Rymanów, Sanok, Tarnobrzeg, Ustrzyki Dolne, Wielkie Oczy, Włodawa and Zamość.

We invite you to take a trip along the Chassidic Route!

For more information about the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, please visit:

www.fodz.pl
www.polin.org.pl
www.pamiec.fodz.pl



ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland was founded in 2002 by the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO).

Our mission is to protect surviving monuments of Jewish heritage in Poland. The Foundation's priority task is the protection of Jewish cemeteries; in cooperation with other organizations and private donors we have saved from destruction, fenced and commemorated several burial grounds (in Zakopane, Kozienice, Mszczonów, Iwaniska, Strzegowo, Dubienka, Kolno, Ilża or Wysokie Mazowieckie). Our activities also include the renovation and revitalization of particularly important Jewish monuments, such as the synagogues in Kraśnik, Przysucha and Rymanów, as well as the synagogue in Zamość.

The protection of material patrimony is not the Foundation's only task, however. It is equally important to us to increase the public's knowledge of the history of the Polish Jews, who for centuries contributed to Poland's heritage.

Our most important educational activities include the „To Bring Memory Back” program addressed to high school students, and POLIN – Polish Jews' Heritage www.polin.org.pl – a multimedia web portal that will present the history of 1200 Jewish communities throughout Poland.

One of the Foundation's major undertakings is the Chassidic Route project, whose center of gravity will soon shift to the revitalized synagogue in Zamość.



REVITALIZATION OF THE RENAISSANCE SYNAGOGUE IN ZAMOŚĆ

for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community





ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Renaissance synagogue in the Zamość Old City is one of the most spectacular monuments of Jewish heritage in Poland. The Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland has been the owner of the building since 2005. Our goal is to transform the synagogue into a modern cultural institution that will serve both Jewish visitors to Zamość and the local community.

Due to several years of neglect, the technical condition of the synagogue was very bad upon its takeover by the Foundation in 2005. The Foundation immediately carried out crucial renovations and secured the historical structure. We also developed a revitalization scheme for the building and launched efforts to acquire the necessary funds.

Since 2008, the project „Revitalization of the Renaissance synagogue in Zamość for the needs of the Chassidic Route and the local community” is supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism. Construction and conservation works commenced in July 2009 and will be completed by December 2010.

In 2011, the Chassidic Route tourist and cultural information center as well as a multimedia museum dedicated to the history of the Jews of Zamość and the surrounding area will be established within the renovated synagogue. Visitors will be able to learn about Jewish figures who contributed to shaping of the region’s intellectual, religious and cultural character. A part of the area will also be adapted for the needs of local NGOs.

After the completion of renovation works, the synagogue will serve as a venue for educational activities and cultural events designed both for the inhabitants of Zamość and tourists travelling along the Chassidic Route. These activities will also involve our local partners: the Zamość Artistic Exhibitions Agency, the Bernardo Morando Fine Arts High School, the Karol Namysłowski Symphonic Orchestra, the Zamość University of Management and Administration and the Catholic University of Lublin as well as the Jewish Community of Trondheim, Norway. The synagogue will also be available for religious services.

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In 1992, the town’s Old City complex was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.



ZAMOŚĆ – A CITY OF MANY CULTURES

Zamość is Poland’s only – and one of Europe’s very few Renaissance urban complexes. It was founded in 1580 by the Hetman and Grand Chancellor of the Crown Jan Zamoyski as the Renaissance „ideal city”, designed by the Italian architect Bernardo Morando.



But the uniqueness of Zamość derives not only from its architecture and urban design. Taking a walk down the city’s Renaissance alleyways one should keep in mind that nearly from its very founding Zamość was to be a multinational metropolis where the ideals of tolerance and harmony could flourish. Zamość was home to Poles, Armenians, Greeks, Scots, Hungarians, Ukrainians and Jews, all enjoying equal rights and contributing to the city’s multicultural image.

THE ZAMOŚĆ SYNAGOGUE

In 1588, upon Zamoyski’s invitation, Jewish merchants from Italy and Turkey settled in Zamość, followed, after 1623, by Jews from Flanders and the Netherlands. The new settlers were Sephardim – Jews originating from the Iberian Peninsula, from which they were exiled at the end of the 15th century. Some of their customs, liturgy and musical as well as linguistic forms distinguished them from the Ashkenazi Jews originating from Germany, who were dominant in Poland at the time. For several decades, Zamość boasted the largest concentration of Sephardi Jews in the Republic; later, the Zamość community adopted the Ashkenazi rite.

The Old City synagogue was erected at the beginning of the 17th century, probably in 1610–1618 or 1620. It was initially a single chamber structure, with annexes for women probably added to the main building in the 1630’s. The edifice is topped by an attic concealing a recessed roof. The vaults are adorned with finely carved stucco elements. The eastern wall of the main hall contains the aron ha-kodesh – a richly adorned vault in which the Torah scrolls were kept.

In the 18th century the synagogue underwent extensive refurbishments: the façade of the building was changed, the attics removed and a new roof raised, while a second floor was added to the annexes for women. A vestibule connecting the synagogue to the adjacent kehilla house was built on the western side. In 1788, a beautiful bimah made of wrought iron, funded by rabbi Samuel Barzel, was placed in the center of the main hall.

Following the outbreak of World War II the interior of the synagogue was looted and devastated by the Nazis. The southern annex for women was taken down, while the northern suffered extensive damage. In 1941, the Germans established a stable, followed by a carpenters’ workshop inside the synagogue.

Out of the Jewish community of Zamość, numbering over 12 500 people (43% of the town’s population) before the war, only 50 managed to survive the Shoah; a few hundred of the Zamość Jews survived the war in the Soviet Union.

After the war, the Zamość synagogue was renovated – its function as a house of prayer was, however, not restored. Between 1951 and 1954 the building functioned as a warehouse, and between 1959 and 2005 as the provincial and municipal public library. A number of works whose aim was to restore the building’s form prior to its 18th century reconstruction were carried out after the war. The southern annex for women was rebuilt in 1948–1950 (with one floor), and the second floor of the northern annex was eliminated. The attic was reconstructed in 1957–1972.

In 2005, ownership of the building was transferred to the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland which launched efforts to revitalize it.

