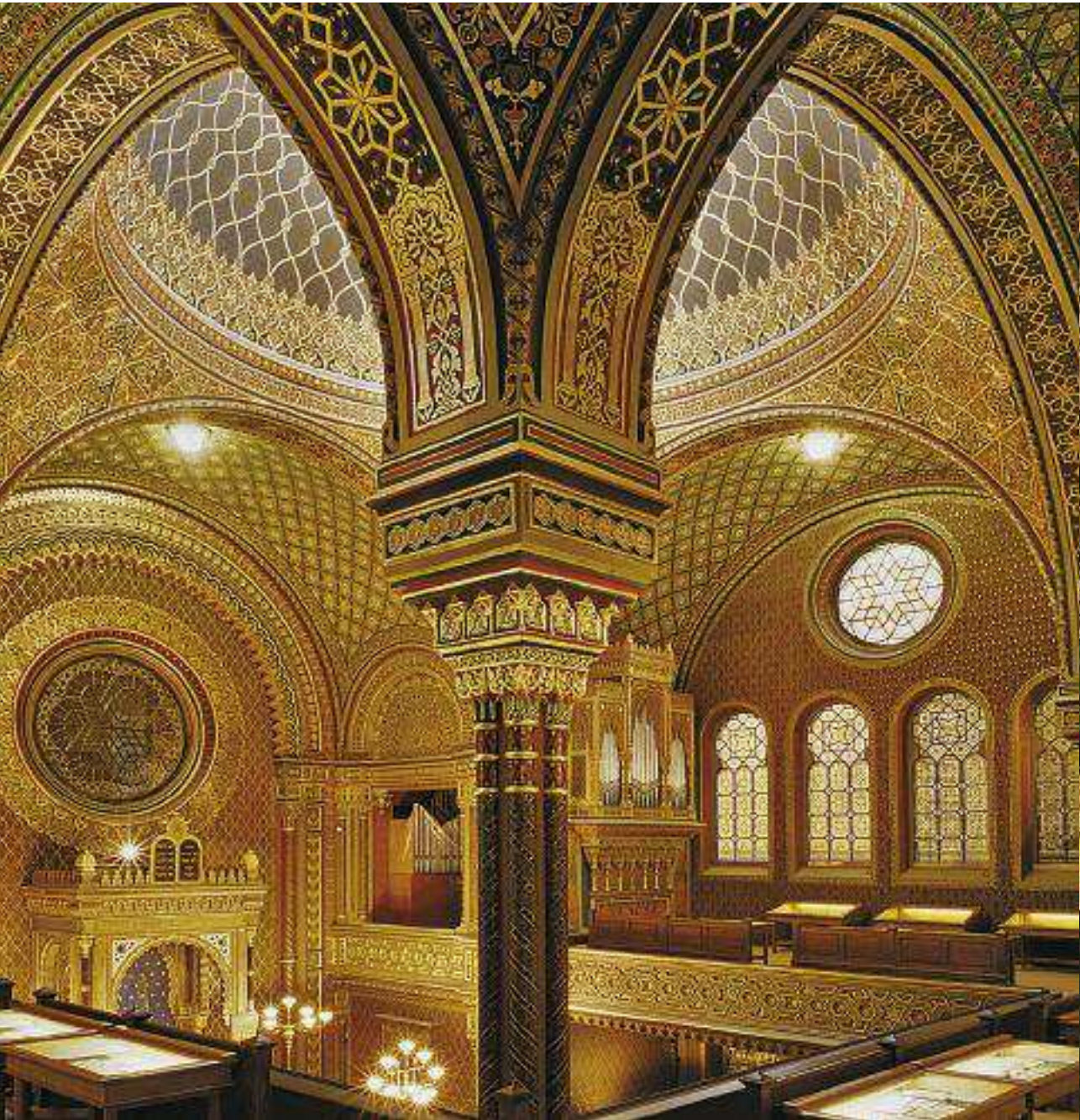


# Jewish Museum in Prague





## A European centre of Jewish culture

The Jewish Museum in Prague is a unique European institution – the most comprehensive of its kind. It oversees four historic synagogues and the Ceremonial Hall, which house unique exhibitions, as well as the world-famous Old Jewish Cemetery, its own gallery, several depositories, an archive, library with multimedia centre, restoration workshops and an educational and culture centre. It is also one of the most attractive points on the cultural map of Central Europe. The museum tour of its monuments with displays of wonderful Judaica in the unique area of the Prague Jewish Town – a UNESCO world heritage site since 1992 – is one of the most impressive experiences to be had in the Czech capital. This explains why the Jewish Museum in Prague is among the most visited museums in the whole of the Czech Republic.

