Featuring best-selling author & historian Alexandria Richie, DPhil

Bringing History To Life™

The Rise and Fall of Hitler’s Germany

A journey that takes you from Berlin to Auschwitz to Warsaw, focused on the devastating legacy of the Holocaust, the bombing raids, and the last battles.

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Dear World Traveler,

For several years now, it has been my ultimate pleasure to welcome guests from The National WWII Museum Travel on tour with me throughout Germany and Poland on the educational program, The Rise and Fall of Hitler’s Germany. Both Berlin and Warsaw, the two capital cities of the countries we visit, have been the subjects of my books. \textit{Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin} dives into the role of this city as a crucible of social, political, and economic transformation—both positive and negative. In \textit{Warsaw 1944: Hitler, Himmler, and the Warsaw Uprising}, my focus was more defined with an emphasis on what was perhaps Warsaw’s most transformative year.

I invite you to join me on a journey back in time, to explore the origins of World War II. We meet in Germany where the early seeds of war were planted in private meeting rooms and in raucous public stadiums, and we uncover the Nazi’s sinister plans to remake the world. As we travel deep into Poland, the strategically thought out evil is clearly revealed, and the tragedy of Nazi ambition becomes strikingly apparent. Former prisons, concentration camps, and rebuilt cities are the physical reminders of the suffering brought by the Third Reich. Along the way, we learn not only about the men who sought to destroy the world, but also about those who heroically fought back against the Nazi regime. Colonel von Stauffenberg, Oskar Schindler, and Władysław Bartoszewski—my late father-in-law—are only just a few of the resistance fighters whose names you will hear.

Since the inception of this poignant itinerary I created in collaboration with The National WWII Museum, I have seen firsthand the travelers forever transformed by the entire experience. They are in awe of modern Poland with its vibrant culture on full display. As we gather for a farewell dinner held at my home outside of Warsaw on the last evening of the tour, we reflect on the horror but also remember the heroes. No longer held back by the oppression of dictators, Poland has seen a rebirth that coincides with a desire to never forget the legacies of World War II.

It has been one of my life’s greatest honors to travel on The Rise and Fall of Hitler’s Germany, and I so look forward to welcoming you on this memorable journey.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Richie, DPhil
Alexandra Richie is a historian of Germany as well as Central and Eastern Europe, with a specialization in defense and security issues. She completed her B.A. (Hons) in Political Science at the University of Victoria and went on to study at St. Antony’s College, Oxford, where she wrote her doctoral thesis, *The Political Manipulation of History in East and West Germany.*

Richie is also the author of *Faust’s Metropolis: A History of Berlin,* which was named one of the top ten books of the year by *American Publisher’s Weekly.* Her latest book, *Warsaw 1944,* won the Newsweek Teresa Torariska Prize for best non-fiction book of 2014 and the Kazimierz Moczarski Prize for Best History Book in 2015.

She has contributed to many articles, documentaries, radio, and television programs, and serves on the Presidential Counselors at The National WWII Museum. She is also a member of the Senate at the Collegium Civitas University in Warsaw, Poland, and the Władysław Bartoszewski co-chair of History and International Studies at the Collegium Civitas. Dr. Richie is a favorite of Museum travelers and has hosted dozens of tours with The National WWII Museum to destinations in Germany, Poland, along the Elbe, and in the Baltic.

