

APPENDIX 3: NETNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH REVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

All reviews are transcribed without edits and include headings as per original site content. Reviews are numbered for purposes of analysis, reviewer identities and other detail are not included, and the reviews are listed in order of review level (EXCELLENT; VERY GOOD; AVERAGE; POOR; TERRIBLE).

Review level: EXCELLENT (1 – 82)

1. Sad but worth a look at history.

I have been to Dachau and Sachsenhausen and the first thing that strikes you with Auschwitz / Birkenau is the size of this place, it's like a city behind the walls. Auschwitz is the smaller part and being old Polish Army barracks. The many large brick buildings contain memorials and historical facts from the time of the Nazi's. Having a guide to explain all is a must, the last barrack we went through with the execution wall was particularly sobering.

We then travelled the short distance to Birkenau and this place is massive, once you travel through those famous gates and onto the ramp you see hundreds of timber barracks and its then it hits you just as to how many people actually resided here. It was very sad and shocking at the same time but I'm glad I went and walked the path of so many people who were murdered by the Nazi's there to understand a little better what the holocaust is.

2. Poignant and Heartbreaking

Words can't really describe this experience but it is so worth doing. It was handled so sensitively that it felt like you were paying due respect to all those who had died there. Our guide was unbelievable...it was not just about the facts but very much the emotional impact. I was on the verge of tears the entire tour but I'm so glad I went.

3. Go to witness and never forget.

I know a lot about the atrocities that were carried out at this site and others by the Nazi regime. However I don't think anything can quite prepare you for being somewhere physically. Auschwitz 1 was almost peaceful and the red brick buildings appeared quite pretty in the autumn sun. Then the reality hits in as you walk through the accommodation blocks and see the pictures of Polish prisoners, the conditions they slept in, punishment cells etc. standing in a room full of possessions belonging to dead people was quite sickening- the most upsetting was the hair taken from the heads of female prisoners.

Continuing to Auschwitz 2- again at first sight looked like a railway station. Looking out over the camp from the watch tower just showed how vast the site was. The blocks were haunting, the children's block was eerie. As the sun began to set you can't help but imagine what it must have been like day in day out for the victims who were imprisoned there - and murdered there. I'm glad I've been to witness - I can talk and tell people about it - I think it is somewhere that should be visited to honour those who died and help humanise the victims - but also the perpetrators - they were people - and committed something so heinous, we need to learn and try to behave in a way that ensures we as humans don't allow this to happen again.

4. Important to acknowledge

Emotions cannot be put into words to describe the feelings this place invokes. I'm so glad i visited. The tour guide was exceptional- so informative. It was easy to pay attention although there was so much to take in. Unable to still concede the atrocities- it resonates for the following days and you cant help but feel rage. A must for everyone.

5. Very sad place but a must for everyone

Visited while on a city break and have to say this is the most harrowing place I have ever visited in my life.

We did both Auschwitz and Birkenau which was pretty emotionally draining but I'm So glad I did it.

To see the images and the reality of what those poor people endured was very humbling, it also makes you think how any human could treat another with so much pure evil.

I will never forget what I saw and I think everyone should see this once in their lifetimes.

6. A must whilst in Krakow

This review is mainly about the ease of access in getting to Auschwitz and how best to do it. I researched lots of ways before we went to make the journey straight forward and to get the best out of the trip.

I won't say much about the camp itself as I feel it's kind of a personal thing.

So as I said after much research and people advising of different ways of getting there and prices and guides etc.... I decided to book directly through our hotel before we arrived in Krakow. It was very simple and I'm sure all the hotels do the same. I emailed and told them which trips I would like to do. They quickly emailed back with all the info and prices and a booking / payment form.

