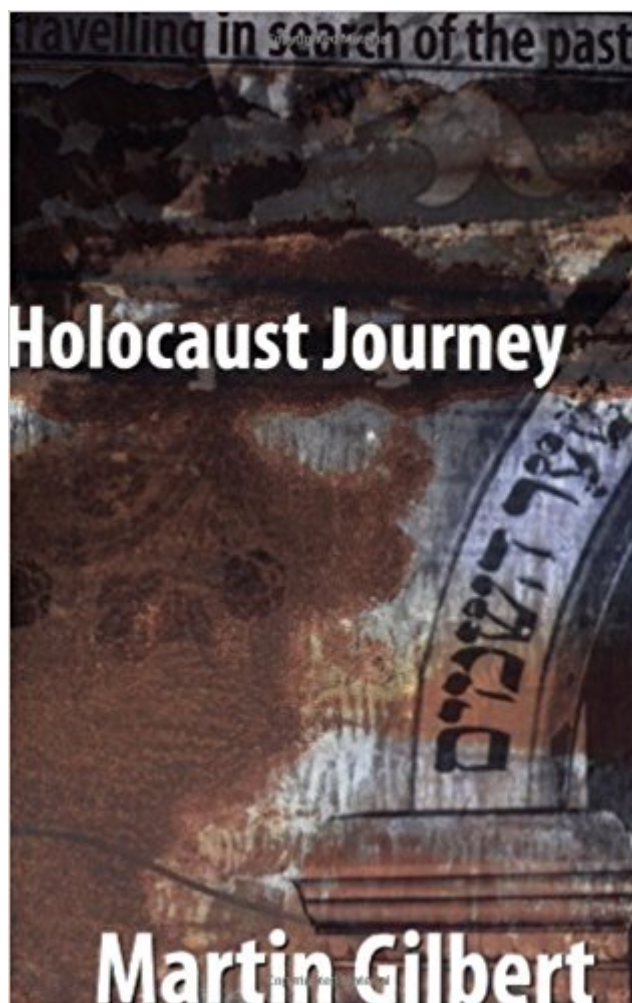


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# Holocaust Journey



## Synopsis

In 1996 Martin Gilbert was asked by a group of his graduate students to lead them on a tour of the places in Europe that were the stage of one of history's greatest human tragedies. The two-week journey that resulted, with England's leading Holocaust and World War II scholar as its guide, culminated in the powerful travel narrative *Holocaust Journey*. Gilbert skillfully interweaves present-day experiences, personal memories, and historical accounts. More than fifty photographs taken over the course of this unique voyage are included, among them shots of Berlin, at the spot of the 1933 book burning; the railway line to Auschwitz; Oskar Schindler's factory in Crakow, Poland; and memorial stones from Treblinka. Together with fifty-five maps, these illustrations add an arresting visual dimension to this powerful story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gilbert (*Holocaust studies*, Univ. of London; *History of the Twentieth Century*, LJ 9/15/97) has added an interesting dimension to Holocaust studies by chronicling a tour of Holocaust sites that he conducted with a dozen students and friends; the text of documents they studied at each stop is included. Gilbert not only describes their itinerary and the problems of conducting a tour but integrates the history of European Jewry into his narrative. He then details the specific events of the Holocaust associated with each location. Although many of his stories are well known to students of the Shoah, the result is more than a chronicle of his tour, for the book provides a window into how more than a millennium of Jewish history came to an end and in many cases almost vanished. Recommended for all Judaica collections and Holocaust libraries. ?Frederic Krome, Northern

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Gilbert.... is a dedicated guide to this difficult material. We can be grateful for his thoroughness, courage and guidance. (Los Angeles Times Book Review)The achievement of Gilbert's Holocaust Journey is to reduce to comprehensible, human terms, the scale of genocide that to many is still unimaginable. (Literary Review (UK))A powerfully moving narrative that reveals the deepest thoughts and feelings of 13 travelers during the summer of 1996.... Without overpowering his readers, [Gilbert] juxtaposes the histories of the places visited with descriptions of what they look like today. The overall effect is to make the past live by transferring it to the present, where it can be handled and evaluated anew. (America)A travelogue, spanning two weeks, of the essential sites of the Holocaust, by the venerable historian and author of many books.... [Gilbert] guides one of his classes on an extraordinary field trip.... He lectures at the most significant sights--of desecrated synagogues, book burnings, and gas chambers.... To these moving testaments Gilbert here adds the voices of his fellow travelers, both Jews and non-Jews, who draw closer as the trip progresses and they relive the terrible history.... The very best book for any Jew, or any human being, planning the same soul-searching trip. (Kirkus Reviews)