ALEXANDRA RICHIE WITH TOUR GUESTS AT WWII RUINS NEAR HER HOME OUTSIDE OF WARSAW.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>September 1–Westerplatte, Poland</td>
<td>Nazi Germany invades Poland and fires the first shots of World War II in Europe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>January 15–Krakow, Poland</td>
<td>Oskar Schindler, opens his factory where he will go on to save more than a thousand Jews.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>May 20–Oswiecim, Poland</td>
<td>Auschwitz is established by the SS and initially populated with Polish political prisoners and then becomes the site of mass extermination of European Jewry.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>July 20–East Prussia, Germany</td>
<td>An assassination attempt on Hitler fails at the fortified command post known as “Wolf’s Lair.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>March 24–Żagań, Poland</td>
<td>Seventy-six prisoners of war escape Stalag Luft III, in what later becomes known as “The Great Escape.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>August 1–Warsaw, Poland</td>
<td>As Soviet forces near Warsaw, Polish freedom fighters take up arms, thus beginning the Warsaw Uprising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>August 1–Radzymin, Poland</td>
<td>One of the last great tank battles on the Eastern Front begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>April 16–Berlin, Germany</td>
<td>The Battle of Berlin begins, resulting in Germany’s capital city being reduced to rubble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>May 6–Breslau, Germany</td>
<td>Breslau surrenders, becoming the last major city in Germany to fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>July 17–Potsdam, Germany</td>
<td>Churchill, Truman, and Stalin meet at Cecilienhof Palace for the Potsdam Conference.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Warsaw Uprising Museum, Warsaw, Poland 
(Pictured above)
This museum opened to the public on the 60th anniversary of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, and is one of the most visited places in Warsaw. It is a tribute to all those who fought and died to free Poland and depicts the struggle of everyday life during the horror of occupation. The exhibits feature photographs, recordings, and videos from before, during, and after the uprising; a replica of a Liberator B-24J bomber used by the Allies during air drops; a 3-D movie of the destruction of Warsaw during the uprising; and a recreation of sewer tunnels used by the Resistance to move around the city.

The Topography of Terror Museum, Berlin, Germany
Now an outdoor and indoor history museum in Berlin, Germany, Topography of Terror is located on the site of buildings that housed the SS Reich Main Security Office, the headquarters of the Secret State Police, Security Service, and Gestapo during the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945. More than 1.3 million people visit per year, making this memorial site one of the most frequently visited places of remembrance in Berlin.

The Allied Museum, Berlin, Germany
In its permanent exhibition, How Enemies Became Friends, the Allied Museum tells the story of the Western powers in Berlin and Germany from 1945 to 1994. Original exhibits and large-scale artifacts include a plane from the Berlin Airlift, a restored segment of a tunnel used for espionage, and the guardhouse from Checkpoint Charlie. They bring to life the eventful history of a friendship between the people of Berlin and the Americans, British, and French.

POW Camps Museum, Żagań, Poland
During World War II, there were four prisoner of war camps under the command of VIII Wehrmacht Military District with headquarters in Wrocław and three POW camps under the command of the Luftwaffe in Żagań. On the evening of March 24, 1944, 76 prisoners from one of these camps, Stalag Luft III, escaped via a specially constructed tunnel during an event has become known to history as “The Great Escape.” A modern-day museum at this site commemorates what took place there and features a replica of a prisoner’s barrack with restored equipment, a replica of the escape tunnel “Harry,” and a reconstructed watchtower.

Museum of the Second World War, Gdańsk, Poland
Located where World War II began on September 1, 1939, it is the only WWII museum in the world dedicated to putting the war into an international context, commemorating the losses of all nations that suffered under German occupation.

The Martyrdom Museum, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland
Housed in the former Nazi concentration and extermination camp, the preservation of the original buildings and relics has long evoked controversy. Through international support, this museum takes collective and individual memories into account, along with the accompanying reflections and emotions of its many visitors.

The POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews, Warsaw, Poland
The POLIN Museum is located in the area the Nazis turned into the Jewish ghetto during World War II. Beyond the main exhibition that presents the history of Polish Jews, POLIN Museum also functions as an educational center with rich cultural programs working closely with the community at large.
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THE EXPERIENCE
Arrival in Berlin

Arrive in Berlin Brandenburg Airport (BER) and transfer to the Regent Berlin Hotel. Enjoy free time in the area before attending a Welcome Dinner and tour preview with Dr. Alexandra Richie this evening.

