

A special invitation from Rabbi Marvin Tokayer

Exotic Far East through Jewish eyes™ 2015

June 13 ~ 25 visiting Siberia, Manchuria, & China



Dear Fellow Travellers,

The name *Siberia* conjures up an image of freezing wasteland, and the Gulag of Stalin. But that is only in the north. Southern Siberia, along the border with China, is a fascinating area. People know so little of this part of the world. Who would believe that a Jewish autonomous republic was established in Siberia near the China border with Yiddish as the official language. The main street is Shalom Aleichem Street, and all government buildings, including the famous Trans-Siberian railroad station, have their signs in Yiddish, and the entrance sign to the concert hall, in this remote part of Siberia, is a menorah made into a G-clef! And we will meet the current Jewish community and see all the Jewish sites of the Russian Far East.

We will then cross the border into *Harbin*, "Paris of the East", which had the most dynamic and sophisticated Jewish community, and now has a magnificent Jewish museum in the former 800-seat synagogue, and also has the best kept Jewish cemetery in Asia. The actor, Yul Brynner, of *King & I* fame, told me that he studied for several years at the Jewish school in Harbin, and we will visit that school, with a Star of David on every window. We will visit the former Jewish hospital, Jewish hotel and Jewish soup kitchen. In *Shandong*, the University was chosen to train the future professors of Jewish Studies for the major universities in China. We will be welcomed at a special luncheon in your honor at the University. *Kaifeng* was the capital of China a thousand years ago where we'll find remnants of an ancient Jewish community and we'll meet some of the descendants of those early Chinese Jews. And we'll visit *Shanghai*, with its magnificent waterfront Bund, the saga of influential Jewish merchant families, and the site where 20,000 Jews found refuge during the Holocaust.

We will meet distinguished guest speakers throughout the tour including **Iosif Brenner**, the congenial leader of the Jewish community of Birobidjan who was born and raised in Birobidjan. We will also meet **Prof. Qu** (Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, Harbin) and the Chinese scholars who now study the Jewish experience in Manchuria; Oxford-trained **Professor Fu Youde (Yehudah)**, translator of the *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide to the Perplexed) into Chinese; and **Prof. Pan Guang** (Director of the Institute for Judaic Studies, Shanghai) who will provide a fascinating insight into the history of Jews in China. If you have any questions, please call me at (516)829-8595 or email marvintokayer@gmail.com.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marvin Tokayer".

EXOTIC FAR EAST 2015

Visiting Siberia, Manchuria & China

Jun 13, Sa Late night check-in

Check-in at LAX. Board your widebody jet bound for the Far East.

Jun 14, Su Depart for the Far East

Cross the International Dateline and lose one day.

Jun 15, Mo Arrival in Khabarovsk D

Arrival in far eastern Siberia. Upon arrival in Khabarovsk, transfer to the Parus Hotel (or similar). To date, no one has written a history of the Jewish communities of Siberia but Rabbi Tokayer's congregation in Tokyo had consisted mostly of Jews who were born and raised in Siberia.

Jun 16, Tu Khabarovsk B,L,D

Our tour of Khabarovsk will include important squares named Lenin, Victory and Komsomol, the city's main street Muraviyov-Amursky and the Central market. There is much to learn from the Russian Jews of Siberia and we'll meet the present day Jewish community of Siberia. Dinner at the synagogue.

Jun 17, We Khabarovsk ~ Birobidjan B,L,D

We will learn of the defunct Far East Republic - a forgotten and short-lived government in Siberia, recognized by the USSR, USA and Japan. Surprisingly, the first and only president of the Far East Republic was Jewish. So what else is new! Few remember that this Jewish Autonomous region was created by Stalin and the official language is Yiddish. The sign at the Birobidjan train station is in Yiddish and Shalom Aleichem Street is the main street of Birobidjan. Today there are two shuls that do not talk to each other but we are welcome at both communities.

There are many Jewish landmarks and there is an unbelievable epic Jewish story in Birobidjan, and we will visit all the sites of Jewish interest. We will meet the current Jewish community, and a special program has been arranged for us at the Yiddish Library and remind me to tell you how they spelled 'Shabbos' in Birobidjan. After dinner, we'll return to Khabarovsk.

Jun 18, Th Khabarovsk B,L,D

Morning at leisure. This afternoon enjoy a boat ride on the Amur River. We will witness the exceptional generosity and kindness of the Joint Distribution Committee and arrange a home visit or other cultural activity this afternoon.