The Jewish Museum in Prague has had a turbulent history since its founding in 1906. After the Nazi occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, the then Central Jewish Museum became a place for gathering items from plundered synagogues, Jewish communities and many Jewish households in Bohemia and Moravia. The objects were loaded onto trains and trucks and sent to warehouses where they were subsequently numbered and registered. The same fate also befell their owners – they, too, were given numbers and were registered for processing, but for the purpose of liquidation.

As many as 120,000 Jews did not survive the Second World War. Their objects, however, were preserved. Some of them were returned to the few Jewish communities that could be revived; others were handed back to the original owners or their families. Thousands of immensely valuable objects, however, remained unretrieved at the Jewish Museum in Prague, thus giving rise to a unique collection. Nowhere in the world has such a large amount of Jewish artefacts relating to a single geographical region been gathered together.

The museum's collections and specialist activities suffered immensely during the Communist regime. This rare Jewish heritage, however, was returned to the Jewish community of Bohemia and Moravia in 1994. Since then the care of the collection pieces has fundamentally improved, new exhibitions and depositories have opened, and the museum has focused on publishing, awareness, educational, research and various cultural activities.

After 20 years as an independent organization, the museum is now launching a number of changes which will highlight its image as a modern, dynamic and visitor-friendly centre of Jewish culture. For the future, we want the museum's exhibitions to showcase the diversity of Jewish culture and to draw attention to its past and present in a more engaging and inspiring way. Modern technology enables us to come out from behind the synagogue walls and to tell the stories of the unique artefacts, photographs and documents – not only on display under glass but also out there in the online world.

You too can become part of our dedicated team to help us carry out our plans. This brochure will show you how. We would be glad to discuss with you the specific kinds of support, as well as your ideas and our possibilities.



## Unique collections in our care

The collections of the Jewish Museum in Prague contain as many as 40,000 unique items, artworks, rare textiles and other artefacts. The museum also has about 100,000 books, in addition to a wealth of photographs and documents. These items are not only of interest to regular visitors but are also of great value to scholars and researchers. At the same time, however, they are often the only legacy and tangible reminder of their original owners.

The **visual art collection** contains artworks that were initially brought together to complement the Judaica collections. Most acquisitions to this collection were made in 1942–1945 on the basis of consignments of paintings, drawings and prints that had been confiscated from the private collections of Jewish deportees to the ghettos in Lodz and Terezín.

This collection has about 18,000 items – paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and sculptures from the last third of the 18th century to the present, as well as a group of new media art. Among the completely unique groups of artworks in the collection are portraits from the period of Jewish emancipation in the Bohemian lands and children's drawings from the Terezín ghetto (1943–1944) – the largest group of children's drawings from the Shoah period in the world.

With more than 12,000 items, the **textile collection** is the world's most important group of Ashkenazi textiles from the late 16th century. The vast majority of these items are textiles for ritual use in the synagogue or for other purposes (e.g. decorative). They include rare Italian and French fabrics interwoven with gold and silver, silk velvet and damask, expensive and complex embroideries, pearls and precious stones. In their entirety, the Torah ark curtains, Torah mantles, bimah covers, Torah binders, tefillin, head coverings and garments constitute a unique assemblage of Jewish art over four centuries. The care with which these items were made and the beauty and complexity of their motifs still inspire respect for their makers and for their generous donors.

In the past, the textiles were kept in unsuitable conditions. They are now located in modern depositories and are being gradually repaired, restored and exhibited. Due to the high cost of such work and the large size of the collection, however, it is not possible to devote such care to all of the items in a short period of time.

The **collection of metal and three-dimensional objects** contains more than 8,000 items from Bohemian and Moravian synagogues, Jewish households, associations and other institutions. It includes objects for ritual use, as well as ordinary items that document the everyday life of Jewish communities. The core of the collection mainly comprises silver adornments for the Torah scroll – shields, finials, crowns and pointers.