Accommodations: Ritz-Carlton Berlin (R, D)

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THE EXPERIENCE
Berlin

After breakfast, embark on a day long tour of Berlin. First, visit the reimagined and refurbished Reichstag building, historic home of the Bundestag (the national parliament) from 1894 to 1933. The massive 19th century building was used during the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, Nazi Germany, and now by a united, democratic Germany. Next, view the Berlin Wall Memorial at Bernauer Strasse, where the only preserved section of the notorious wall can be seen, and walk the “no-man’s-land” along the remaining segment. The tour continues to the Topography of Terror Museum, which has housed a permanent exhibition since 1987, when the cellar of a Gestapo headquarters was discovered and excavated. An open-air memorial was erected in memory of those who were imprisoned, tortured, and killed by the Nazis, and the site developed into a prize-winning documentation center. After lunch, visit the Olympic Stadium on the outskirts of Berlin. Built to host the 11th Olympic Summer games in 1936, the stadium was a prime example of Nazi architecture and design, and could hold 110,000 spectators. This evening is free for dinner and independent exploration of Berlin.

Accommodations: Ritz-Carlton Berlin (B, L)
Bid farewell to Berlin and head to Żagań, a small city in Poland near the German border. During World War II, Żagań was the site of Stalag Luft III. It was from this camp that one of the most daring prisoner escapes took place, providing the inspiration for the 1963 film, *The Great Escape*. Around eighty prisoners escaped through tunnels underneath the complex. All but three were recaptured, and fifty were executed. A museum at the site of the former camp is dedicated to the martyrdom of Allied prisoners of war. After lunch in Żagań, continue to Wrocław or the evening.

Accommodations: AC Hotel by Marriott Wrocław (B, L, D)
The area around Żagań, now in Poland, was selected by the Nazis as the site of Stalag Luft III due to several security considerations. The sandy soil would compromise the integrity of any underground tunnel, and the underground soil contrasted sharply with the surface sand, making any soil dumped from tunneling operations instantly noticeable. Additionally, the Germans placed seismographs around the camp to detect any sounds of digging, and the barracks were raised off of the ground to allow for easy visual inspections.

These obstacles did not deter Royal Air Force Squadron Leader Roger Bushell from launching an ambitious escape plan involving three tunnels code-named Tom, Dick, and Harry. Bushell started by consolidating all escape plans. No tunnels or escapes would be attempted outside of his plan. In the event of detection of one of the tunnels, work could continue on the other two as the guards focused on the first.

Work on the three tunnels began in spring of 1943. More than 600 prisoners worked on the tunnels in various roles such as digging, soil disposal, and scavenging for supplies—especially wood for bracing the sandy soil in the tunnels. The tunnels were thirty feet deep, but only two square feet wide so that they could be easily concealed. Work on Tunnel Dick was stopped to allow it to be used for storage and soil disposal. Tom was discovered by the Germans in the winter, so work stopped on Harry until the Germans’ heightened security was reduced.

In March 1944, nearly one year after Bushell first called a meeting about the escape plans, Harry was complete. The original plans called for a summer escape, but the date was moved forward to the first moonless night. The March weather did not cooperate with temperatures below freezing at night, but the escapees continued with the plan. On the night of the planned escape, the entrance to the hatch was frozen, delaying the opening by over an hour, and an air raid alert cut the electricity and the lighting in the tunnel. Finally, the first men made their way outside the camp in the evening hours of March 24, 1944. The tunnel exit was too close to a guard tower, so the flow of escapees had to be slowed to six men per hour. Seventy-six POWs made it out of the camp, but only three evaded capture. To set an example, Hitler ordered all escapees to be executed, but the number was reduced to 50 who were sent to a firing squad.

Dutch aviator Bram Van der Stok managed to evade capture, and was the only one of the three permanent escapees to rejoin the fight. With the Royal Air Force, Van der Stok flew missions over the coast of Northern Europe, was awarded the Order of Orange Nassau from the Netherlands, and was inducted as a Member of the Order of the British Empire. He later settled in the United States, worked as a General Practitioner, and eventually joined NASA’s space lab research team.
Start the day with a brief stop at Oskar Schindler’s factory, the site from which Schindler was able to save over 1,000 Jews from the Plaszow forced labor camp, and ultimately from death, as portrayed in the film Schindler’s List. After an opportunity to view the exterior of the factory and take photos, enjoy a walking tour of picturesque Kazimierz in Kraków’s Old Town, followed by lunch. A thirty-mile drive west of Kraków is the Polish town of Oswiecim, known to history by its German name, Auschwitz. The German occupiers took over this former army barracks in 1940 and populated it with Polish political prisoners. As the war continued, the Nazis expanded and refined the camp, imprisoning Jews from all over Europe or sending them on to their deaths at nearby Birkenau. The Martyrdom Museum at Auschwitz is a ghastly reminder of the unspeakable horrors that took place there. An evening on your own allows reflection on today’s touring.