Jun 19, Fr Fly to Manchuria B(L)D

до свидания ~ It's 'Dusveedanya' as we bid farewell to our Russian friends and board our flight to Harbin, Manchuria. We'll arrive midday and be transferred to the Shangri-La Hotel (or similar). This afternoon, we will meet the leading scholars who are anxious to welcome us at a special get-together. Shabbat services and dinner in Harbin.

Jun 20, Sa Shabbat in Harbin B

Harbin, in northern China, was the heart and soul of the Jewish communities of the Far East. Under the brilliant leadership of Dr. Abraham Kaufman, Harbin had a Jewish population of over 10,000 with Jewish schools, several Jewish newspapers, 2 Jewish banks, Jewish hospital, and a Zionist movement of right, left and center. Manchuria is rich in coal, oil, timber, furs, soybean and wheat, and was coveted by China, Russia and Japan. It is a very European style city and scenes of the world-famous winter ice festival are overwhelming.



Jun 21, Su Harbin ~ Jinan B,L,D

The Harbin government printed an excellent and beautiful photo book of Jewish life in Harbin, and invested a small fortune to renovate Harbin's magnificent 800-seat synagogue, largest in the Far East, which is now a beautiful museum. We'll also visit the largest and best preserved Jewish cemetery in the Far East, with over 600 tombstones. The grandparents of Ehud Olmert, former Prime Minister of Israel, are buried there. It is a rendezvous with history, and we'll see it all. This afternoon, fly to Jinan in Shandong Province. Overnight at the Crowne Plaza (or similar).

Jun 22, Mon In Jinan ~ train to Kaifeng B,L,D

In Jinan, there is a graduate school in Jewish studies that is preparing all the future professors of Jewish studies for the major universities of China. Exclusive program and lunch with scholars, at the University. This afternoon, board our bullet train to Kaifeng where we'll be met and transferred to the Grand Hotel (or similar).

Jun 23, Tu Kaifeng B,L

During the 10th century, Kaifeng was the elegant and prosperous capital of China with merchant arcades and canals filled with lotus blossoms and where thousands of Jews resided. Take a photo at the site of the ancient Silk Road synagogue and see the original street sign that reads Teaching Torah Lane South. Share lunch with members of the present day Jewish community and students of Beit Hatikvah school for Chinese Jews.

Jun 24, We Fly to Shanghai B,D

Transfer to the airport for the brief flight to Shanghai. Upon arrival in Shanghai, we'll be met and transferred to the Fairmont Peace Hotel (or similar). The Jewish experience in China is most evident in Shanghai, China's largest and most important cultural, industrial and commercial city. Former headquarters of the "Rothchilds of the East" - the Sassoon, Kadoorie and Harboon families - Shanghai was also home to some 20,000 European Jewish refugees during World War II. Prof. Pan Guang, Founder and Director of the Center for Jewish Studies, will host a special presentation. At the farewell dinner, Rabbi Tokayer will summarize the Jewish experience in the exotic Far East.



The Bund, Shanghai

Jun 25, Th Farewell B

Transfer to Shanghai International Airport for the flight home. Re-cross the Dateline and arrive this same day. Optional extension in Shanghai is available.

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Shanghai Extension escorted by Rabbi Tokayer

Jun 25, Th B,D

Begin your day with a visit to the impressive Natural History Museum containing priceless works of art from the dynastic periods of China. You'll enjoy seeing the hustle and bustle of Nanjing Road followed by a stroll through Yu Gardens ("Old Shanghai"). This evening, thrill to the acrobatic circus followed by a night tour incl. boat ride on the Whangu River which runs between the Bund and Shanghai's 'new' skyline of Pudong with its nightly light shows.

Jun 26, Fr Ancient Grand Canal B,L

Morning excursion to a nearby water town with well preserved buildings and stone bridges spanning the network of canals - a striking contrast to modern China. Afternoon free to explore the city at leisure or optional shopping. Shabbat Dinner. Shabbat Shalom.

Jun 27, Sa Shabbat in Shanghai B

Shabbat Services. At lunch, we will meet members of the current Shanghai Jewish community. This evening, enjoy a night tour to glittering Nanjing Road and the glittering Xintiendi, one of the historic "shikumen" that has been restored to feature galleries, shops, restaurants and even a Haagen Dazs

Jun 28, Su Return to USA B

Transfer to Shanghai International Airport for the flight home. Re-cross the Dateline and arrive this same day.

