**The land of Pope Wojtyla - 6 days**

**Day 1: Czech Republic / Brno**

Arrival in **Brno**, the second largest city of Czech Republic after Prague, a lively, artistic, safe, modern and harsh city, also representig a significant scientific and university centre. Gli abitanti di Brno si chiamano brunensi, o brunesi, (in ceco *"brgnàzi"*). The visit starts from the central **Liberty Square**, surrounded by elegant historic and modern buildings, but there are **2 oddities** that will surprise the visitors: the twisted arch over the Gothic entrance of the old Town Hall, which was allegedly built in this way by the architect out of spite, since he didn’t receive the sum agreed; the modern clock with its ambiguous form (some believe it is a bullet, others a phallus), that strikes the noon at 11:00 am in memory of the successful defense of the city against the Swedish army. One of the most ancient and popular buildings is the **Old Town Hall**, where you will find out why the drake and the wheel represent the symbols of the city. The **Cathedral of St. Peter and Paul** overlooks the city from the Petrov hill. It was initially built as a small Romanesque church, however the style was turned into Gothic during the 14th century. If you like walking, it’s worthy to have a walk along the bastions or to visit the underground city paths.

**Day 2: Czech Republica / Brno – Poland / Krakow (Km. 333)**

Breakfast and departure for **Krakow**, with lunch break en route. Dinner and overnight in hotel in Krakow.

**Krakow** has been for a long time the capital and even today it remains the main cultural, artistic and university centre, and also the main touristic destination of Poland. It’s known for its small and well-kept Old Town, it’s the first UNESCO site in Europe and also the first inhabited centre that was declared World Heritage Site in the world (1978). From 1964 to 1978 **Karol Wojtyla**, the future Pope John Paul II, was archbishop of Krakow.

**Day 3: Poland /Krakow**

Breakfast and meeting with the guide for a guided tour. The Old Town is articulated around the largest medieval square in Europe, the Market square (**Rynek Glowny**). This is the city of the beloved **Karol Wojtyla**, who had been living here for 40 years, which he used to remind with nostalgia. The visit proceeds with the jewish quarter, **kazimierz**, famous for being the cornerstone of the jewish community of Krakow from the 14th century until the World War II. Lunch in restaurant and continue of the guided tour with the Wawel’s Castle, fortified on the Vistul River. Seat of the Royal Polish family over the centuries (see the king graves in the Cathedral), Wawel is the symbolic reference point for the whole country. Dinner and overnight.

**Pope’s tracks:**

At **number 10 Tyniecka street**, in the Debniki quarter, you will find the place where Wojtyla lived when he was a 18 years old student, after moving with his father from Wadowice. Today you can find here a small museum.

The **Jagiellonian University** is where the young Karol studied philosophy and later taught ethics.

The **Church of St. Francis** is where Wojtyla used to pray daily, always on the same pew, which is commemorated by a memorial plaque.

Ar **number 3 Franciszkanska street** you will find the **Archbishop’s Palace**, where in 1946 Wojtyla was ordained priest.

**Day 4: Poland /Krakow- Auschwitz - Birkenau – Krakow (Km. 150)**

After breakfast we will visit **Auschwitz** and **Birkenau** camps, opened by the Nazis in April 1940. Originally the camp was made up of 28 buildings and the entrance was through a gate with the ill-famed sign “Arbeit macht frei” (work sets you free). In addition to the originary camp named Auschwitz I, during the Holocaust were raised other camps inside the complex, including the infamous extermination camp Birkenau (Auschwitz II), the labor camp Monowitz (Auschwitz III) and other 45 subcamps.

Visit of part of the deportee’s barracks, the crematorium and the gas chambers. The camp is inscribed in the UNESCO list as a World Heritage Site. Lunch in restaurant and departure for the **Salt Mines** in Wieliczka, about 16km from Krakow and UNESCO site as well. The visit allows the visitors to live again the miner’s life during the 700 years of the mine’s history and it ends with an amazing amphitheatre located at 125m depth. Return to Krakow, dinner and overnight.

**Famous captions**: “They will tell you you are not enough. Don't be fooled, you are much better than what they want you to believe.” Pope John Paul II

**Day 5: Poland /Krakow- Wadowice – Slovakia / Bratislava (Km. 375)**

After breakfast departure for a guided tour in **Wadowice**, birthplace of Pope John Paul II, today a biographic museum collecting his memories and objects. In the surroundings there is the **Minor Basilica of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary**, where the Pope was baptized and he celebrated Mass. The Chapel, devoted to the Pope, hosts the reliquary containing a drop of his blood and the pastoral staff given by Pope Joseph Ratzinger during his visit in Wadowice.

In front of the Basilica until 1945 there was the renowned **Confectionary of Karol Hagenhuber**, often mentioned in John Paul II’s memories. The place is famous for the “kremòwki”, cream pies, of which young Karol was really fond. In the city bakeries you can ask for the “**Pope’s kremòwka**”.

After lunch, return to **Bratislava**. Hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight.

**Day 6: Slovakia / Bratislava – Return trip**

Breakfast and visit of **Bratislava**: the Castle (***Bratislavskýhrad***) overlooks the old town and the Danube and it’s an integral part of the city skyline. The St. Martin’s Cathedral (***Katedrálasvätého Martina***) is the most important church, housing the graves of many illustrious persons and of members of eminent families. The church is known for being over 3 centuries the place where Hungarian kings were crowned. The Blue Church (***ModrýKostolík***) is a small church characterized by soft shapes and the use of blue and turquoise colours. The **Trinitarian Church** is a Baroque church rising on the ruins of the older St. Michael’s church. The Pálffy Palace is not known for its architectural value but for the interesting fact that Mozart held a concert there at the age of 6. Another renowned and precious building is the Neoclassic **Primate’s Palace** and its **Hall of Mirrors**, where the Peace Treaty of Pressburg between the Habsburg Empire and France was signed, after the Battle of Austerlitz won by Napoleon. At the end, visit of the **UFO-like Tower**, landmark of the city, a multifunctional building that allows you to enjoy a splendid view on Bratislava.

**Pope John Paul II**, during his pontificate lasting 26 years, 5 months and 17 days, visited Slovakia 3 times: in **1990**, four months after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the then called Czechoslovakia; in **1995** and lastly in **2003**. He died on April 2, 2005. His pontificate was the longest ever: he made 104 Apostolic Journeys abroad, he published 14 encyclicals, he blessed and consecrated 1,340 persons, he gave 3,500 speeches, he proclaimed 3 Jubilee Years, he held about 1,200 general audiences with the participation of more than 20 million people. He tirelessly fought for the peace maintenance, for the respect of human rights and dignity. At his funeral the crowd was waving flags claiming “Saint now”. On 27 April 2014 he was canonized by Pope Francis.

After lunch, return trip.