I would definitely advise the organised trip. You are collected from the hotel early morning (ours was 8:30am pick up). It was a small mini bus - about 8 people on it. The weather was really snowy so it took us a little longer than usual to get to Auschwitz but the scenery was lovely. It normally takes about 90 mins. A video is shown on the bus all about Auschwitz and WW11. On arrival a lady joined us on the bus to explain the day to us and the do's and don'ts. We were off the bus near a kind of services on the site, little restaurant, toilets and a shop. There is no eating inside either of the camps but it's ok to take water in with you. We bought some snacks and left them on the bus to eat in between camps.

We were then handed over to another lady who took us through security and supplied us with headsets before handing us over to our English speaking guide. Security is quite tight with bag searches. They say your bag is to be no bigger than an A4 piece of paper. Mine was a little larger but it was ok. No rucksacks and holdalls.

From there the guide made sure we were all tuned in through our head sets and we could hear her and we set off.

It was about 2 to 3 hours around Auschwitz before a quick toilet stop and back on the bus for a 10 / 15 min drive to Birkenau. Probably about an hour round there then back on the bus home. Arrived back at hotel at around 4:30pm.

I think it's really important to go on the organised trips with the guide. I know you can go for free on certain days and you can get the bus and then the train and then the bus to Birkenau but in my opinion it's just too much. It's quite a draining experience seeing the camps and not sure I would of wanted to have to be thinking about what time I had to where to catch which bus and train after seeing it all.

Plus the main thing is without the guide you would just miss so much. It's all good and well seeing the exhibits and looking at the photos but it's nice to have the background info that the

guide will give you. It wasn't rushed at all and you could ask questions (although our guide left nothing to ask). It's good that you can wander behind the small group you are with but still listen to what your guide is saying.

Make sure you have sturdy shoes on. It snowed whilst we were there and it was quite slippery. Felt rocky too in some places.

I think our hotel booked through See Krakow or Krakow Tours (I can't remember) and it cost 155PLN for the transport, entrance, guide and trf to Birkenau. Just a ton easier than planning the whole thing yourself.

But all this is just my opinion and I'm sure others will disagree.

I didn't want to review the camp but I'm so glad I have visited and paid my respects and ensured that these atrocities shall not be forgotten. You must go if you are in Krakow.

7. I learned a lot

I have always wanted to go to the camp to learn more about it. I'm a history buff. The tour is excellent and the guides a mine of information. It is, as you can imagine, a sobering place to visit. The tour I booked took you to birkenau as well, and the size of this place blew me away. In all, well worth a visit. I'm glad I went

8. Good to visit

The reason we came to Poland was to tick Auschwitz off my bucket list. It did not disappoint. If you go, plan to spend the day there. It takes just under 2 hours by bus each way. To be able to take everything in you need to spend quite a bit of time there. We chose to do it on our so arrived before 10. I'm glad we did it this way. Entrance was free and we could spend as much time as we wanted to see what we wanted. It was packed with tour groups, mostly schools, rushing from one place to the next. its easy to get to from Krakow and free if you do it on your own.

9. Glad I went...

I'm so glad I went here, but once is enough! Auschwitz brings the humanity out of the history books and smacks you round the face with it! Solemn, sad, eerily quiet and a real eye opener to what we THOUGHT we already knew! Everyone must visit.

10. THE VISITOR.

Still the busy season spent over 5 hours there still felt rushed could have spent the day in the main camp alone.Remembering where you are needs to take more time.It all depends on ones reason for going.If you can go solo you get more out of it.That depends on the time of year and time you plan on going.I'm glad I went and would go again.

11. Everyone Should Visit This Location - Interesting and Moving!

This day trip has been on my bucket list for years, it's the most interesting and moving day trip I've ever been on. If you're reading this review contemplating if to visit or not.....GO! We hired a car and the journey took approx 1hr from the city centre, 15PLN to park for the day. Please note there is a restriction on bag sizes so be sure to check the website before you visit. I would advise to buy the official tour guide book when you arrive its very informative and a nice addition to take away. There's a lot of reviews about limited food on site but there is a

cantine and a snack box cabin onsite plus a 5 minute drive out of Auschwitz there's a retail park. Our tour guide was great so informative not only telling you facts but stories that happened in the camp. We then got on a free shuttle to Auschwitz-Birkenau the scale of this place is breathtaking. At the end of the tour our tour guide gave us access to climb to the top of the tower to look over the site. I still can't quite comprehend what happened there is in 1940's I was deep in thought a couple of days after the trip but I'm so glad I went to visit. We all know about Auschwitz and have watched films and documentaries but they do not do it justice this is a must see!

