

## First update on the Spring 2022 memorial trip (September 20, 2019)

**From:** Leon Zamosc

**Sent:** Friday, September 20, 2019

**To:** All potential trip participants list

**Subject:** ATTENTION - First update on the Spring 2022 memorial trip

Good evening. I am sending this message to all those who expressed interest in receiving more information about the Spring 2022 trip to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the liquidation of the ghettos and the murder of the Jews of the Kutno-Gostynin-Wloclawek region.

This is the first update about the plans for the trip. It includes background information, a report on the initial virtual meeting of the trip's organizing group, and answers to the practical questions about the trip that were raised during the meeting.

### 1. Some background information

You can access the following files for background information:

**Maps and tables** offers details about the towns in our region and the people who are interested in the trip:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/14kLkWFuI3VAB2cpJIMrKDbKTQ6J4w2uo/view?usp=sharing>

**Guidebook of the Gombin-Gostynin trip that I organized for the Gombin Society in May 2019:**

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1X8n19ytRUVsOm-w7Dzog7KswgU4Yd2ep/view?usp=sharing>

The guidebook gives an idea of what can be done in a visit of this kind (our planned 2022 trip, however, will have more activities and will focus on a larger number of towns).

**Local press reports** about the Gombin-Gostynin visit of May 2019:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QISsEHR9yzauxTS9WAyPfrgEgBvj-ij\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QISsEHR9yzauxTS9WAyPfrgEgBvj-ij_/view?usp=sharing)

**Short video about the day in Gostynin:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87fEqwV08NI&t=2s>

Regarding the possible **number of participants in the Spring 2022 memorial trip**, the invitation was sent to JewishGen researchers of 12 towns in three counties: Kutno, Gostynin and Wloclawek. Because there has just been a trip to Gombin and Gostynin, we decided to wait before we invite the descendants of these two towns. As you can see in the attached tables, we have already received 57 individual responses. Since many participants will come with relatives, this response is enough to anticipate that, despite the attrition that will necessarily happen, we will easily have the 60 participants that can be accommodated in a large charter bus. There was a great deal of enthusiasm in the responses. The idea of a memorial trip to Poland certainly responds to a deeply felt yearning among descendants.

### 2. Report on the first virtual meeting of the trip's organizing group

Sixteen people participated in the exchanges of the organizing group, which took place three weeks ago. We discussed the background materials, considered possible activities for the trip, raised and answered practical questions, and commented about our interests and experiences.

Our discussion of practical matters outlined an initial idea about how the Spring 2022 trip may be organized (**see answers to practical questions below**). We talked about the main activities and concrete matters such as lodging, transportation, overall costs, translation services, kosher food, how to visit the towns, etc. Because of the complexity of visiting multiple shtetls, we agreed that **a small committee will ask all the potential participants about the towns that they would like to visit and come back with a concrete proposal on how to organize subgroups and their itineraries.**

**Please stand by for a message next week asking your preferences and respond as soon as possible.**

**Questions and ideas were also raised about longer-term organization and actions.** One discussion focused on **establishing a mailinglist** for all the potential trip participants. In addition to allowing us to make announcements about the trip, the mailinglist will enable us to exchange information about our interests, family histories, and genealogical

research. We discarded the Facebook option, agreeing to look into alternatives like Google or Yahoo groups. **Please stand by for a message with details about the future launching of the mailinglist.**

**Another discussion focused on the creation of an association of descendants** that would make possible additional activities beyond planning the 2022 memorial trip. Such long-term activities could include functioning as a regional SIG (special interest genealogy and history group), translating from Yiddish the town memorial books that were published in the 1960s, lobbying for the protection and restoration of our towns' abandoned Jewish cemeteries, getting more informed and actively involved in matters related to the Jewish heritage of Poland, etc. **A second small committee will explore the options to establish the association of descendants.**

The next virtual meeting of the trip's organizers' group will take place when the two committees are ready to report results (probably by late October or November).

### **3. Answers to practical questions about the Spring 2022 memorial trip**

**Where to stay?** The ideal option is to stay in one place, taking one of the largest towns as a base and finding a hotel that can accommodate everybody for all the days of the visit. Wloclawek and Kutno are the obvious candidates. For **transportation** we will charter a large bus from a local company that will pick us up at Warsaw airport, move us around during the days of the visit, and drop us off at Warsaw airport on the last day. There will be **translators** accompanying us in all the activities.

**Main activities and visiting the towns.** The last full day of the visit would be devoted to one of the region's forced labor camps and Chelmno death camp. For the previous days, we anticipate three important activities: a symposium with historians and researchers, a workshop with representatives of Jewish institutions in Poland, and a regional cultural evening with people from Polish civil organizations interested in local/regional history. If we organize these three events in the largest towns, one per day, we can devote the rest of those three days to the visit of each one of those towns. So the three largest towns (Wloclawek, Kutno and Gostynin), would be covered that way. To visit the smaller towns we can split up into sub-groups with different itineraries (based on the responses of the participants to the question about the towns they would like to visit). Since some people have ancestors from more than one shtetl, we could devote two days to visiting the smaller towns to provide more opportunities. What would happen in a town visit? The attached May 2019 Gombin-Gostynin trip program can give you an idea, please have a look at it.

**What would be the costs?** A pleasant surprise of the May 2019 Gombin-Gostynin trip was that we were able to do a lot and the costs were quite low. The participants paid for their own flights, hotel stay, and some meals. The individual payment for all the other costs was less than \$500 (including all transportation in Poland, guides, translation services, museum tickets, other meals, trip guidebook, and even a reimbursable fund for unanticipated expenses). Flying in the Spring is relatively cheap and the 3-star hotel was \$75 double room with breakfast. We can follow the same model, but we should be aware that the cost will be a bit higher because the visit will be one or two days longer, with more transportation costs for the town visits and more activities requiring guides and translators.

**Kosher food?** Can be arranged through a guaranteed service that delivers from Warsaw or Krakow to your hotel anywhere in Poland, but it is expensive. Veggie food is of course much easier to arrange.

**Visiting other places like Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow?** The participants in the May 2019 Gombin-Gostynin had the option of staying three days more after the main program, for an organized Jewish heritage visit to Warsaw. The same option could be offered to participants in the Spring 2022 trip. Considering other cities like Lodz and Krakow would be too complicated. Those interested in staying more time for such additional alternatives can organize them on their own or through one of the tour agencies specialized in Jewish itineraries in Poland.

### **WHAT COMES NEXT?**

You will soon receive a message asking your preferences for the towns you would like to visit. When the message comes, please do not delay your response.

At some point, there will be another message announcing the launching of a mailinglist that will allow all the potential trip participants to receive announcements, ask further questions about the 2022 memorial trip and exchange information about our interests, family histories, and genealogical research.

The next update will be circulated in November, following the reports of the small committees and the second virtual meeting of the trip's organizers' group.

In the meantime, feel free to write to me with any queries, suggestions or comments you may have.

Shana tovah umetukah !!

Leon Zamosc