Accommodations: Radisson Blu Kraków (B, L)
Bartoszewski’s formal schooling ended with the German invasion. Nazi rule in Poland was highly oppressive: schools and universities were closed, along with newspapers, publishing houses, and virtually all other Polish institutions. Bartoszewski continued to work for the Red Cross as a clerk. In September 1940, the Germans began random roundups of men between the ages of 18 and 65. Bartoszewski was 18 years old when the Nazis arrived at his house. They stormed in, grabbed him, and put him on the second-ever transport to a small town in southern Poland where a new camp, Auschwitz, was being built. There, he was photographed, put in striped prison uniform, and given the number 4427.

Life in Auschwitz was intolerable. He watched as friends were beaten to death in front of him; he was forced into slave labor pulling a gigantic concrete roller; food was scarce. By the end of the first year he had become desperately ill. The Red Cross intervened and arranged for Bartoszewski and a number of other prisoners to be released—something which would have been impossible later in the war. He returned to Warsaw sick and too weak to function. His old friend Hanka Czaki, who worked for the Polish Underground, came to see him as he recovered, and over some weeks wrote down his testimony about Auschwitz. It was sent to London and published in April 1942 by the Home Army as *Memoir of a Prisoner*. It was the first-ever eyewitness testimony published about Auschwitz, and it was the first warning to the Allies about what was happening to the victims in the new concentration camps in German-occupied Poland.

In the spring of 1942 Bartoszewski was interviewed by Jan Karski, a later recipient of the American Presidential Medal of Freedom. As a result of this meeting, Bartoszewski was invited to join the Polish Home Army in August 1942. Disturbed by the increasing brutality directed against the Jews, he became a founding member of The Council for Aid to Jews, code named “Żegota,” was funded from London and helped approximately 50,000 Jews in occupied Poland. The exact number of those aided who survived the war is unknown, but it is thought to be less than 20%. During the course of his work Bartoszewski and the Żegota organization supported well-known activists, including Irene Sendler, who saved 2,500 Jewish children, and the “Zookeeper” Jan Żabiński, who saved Jews by hiding them at the Warsaw Zoo. Aside from his work at Żegota, Bartoszewski personally saved dozens of Jews, and as a result was honored at Yad Vashem both for his work with Żegota and for his own individual contributions. He was also made an honorary citizen of the State of Israel.

After the war, Bartoszewski was arrested and spent seven years in a Stalinist prison. Between 1963 and 1989, he worked in secret for Radio Free Europe. Given his links with the Solidarity movement activists, he was arrested again on December 13, 1981, when the Polish Communist Government declared martial law. When Poland finally threw off the communist yoke in 1989, Bartoszewski became Polish Ambassador to Austria, and then was twice made Polish Foreign Minister. He served as Secretary of State in the Polish Prime Minister’s Office until his death on April 24, 2015.

Władysław Bartoszewski suffered through the horrors of Nazism and Stalinism, and as a result was determined to be a witness to history. He wrote hundreds of books and articles, gave countless interviews, and supported initiatives to remember the war. He was Chairman of the International Auschwitz Committee, and worked tirelessly to promote ties between Poland and Israel, and between Poland and Germany. He was truly a “great survivor.”
THE EXPERIENCE