12. Life changing

A must-see if ever in Poland. Very touching, tragic and horrible obviously, but I'm glad I went to see it. The trip sure did change my perspectives, and I like to think of myself as changed in a positive way because of it.

The experience (tour) in itself was very plain, but I could not have asked for anything more.

13. Unbelievable Experience

My oh my! What an experience. It was March 2002 when I visited here with the School I was working at at the time. Our tour guide was fabulous, & our students, very respectful.

Each of the Blocks has country specific information, & then there are some general displays. The display cabinets in Auschwitz I still haunt me to this day, particularly the one with the the cremation ash & then the one with hair in it. In fact, I can still smell that particular room. We were also show Block 11 - or the Death Block! & the crematory including the ovens.

The second part of the tour was a 15 minute journey to the Birkenau site, where we were taken into the main gate watch tower... wow! I'd seen photographs before we went, I read what I could, but nothing prepares you for the size of Birkenau, even the photographs I have don't give it the same perspective.

Once we'd been in the tower, we were taken to one of the huts to the right of the rail tracks, where 'inmates' were forced to live & sleep - if they were lucky enough, & were we shown the very basic loos too.

The whole tour was very haunting. It was something that I'm glad I've seen, but I don't think I'd want to return for a second trip. Not because I didn't like it as part of our trip, I did, but, more out of the respect for all those innocent victims who were lulled there under false pretences

It's a trip that you should make & have respect for.

14. Do not pass up on the chance to go!

If you are interested in Auschwitz then it is definitely a must if you are visiting Poland. If your going on a whim be prepared as it is so hard hitting my partner nearly fainted several times. The museum is run very very well. Toilets are 1.50 Zloty to use, so 30p. There is a stall with employees that you pay so if you do not have the correct change it shouldn't be a problem. There is a small book shop and a kiosk to buy food and drink (pizza slices etc), food and drink is understandably quite highly priced. Before entering you need to go through a security scanner. There is no drinking, eating or smoking throughout the camp. We booked a tour and I'm so glad we did. Although it means you do not cover everything you get to understand

more of the history. Also, if you are independently going you will find it hard at times getting through the tour groups. You are not allowed to take photos during some exhibitions and some exhibitions you are allowed to take photos however without flash. When we moved onto Birkenau everything is pretty much outside as opposed to the internal exhibitions at Auschwitz 1 camp. You do not have to go through security scanners in Birkenau. Make sure you read the website on their rules on what they allow in the camp as you are limited on the size of your bag, a large backpack will not be allowed in, however there are lockers provided although I didn't use them as I had already seen the website so unsure how many and if they cost. Both camps have been maintained respectfully. Be prepared for it to be extremely busy in places. I was astounded by the sheer amount of people there paying their respects. Highly recommend decent comfortable footwear, I saw some ladies in heels! A very draining day however very interesting and a place that should never be forgotten.

15. You should go,

Somewhere you have to go. We booked online and avoided the queue outside. We went early and were allowed to go without a guide (before 10). We took the bus from Kraków station. You can pay the driver and get a single ticket so you can use a different bus company for the return journey. All is well labelled in English. The shuttle bus to Birkenau starts running at 10.30 - we walked the 2 or 3 km as we were so early. I'm glad I went, though it was a sombre day

16. Educational, Disturbing, Once in a lifetime experience.

Everyone needs to come here once in their lifetime. One time is all you need.

