



A LIVING
MEMORIAL
TO THE
HOLOCAUST

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Pack Your Suitcase, Metrocard, or Sneakers For a Trip to the New Exhibition
The Other Promised Land: Vacationing, Identity, and the Jewish-American Dream
at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

NEW YORK, NY — Fresh ocean air, sun and palm trees, mountains, and roller coasters and salt-water-taffy conjure up happy memories of bygone vacations for many families. Just in time for summer, visitors can re-live those lazy summer days when ***The Other Promised Land: Vacationing, Identity, and the Jewish-American Dream***, a new nostalgic exhibition exploring the history of Jewish vacationing in America from 1890 to the present, opens on **June 14** at the **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**.

The exhibition, curated and produced by the Jewish Museum of Maryland, focuses on such legendary destinations as Atlantic City, the Catskills, Florida, Israel, and New York. *The Other Promised Land* illuminates both the unique cultural meanings inherent in the American-Jewish vacationing experience and the ways that Jewish culture thrived because of the experience. Through original artifacts, photographs, film footage, and archival materials from popular Jewish vacation destinations chosen by American Jews for a variety of reasons, the exhibition demonstrates how vacations have expressed and defined Jewish identity, reflecting the values, tastes, and dreams of American Jews.

Highlights of *The Other Promised Land* include quaint Victorian traveling outfits, an inviting rolling wicker chair from the Atlantic City boardwalk of the 1880s, shocking evidence of anti-Semitism in the forms of anti-Semitic hotel brochures and a “Gentiles Only” hotel sign, light-hearted home movies and family mementos, a lace bathing suit with rhinestones worn in the 1950s in Miami Beach, and an original “Mr. Peanut” costume from Atlantic City.

For the New York viewing of the exhibition, a special case will be devoted to Coney Island, the Rockaways, Atlantic Beach, and other local vacation spots. Local artifacts include photos of children from the Hebrew Orphan Asylum on day trips in Coney Island and Far Rockaway, and a race walking medal won by Isidore Bloom for walking from City Hall to Coney Island.

“I learned how to swim, dance, play Mah Jongg, kibbitz, and had my first real crush,” one visitor to the Catskills said in the 1950s; “It’s orange juice, coconuts, stuffed alligators, flamingos, palms and mangoes. It’s everyone’s dream come true,” reads an advertisement for Miami Beach, a “snowbirds” heaven, in 1960 in *The New York Times*. By the 1950s vacationing had become an integral part of American life and culture, as it still is today.

Originally a pastime of the well-to-do, the second half of the 19th century saw the rise of the American vacation. Vacations were later democratized by innovations in transportation, changes in labor and leisure, and the aspirations of the growing middle class. For Jews in particular, vacations symbolized escape, progress, leisure, choice, and arrival in the “promised land.” By the end of the 19th century many German-American Jewish families, in particular, had the means to enjoy vacations similar to their non-Jewish counterparts. In contrast, many newly arrived Eastern European Jews had fewer choices, but actively pursued the less costly vacations available to them. In fact, by the 1890s, a summer vacation was a normal expectation for many working class Jews — by 1906 over 400,000 people, most of whom were Jews, vacationed annually in the Catskills.

However, a look at Jewish vacationing also sheds light on the tensions, traditions, and motivations particular to American Jews. The exhibition does not shy away from examining themes of discrimination, assimilation, and differentiation over the past century. In truth, up until the post-World War II years, many resorts and hotels were restricted for Jews. This led Jews to build their own resorts, hotels, restaurants, and bungalow colonies such as those built by Jewish farmers and entrepreneurs in the Catskills.

The end result was magnificent. In the 1950s and 60s the Catskills became the most celebrated Jewish destination in America, a “Jewish Brigadoon,” Bunny Grossinger, daughter-in-law of celebrated Catskills’ hostess Jennie Grossinger, said in retrospect in 2002. “It stays in our mind and our hearts, and every time we talk about it we create a little bit of what it was.”

In 1987 the wildly popular film *Dirty Dancing* (1987) paid loving tribute to the culture and tradition of the Catskills and Jewish resorts by romanticizing them in all their Mah Jongg and mambo glory for a whole new generation. Have the time of your life at the exhibition on view through **January 1, 2008**.

We welcome you to add your Jewish vacation photos to our upcoming exhibition. Send no more than two of your scanned or digital vacation photos to vacationphotos@mjhny.org.

This exhibition is curated by the Jewish Museum of Maryland with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The New York exhibition is supported, in part, by The Robert Sillins Family Foundation. Media sponsorship provided by The New Jersey Jewish Standard, New Jersey's oldest independent English language Jewish newspaper.

Public Programs

The Museum will present **Catskills on the Hudson: Comedian Freddie Roman in conversation with Scott Blakeman on June 20 at 7 p.m.** Laugh your *touchas* off at this hilarious discussion with NPR humorist Scott Blakeman and Freddie Roman, one of the great Borscht Belt comedians from the 1950s and 60s Catskills. For information and tickets please call 646-437-4202 or visit www.mjhny.org.

About the Museum

The Museum’s three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century--before, during, and after the Holocaust. Current special exhibitions include *From the Heart: The Photojournalism of Ruth Gruber* and *Daring to Resist: Jewish Defiance in the Holocaust*. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to Andy Goldsworthy’s memorial *Garden of Stones*, as well as James Carpenter’s *Reflection Passage*, Gift of The Gruss Lipper Foundation. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the *Museums of Lower Manhattan*.

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