Kraków

Explore Kraków, which was included on UNESCO’s first World Heritage list in 1978. Since the Tatar raids in the 13th century, the Old Town has remained mostly intact, making it the only large Polish city to escape the destruction of World War II. The tour day begins at St. Mary’s Basilica before breaking for an independent lunch in the Old Town Square. Rynek Główny in Polish, the square is known for its quaint cafés and excellent shopping. The afternoon includes a visit to the Wawel Royal Castle, the residence of Polish kings for hundreds of years, and the gothic Wawel Cathedral, where Polish kings were crowned and buried for centuries. During the war, Governor General of the occupied Polish territories, Hans Frank, installed himself in the Wawel Castle. Calling himself the “King of Poland,” he surrounded himself with stolen art including Leonardo Da Vinci’s Lady with an Ermine, and wielded his terrifying power over the population. Continue on a walking tour to Jagiellonian University, founded in 1364 by Casimir III the Great. Over the centuries, the university has educated some of Europe’s most respected figures, including Nicolaus Copernicus, Pope John Paul II, and Nobel Prize-winning poet Wisława Szymborska. Take a stroll through the university’s lovely botanical garden, which is more than 200 years old. Return to Old Town to visit Cloth Hall, which historically functioned as the main marketplace of the town. Board a short flight for Gdańsk this evening.

Accommodations: Sofitel Grand Sopot (B, D)

THE EXPERIENCE

Gdańsk

Poland’s maritime city on the Baltic Sea, Danzig, now known as Gdańsk, was first mentioned in historical documents in 997. During its millenium of existence, this venerable port city has changed hands six times – the prize in a long game of tug-of-war between Germany and Poland. This morning, visit Westerplatte, the place where the Germans fired the first shots of what became World War II. On September 1, 1939, a German battleship paying a “courtesy call” on Gdańsk began firing shells at the Polish garrison here. Enjoy lunch on your own and the option to take a walking tour of Gdańsk, then visit the Museum of the Second World War. After ample time to explore the museum, your evening is free in the quaint seaside town of Sopot.

Accommodations: Sofitel Grand Sopot (B)
Today, drive onward to Wolf’s Lair, the English name for Hitler’s secret, fortified Eastern Front command post Wolfsschanze. The failed July 20, 1944, assassination attempt on Hitler’s life, portrayed in the 2008 movie *Valkyrie* (starring Tom Cruise) took place within the concrete fortification. Virtually untouched since the war, this huge bunker complex is where many of the major decisions affecting the conduct of the war on the Eastern Front were made. Spend the evening in the resort town of Mikolajki.

**Accommodations:** Hotel Mikolajki (B, L, D)

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Depart Mikolajki, bound for Poland’s capital city of Warsaw. Enjoy free time for independent exploration and lunch in Old Town Square. Set out on a walking tour this afternoon, beginning at the 1944 Warsaw Uprising Monument. Unveiled in 1989, the monument commemorates the valiant and tragic attempt of the Polish Resistance to take back the city of Warsaw from Nazi troops before the Soviet Army entered the city. This afternoon, visit the Warsaw Uprising Museum. Opened in 2004, on the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Warsaw Uprising, this museum includes a collection of almost 1,000 photographs taken by photographer and Olympian athlete Eugeniusz Lokajski, who documented the uprising before he was killed in an artillery attack. During a reception this evening, learn more about the uprising from local members of the community.

**Accommodations:** Hotel Bristol (B, R)
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THE EXPERIENCE
Warsaw

Spend the day exploring Warsaw, starting at the Genscher Cemetery, Warsaw’s largest Jewish cemetery with over 250,000 people buried on site. Many prominent leaders of Warsaw’s Jewish community are buried here, including Marek Edelman, a leader of the uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto. Continue on to the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews for a guided tour of the exhibits. The afternoon is free for lunch and individual pursuits. Drive a short distance outside of Warsaw this evening to Radzymin, the site of one of the last great tank battles of World War II, in August 1944. Explore the terrain with Dr. Richie who will explain the events of the battle and their consequences for both the Germans and the Soviets. The tour concludes at the private residence of Dr. Alexandra Richie, which was used as the headquarters for German General Herbert Otto Gille, commander of the 5th SS Panzergrenadier Division Wiking during the battle. Here, Dr. Richie hosts a farewell reception and dinner. 

Accommodations: Hotel Bristol (B, R, D)

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THE EXPERIENCE
Depart Warsaw and Return to the US

Bid farewell to Poland this morning and transfer to Warsaw Chopin Airport (WAW) for individual flights back to the United States. (B)
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