I'd recommend booking a tour as there are so many people it's difficult to read about everything on display. With a guide, you can listen as they guide you around both camps.

Both camps were quite disturbing, and quite eerie, but I'm glad I went. It's a great way to learn about what happened, while you're there, and not just watching documentaries on TV. It's just not the same. It's a mind blowing experience and really quite upsetting.

Be prepared to get very emotional and you will absorb a lot of information. Try and ignore the ignorant tourists taking photos of themselves smiling behind the bars as if they're trapped. Wander around slowly and take it all in. Go home and tell people about it. Everything that happened here needs to be remembered and shared with the world.

17. Sad but important to see

This is one of the death camps that was in Poland during WWII. It is very sad to see and to learn about the history, but it is also very important. I definitely recommend a guided tour. They are done in many languages. I also recommend buying tickets in advance! Times sell out. Tour groups are limited. When we were there, even during the week, it was very crowded. You have to stay with your tour guide. The tour guide explains a lot. I don't think we would have learned as much if we didn't have a tour guide. You can go on your own in the early mornings or the late afternoons though. There are two different sites, Auschwitz and Birkenau. There is a bus that goes between the two. We hired a driver for the day. He drove us to Auschwitz and then to the salt mine later that same day. I would definitely recommend hiring a driver. It is inexpensive and well worth it! I'm glad we did not do one of the big tours from Krakow. We purchased tickets to Auschwitz on our own. For the tour, you wear a headset so you can hear your tour

guide. I do not recommend this for young children. I would think that children need to be at least 14 to visit.

18. A Necessary Trip!!

The main reason that I wanted to go to Krakow for was to go to Auschwitz. I have always found history fascinating and I think it is very important to understand and remember the past. That is why I believe that this tour was worth while and necessary to everyone.

The guide we had was informative and friendly as he waited for us and let us go at our own pace.

Both museums were educating and powerful. The information provided was detailed and factual as it matched and developed my existing knowledge.

I'm very glad I went and would like to go back again.

19. The logistics of a trip to Auschwitz from Prague

The place is absolutely moving, eye opening and a must if you are in the area. I will not go into my experience there, but will cover the logistics of getting there and making the most of your day. We flew in to Prague as we were planning on spending 4 days there and taking a day trip to Auschwitz. After we flew in, we took the AE bus for very cheap to the Prague main metro station to catch a train. It's the last bus stop from the airport. About two weeks prior, we booked a train and shuttle from Prague to Katowice (30 min from Auschwitz) via Tiger Express. Therefore we already had train tickets for RegioJet which goes to Oslava Svinov. After we arrived at the Prague train station we waited in front of the main board until about 15 min before our departure time at which time it will tell you which platform you need to go to for your train. We had plenty of time to get to the platform, then boarded the train. The train had "cabins" of about 6 people in each, we had very good, helpful service so it was a pleasant experience. It took about 3 hours for us to get to our train station - Oslava Svinov. From there, a TigerExpress mini bus was waiting for us outside. The driver was very helpful and nice and it took us about 1.5 hours to get to the Katowice center metro station. From there we took a taxi from to our hotel. Two weeks prior we also booked our Auschwitz tickets for a 9am time. **YOU DO NOT NEED TO SEE AUSCHWITZ WITH A GROUP.** I was worried we might be mistaken as I felt the website was misleading and even some signs at the camp site would say everyone needs to be with a group, but that's not the case. I'm glad I listened to another reviewer on here who said the same thing. We purchased a guide booklet from the book store there on arrival. They have them in about 20 different languages. Back to getting there. The night prior we asked the hotel receptionist to have a taxi pick us up at 8 am. In the morning we agreed with the taxi driver to take us there, wait until 2pm, and afterwards take us to Katowice airport after for \$300 zlotas (sp?) about \$100. It takes about 40 min to get from Katowice to Auschwitz and about an hour to get from Auschwitz to Katowice airport (with some traffic). These are the two options given by Tiger Express. We already had our shuttle and train tickets back to Prague through Tiger express booked so after the taxi driver took us back to the Katowice airport it took about 6 hours total to get back to Prague. A few helpful points: there's a luggage storage at Auschwitz that operates from 8am-10pm if you need to leave your things for the day. Get there early, if you're going individual I'd suggest getting there around 830. There will be lots of groups there and sometimes it got crowded especially at Auschwitz I. There are no audioguides - only guided tours and booklets you can purchase at the book store. There is no separate ticket to see Auschwitz II, a shuttle that runs every 30 min takes you there. Also, although we stayed the night

