

Information for prospective participants in Summercamp Višķi

Višķi is a village in south-eastern part of Latvia. Višķi is known as a shtetl ("miestiņš")- Jewish name for the village - because according to the 1935 census, 56.3% of Višķi's population was Jewish (423). Jews did different crafts, petty trade, some worked leather. 50 of 58 businesses in Višķi belonged to Jews.

The World War two ended peaceful and developing life in Višķi. Daugavpils Region (including Višķi) was occupied by German army in about a week after Germany attacked Soviet Union.

Main events that took place in Višķi shtetl:

- Execution site was prepared in Ostrova woods, but the operations was cancelled at the last moment, and all local Jews were ordered to go to the Daugavpils ghetto (to be killed later in the Mežciems, Daugavpils);
- Execution of Jews from Dagda (who were also evacuated to the Daugavpils Ghetto) in Kalnavišķi.

All that can remind you now of once thriving Jewish life in Višķi are remains of foundation of synagogue and old Jewish Cemetery, some houses that once belonged to Jewish families.

Drei Stufen project (Baruch Chauscin, whose ancestors came from Višķi, one of the founders) in active cooperation with local Višķu parish administration and Augšdaugavas county council are planning to set up a Memorial Complex in Višķi - a memorial at the site of the synagogue and a museum in a contiguous house.

Two summer camps have already been organised in Viski on the way to this goal in years 2022 and 2023.

Summer camp 2022 brought together young people from Germany, Latvia and Ukraine. They spent two weeks together, learning about the now extinct Jewish community in Višķi and doing archaeological work on the site of the synagogue. With detailed information about work done in Summer Camp 2022 you can find in an archaeological report from a leading archaeologist.



In August 2023, during the second Summer Camp in Viski, the area of the synagogue was scanned and objects on the surface were found and collected with metal detectors near the synagogue. Cleaning work was also started on the Jewish cemetery and just over 100 gravestones have already been cleaned. The cleaned stones can be viewed in a separate document. This work on the cemetery may be continued in the 2024 summer camp.



Here are a few basic phrases as an introduction about the culture of Latvia, where you decided to spend two weeks of your summer :)



We created a folder (https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-Jlh8QouHFnQkC_SEOKGYcNp5gtBxF5?usp=sharing) with some basic information as well as findings from our investigations regarding the historical events in Viski. We suggest you look through the following, which is included in the folder:

In this folder you can find:

- A folder called “Reports from the past two summer camps”, including the archeological report from 2022 as well as the findings from the synagogue and the cleaned stones from the Summer Camp last year
- A folder called “Historical information” which most importantly includes a folder with all the information about Viski we could find online (Online Research) and a summary of the most important events in Viski (which consists of all the different sources we had access to but will probably be updated).