

Comments from Dan Oren:
Lessons learned from 2019 JewishGen Future Scholars Fellows Trip:

Go/No-go decision *must* be made for a fellows' trip by April 1, including number of student slots (± 1) in order to have advantageous position regarding costs and availability of lodgings and reservations of all sorts. If there are too many excellent applicants, also consider accepting two students on a "standby" basis in case someone else drops out pre-trip. A March 1 go/no-go decision date would be even better.

For a full-fare trip, the go/no-go decision *must* be made by March 1, for the same reasons as above, and because the expectations of the travelers will be increased.

Having set these dates above, it would be ideal to discuss possible timelines for cemetery clean-up dates and locations with The Matzevah Foundation around December 1, if possible. Again, the more the advance planning, the more flexibility we have to meet all the competing logistical needs of a trip such as this.

If plane tickets are reserved for the Fellows, kosher (or other special meals) should be reserved for them. Alternatively, the Fellows should be informed in advance that they need to attend to this themselves.

Fellows should be informed that when meals are eaten in communal (non-restaurant) settings, those meals should be considered "kibbutz-style," where all are collectively responsible for table set-up and clean-up. Alternatively, attendees can simply be assigned at the beginning of the trip to be table-setters, servers, or table-cleaners throughout the trip.

Ideally the site of cemetery work needs to have relatively easy access to kosher meal supply. While we succeeded in providing a hot (and delicious) dinner each night associated with the cemetery clean-up, the food logistics proved complex in many ways (transporting food to the lodging, arranging for sufficient refrigerator and freezer space, arranging for an available oven for cooking) and preparing for daily breakfasts and pack-out lunches. If possible, choosing a cemetery location with a 30-minute driving distance of Warsaw, Lublin, Tarnów, Kraków, or Łódź would be ideal in order to permit evening hot meals to be catered. Depending on the The Matzevah Foundation schedule, this may not be possible, again supporting the value of scheduling the project as early as possible.

Kosher Delight provides a more than ample take-out food supply. To help manage costs, for every seven actual diners, it is reasonable to place take-out orders for six people. There will still be food left over!

Sufficient quantity of coolers/ice packs/utensils/paper and plasticware/oven mitts should be purchased in advance, if needed. (Carrefours at Arkadia Mall in Warsaw is an excellent source.)

Buying 24-hour bus tickets was very useful for easy inexpensive student group travel in Warsaw. Full-fare tourists will likely prefer Uber or a formal coach bus, depending upon the schedule.

Confirm with travel agent if tips are needed for the bus drivers.

Using a high-quality camera, take photo of one tombstone and enlarge it and study it on-site for the deciphering tombstone session.

Limit evening sessions to 60-75 minutes, with the exception of the concluding night's session.

Having a car available to our group for the cemetery portion of the trip proved extremely useful. RentalCars.com/Europcar was a good source for reliable fair-priced cars. Although it was not needed this year, having an International Drivers' License (available through AAA, for example) is sometimes required by car rental agencies in Poland.

Purchase of an emergency medical kit was well worth the minimal investment. This year's medical events included bug bites and nettles/splinters. These are all to be expected in this setting. It is worth repackaging the purchased medical kit that is sold in compacted fashion in the US on site in Poland into easily arranged compartments, allowing especially quick access to band-aids, tweezers, safety pins or needles, bug bite treatment, and sterilizing pads, together which were by far the most frequently used items. If the kit does not come with a high-quality tweezers (for removing nettles and splinters), one should be purchased separately in advance.

Bring markers and masking tape for labeling water bottles to distinguish them for individual users.

Confirm each chartered bus reservation the day prior to expected travel and have the phone number for each bus driver available in case of emergency the day before each travel segment.

Buy still water ("NIEgazowana") and have plenty available. Soda water ("gazowana") is less popular.

Though there is no perfect screening method for individual suitability, consider Skype or in-person interview for each candidate prior to acceptance. Consider adding a question to the interview asking people how they interact with others in group settings.