in Katowice, there were restaurants and hotels right across from the camp site. We allowed ourselves 3 hours at Auschwitz I and 3 hours at II after arriving at 830 for a 9am individual time with guide booklets we purchased at the book store and felt that was a perfect amount of time. That's 6 hours with stopping to read the booklet, reflecting, taking photos, maneuvering through tour groups, and a few water and bathroom breaks. We did not have lunch but had a quick snack on the way to the second site. Hope this helps, and although our trip went smoothly there were a few things we wished we would have done a bit differently.

20. Eery.

Always wanted to visit Auschwitz and I'm ever so glad I did. Myself and my friend did the guided tour in English which was not rushed and very informative. Well worth the visit. Something everyone should see.

21. You have to learn what happened here

1.5 hours from Kraków old town. I did not know what to expect on arrival. So first you have to decide if you are using a tour like escape.Poland or getting the bus. I used the tour. The tour was fast. If you want to take your time get the bus and come solo. Before you come here I would suggest you go to Museum Armia Krakowa. It is behind the shopping mall in Kraków. It will give you so much information about both camps and a very detailed input. This Museum is a must. You have to pay. 11 lev per adult but they do a family ticket. Opens 11am -6pm. Come here then get the bus to the camps. If you are doing it solo. You must arrive before 10am or after 3pm. There is a free shuttle bus between both camps. To use the bus look for the name Auschwitz. Entrance is free. Back to the camp now. We were given headphones as to be able to hear the guide. You get to walk around and explore the buildings. You see the last gas chamber and step inside. Pictures and information is vast and compelling. It's a place where you have to take moment and gather your thoughts. I won't say too much as you need to visit this place. There are toilets and a restaurant and ice cream bars before you enter! The other camp Birkenau is truly darkened with the most horrific history. You can see a train carriage which was used. The last remaining carriage. This was where the gas chambers were. The sight is vast. Wooden and brick buildings remain and you can enter the buildings. These were where the poor souls were kept. Between both camps about 6 mins on the bus. There is also a restaurant here. It was a heart felt day and I'm so glad I came to understand what happened here. Like I said at the begin, your better going solo as the tour is too fast. My advice would be to do museum Armia Krakowa first for a better understanding. You have to come here.

22. Day trip to Auschwitz

What can I say...

A place I've seen and heard so much about over the years and on my bucket list of things to eventually do.

It is what it is.

Definitely book a guided tour. You get to hear so much detail that you'd miss if you went by yourself. In fact, April to October after 10am you can only go by guided tour unless you're there between 8am-10am.

You are taken around both Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau

About 90 mins in each camp which is totally sufficient.

Make sure you wear warm clothes and comfy footwear as you do a lot of standing and walking on uneven stony ground. Not so suitable for wheelchairs and not suitable for under 14's (their rules)

Awkward to say a lovely day out but I'm so glad I've been there to see the scale and magnitude

of it all for myself. I'll remember it forever.

A definite place to visit

23. A long weekend in Krakow

The Auschwitz tour was a "must do" but I think all 4 of us were unsure what our reactions would be.

The impact of the things you see there was very moving for all of us, and will leave lasting impressions on all of us.

I'm glad that we did visit the camps and would certainly recommend the visit, even if only to remind ourselves what the human race is capable of.

24. Very sad place

One of the main reasons we travelled to Krakow was to visit Auschwitz and Birkenau.