Until reading this book, I really didn't understand the true scope of the Holocaust. As a kid, I learned about Anne Frank and the Jews who were required to wear yellow stars; later on, in high school, when we were deemed able to handle such things, we watched "Night and Fog" with its graphic images of those murdered by the Nazis. These experiences were all somewhat clinical, really. The true human cost of the Shoah takes a while for one to fathom. Gilbert's book does that through his readings of eyewitness accounts, usually on the scenes of their occurrences, of the unspeakable horrors which the Nazis committed. (Readers who are easily shocked should be warned that many of the stories are indescribably gruesome and will haunt one's dreams, as they did mine.)But apart from the toll in human flesh which the Shoah exacted, the spiritual cost becomes clear through this book. Gilbert, through his readings and observations, paints a portrait of a country which was literally raped of its vitality and life by the Nazis through the indiscriminate murder of Jews and Gentiles alike. Especially poignant are the descriptions of the pre-war Jewish neighborhoods, alive with activity, commerce, and religion, all completely decimated. It's fashionable for one to claim they are against anti-Semitism and radical nationalism; it's a much more complicated affair for one to understand why these are bad things. This book goes a long way towards reaching that

understanding.

One of the book's most profound aspects were the many names of the victims. Most books, with regards to the Holocaust, tend to bring up the usual named of victims, escapees, etc. But here, we're given names of people that have almost been lost to history. The ones who died, where they died, where they were from, A handful out of millions, but to have the stories of the victims, most of whose names had probably been lost along with their lives. It personalizes the tragedy...tiny snippets of the lives led by those who are no longer here to tell their stories.

Outstanding and highly readable. I actually used it to recreate much of the journey in Poland and had many of the same feelings and reactions as did the late Sir Martin and his fellow voyagers. Very informative and readable. As a combination of history book and travelogue I think it is unique. I highly recommend this work, especially if you plan to visit sites of the Shoah.

While many of the reviews here discuss this book for what it teaches about the Holocaust, I want to also recommend it as a travel guide. I had it with me during a recent (May, 2013) trip to Poland, and found it invaluable. While not meant to be a travel guide, I read the relevant section for each place I visited (if Gilbert had written about it), and the book gave me insight about the place plus information, including many detailed accounts from survivors (or non-survivors) of what had taken place at that location. While driving through the Polish countryside, I would suddenly see the name of a village I was entering, and remember that it was mentioned in this book. So I pulled over and re-read that section. And instead of being a random village, that village would turn into a place with a real story. In addition to this book I also had along *The Holocaust Sites of Europe: An Historical Guide*, which is written as a travel guide, and covers all of Europe. The two books were very complementary, and I would recommend both to anyone going to Poland to visit the Holocaust sites.

This is the best book about the Holocaust that I have ever read. It's a MUST READ for anyone traveling in Europe looking for Jewish history, but it requires the courage to look into a black hole of inhumanity. I read it before going with my father to the town from which he came in Ukraine (it was Poland then.) I never realized how awful the Holocaust was until I read this book, and I'd read many before it. I walked around Warsaw, and Lublin, and L'vov (now L'viv in Ukrainian) with my Holocaust Journey book in my hand checking out this building and that, a yeshiva or a synagogue now a

Catholic school or a hall. It made it much more personal in exploring city after city, where now there were no Jews. However, the real power of this book is in the stories of what was and is no more, a tale of one horrendous sadistic assault on humanity after another. Who knew there were so many ways to torture and kill? One worse than another. Those poor people, my poor relatives. I've had thoughts and images in my mind and dreams ever since, and it's over 8 years since I read it and went to Poland and Ukraine. This is a wonderful book even if it tells horrendous stories, one after another.

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