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All this is included:

- Deluxe 5-Star hotels in Shanghai and Harbin; best available (3-star) hotel in Khabarovsk
- Buffet breakfast daily plus most lunches & dinners
- All sightseeing and cultural events via chartered coach with English-speaking guide incl. entrance fees
- All gratuities (incl. tips to guides, drivers, porters, all hotel and dining staff)
- Meetings with the Jewish communities of China and Siberia incl. invited guest speakers and dignitaries
- All hotel taxes & service charges incl. portorage

[Not included: international flights, some lunches & dinners, items not on table d'hote group menus, China and Russia visa fees, and items of a personal nature.]

Tour Costs

Land portion: \$7,588 p.p. double occupancy (incl. internal flights Khabarovsk/Harbin/Jinan, and Zhengzhou/Shanghai and bullet train Jinan to Kaifeng)

Single Supplement: \$2,295

Shanghai Extension: \$780 p.p. double occupancy
Single supplement: \$495
(incl. 3 nights deluxe hotel, some meals, 2 tours, airport transfer, taxes & service; not incl: gratuities for guides and drivers, and items of a personal nature).

For reservations

Contact Lotus Tours at (800)267-5414. If you wish to reserve space, please complete the reservation form and send a check for your tax deductible deposit payable to FRJC, and mail to Lotus Tours, Ltd., 2 Mott Street, Suite 400, New York, NY 10013.

2015 EXOTIC FAR EAST THROUGH JEWISH EYES™ ~ RESERVATION FORM

please print

Name _____ (copy of passport must accompany this form)

Name _____ (copy of passport must accompany this form)

Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Fax _____

Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____ (other) _____

Please reserve _____ spaces. I/We enclose \$ _____ (min \$900 p.p. deposit) payable to **FRJC**. Visa instructions, travel insurance, reading list & more will be provided with confirmation. You will be invoiced for the 2nd deposit due 11/15/14.

Please arrange airfare from _____ I/We are interested in the Shanghai extension

I/We will arrange our own international flights (arrive Khabarovsk 6/15, depart Shanghai 6/25)



Terms & Conditions

Air transportation via scheduled IATA airlines, on round-trip economy-class group fare basis.
Accommodations including all hotel taxes and service charges, double occupancy basis.
Meals are special buffet breakfast at the hotels, plus some lunches and dinners - on table d'hote group menu basis.
Sightseeing and special events via chartered air-conditioned coach with English-speaking guides, including all entrance fees.
Group transfers between airports and hotels, via chartered air-conditioned coach with local guide to meet and assist.

Reservations: a deposit of \$900 per person is due upon registration; a 2nd deposit of \$1,100 is due 11/15/14; balance is due on or before 3/15/15. International airline tickets, if required, must be ticketed within 48 hours of reservation. Airfares are not guaranteed until the tickets are issued.

Cancellations and refunds: the deposit is non-refundable; for cancellations received between 180 and 90 days before departure, an additional \$1,100 charge applies; within 90 days, the land portion is not refundable; there may be a penalty on the air portion, depending on specific fare reserved. Cancellation charges cover non-refundable expenses incurred on behalf of the participant and the group, and also help protect tour fares for the remaining participants. **Cancellation insurance is highly recommended.**

Responsibility: The Foundation for Remote Jewish Communities, Inc., Lotus Tours, Ltd. and/or associated companies (the Organizers) give notice that all tickets issued by them and all arrangements for transport, accommodations and meals, are made by them as agents for the tour participant upon the express condition that they shall not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may be occasioned by reason of any defect of any vehicle or through the acts of any company or person engaged in conveying the passengers herewith, or of any hotel/ ship proprietor or employees. Itineraries and fares may be affected by changes in air services of the various countries. The right is reserved to withdraw any feature announced in this program and to make such alterations in the itinerary as may be found desirable for the convenience and proper carrying out of the tour. The right is reserved to decline, accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. Guest speakers are subject to professional commitments. The Organizers accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delays or changes in schedules, sickness, weather, strikes, war, quarantine or other causes. All fares shown are based on tariffs and exchanges rates in effect at time of printing and subject to change. The carriers are not to be held responsible for any act, omission or event during the time passengers are not on their respective conveyances. The passenger ticket shall constitute the sole contract between the carriers and the purchaser or passenger.

[9/14]