Everything I've read or watched about this place didn't feel real until I came here. The tour guide that brought us around was very informative and told us stories of survivors he had met, it was quite emotional. I feel people should be more respectful when visiting this place. I seen one man take a selfie in the furnaces and I was absolutely appalled. I'm so glad I finally got to visit this place, I won't forget it.

25. Mind blowing - A must see

Hard to rate this place as it is obviously a very sombre experience, but the museum is well run and totally worth a visit for the day.

We paid for a guided tour which I couldn't recommend highly enough - if you go alone it is still interesting, but you don't get as much of a feel for the place or get the extra information. Our guide was incredibly knowledgeable and had excellent English, he could answer any question thrown at him in detail. He was clearly very passionate about the place and cared deeply about its history.

I learned a lot during my visit and I'm so glad I went. I feel this is a must see place if visiting Krakow or a nearby city. Allow a minimum of 3 hours to see both the original Auschwitz camp and the much larger Birkenau camp.

26. Anyone can write a review but sometimes it is more about a feeling.....

visited 29.01.16Our visit to Krakow was probably motivated by my want to visit Auschwitz. Late last year we visited Flanders and just before travelling to Krakow we watched the commemorative programmes on TV and the documentary about 'the girl who forgave the Nazis' so maybe we were slightly desensitised for what Auschwitz and Birkenau offer up. In no way am I saying we weren't moved by what we saw , just that it was maybe not quite as harrowing on the day as we thought it might be.

Our driver (Sebastian from Spec Trips)collected us at 8am so that we arrived early at the museum .. we fast-tracked a small queue with the help of Sebastian and we chose to tour the museum without a guide so that we could do it in our own time as we had planned a busy day. We were glad of this decision because towards the end of our time we spent (1hr 45mins aprox) we started to get overloaded on information that, because of its content, became quite tiring.

ABOUT OUR DRIVER - we met him as our airport transfer to our apartment (a 6 seater comfortable car), which I had organised with the owner of our apartment - Sebastian was excellent , on our way to the apartment we discussed our tour the following day for Auschwitz and other tours he could offer us during our stay. He was very accommodating when he arrived

to collect us in the morning and we asked if we could add a visit to the Salt Mine to the day . He worked out how we could manage this and the time we would expect to need etc.

On route to Auschwitz he plays a short video of the horrors of Auschwitz - again good preparation of what you will feel when you tour the museum.

As a small car he was also able to take us to the end of the rail , where the decision was made if the new arrivals lived or died. In a larger tour bus , entry to this point is not allowed.

Of all the trips our kids were offered in school - I can't help but wonder if this should not be a compulsory curriculum school trip . Sebastian explained it was part of his school curriculum.

As I walked round it is hard to imagine that in some countries similar atrocities are still carrying on....

It is not just the horrors of what these prisoners went through or the horrors that those who were rescued and survived the torture of the camp (but i'm sure never truly 'survived') but it is heartbreakingly unbelievable the people who became a number of MORE THAN 1.1 million prisoners who died here.

This may not be a 'Tourist Attraction' as such , but in my opinion it is somewhere that should not be overlooked ...

27. A Place to Remember and Learn

It's difficult for me to review this one. I heard a lot of things about this place and the Holocaust but being there to see it myself is a whole different matter. I'm glad that i made time to do this tour, i learned so much. We're all left speechless with the things we saw there. It's just unimaginable, how the things could happen. It's a sad, horrible, disturbing place but I think everyone should visit it.

I did the guided tour, takes about 3,5 hours, costs 30 zloty, which i recommend.

Bring extra water and maybe some snacks, especially if you go on a hot day.

If you travel to Oswiecim by bus or train, please check the schedule, because the train goes kinda irregularly

28. Emotional

We've all read books, watched films and think we know something about what happened here, but that won't prepare you for the feeling you get when you're actually there, walking around those camps. The sheer size of them is unbelievable. The photographs hanging on the walls, rows and rows of scared people looking out at you. Their shoes, their suitcases, it's haunting. To think that this all happened as recently as it did is terrifying - the fact it ever happened at all is horrific. Words cannot express how emotional this place makes you feel. I definitely left looking at the world through different eyes. Everyone should visit at least once in their lifetime, to pay their respects, so we never forget.

We used a private tour company to take us there and they arranged our entry & tour guide - which I'm glad about as it's very busy and dis-organised in the entrance hall, not very clear where to go and what to do. The tour guide around the camps was very knowledgeable, must be a hard job to do, telling that harrowing story over & over again each day.

Extremely emotional, eye opening and educational.

29. Sad Chapter In Human History

I have read and studied about the holocaust, but not until seeing this place first hand did I really appreciate the scope and size of Nazi brutality. I'm glad I was able to see it in person and it is something that I will never forget.

30. Not for the faint at heart

The tour begins in Auschwitz I, the original site, where barracks have been converted into museum exhibits. Photos and artifacts are explicit. The museum does an excellent job putting a face with everything--real individuals who arrived and lived only a few weeks in the camp make experience hard to handle. Halfway through, I found myself thinking "this is too hard, I don't want to finish this." But I did, and I'm glad for the experience.

Auschwitz 2 (Birkenau) is about a 5 minute drive from the original site. Don't miss the beautiful memorial in the back. There's a lot of walking required at this site. Don't be surprised if you walk about 2 miles to see everything.

31. everyone should do this in their lifetime

I main reason icame to krackow was to see auschwitz. And if you don't you will be sorry. Even though we all know the story of the Holocaust you will come away shocked. The museum is very busy so expect crowds. But I was glad to see some many people witnessing such human depravity. I'm not an emotional person but I was crying at many times during the tour. Anna our tour guide through krackow tours was fantastic. Even though she probably does tour 3 times a day 7 days a week. She didn't sound like she was reading of a script. She knew the history and was very passionate about maintaining the dignity of the people who were murdered in the camps. I will say that Ifound that other tourist were disgusting in their behaviour. You are allowed to take pictures of the museum but I think selfies should be banned. The amount of people taking selfies in the place that 1.5 million people lost their lives was disgusting. Iactually felt ashamed to call myself a human being. OK sorry rant is over

32. A must visit. Very moving, very surreal.

Like many have said on here, it seems bizarre reviewing this place. I don't know what I was expecting, and I'm not a huge history buff, and actually don't know a huge about the war world, but after visiting I feel it was such an important thing to do, and see and learn about. The museum is sensitively set out, but still manages to be a hard hitting, emotional and exhausting experience. It's describes the horror of the camp in a matter of fact way, explaining the purposes of the different rooms. It's absolutely heartbreaking but so important to know about and understand. I wish everyone could visit her at least once in their lifetime, as you realise how dangerous it is to generalise and judge another human based on their culture, background or beliefs, it's just impossible to grasp how one group of human beings can devalue the life of another.

It takes a few hours to walk around the camp, then you take the free bus from the car park to Birkenau, which has less to see but still important to visit.

It's quite impossible to describe it, and I feel it's a lot of take in. I'm just glad I went.

33. Very sombre but glad I went

A heartbreaking place. Although it is very busy the tours with headsets mean that it still feels very intimate with your guide. I was worried it was going to be too touristy, but it is very tasteful and sombre. I'm glad I went.

34. Moving

Visiting Kraków I felt compelled to see Auschwitz, to remember what happened here and to pay my respects to all who suffered here and to those still alive but lost loved ones here.

I once read a quote from an Auschwitz survivor who said 'if you understand what happened in Auschwitz, then you need to worry about yourself'. I thought that as a fellow human

being I might be able to make sense of why the Nazi's felt the way they did and why they carried out so many atrocities; but I couldn't. I couldn't understand how and why one human being could be so cruel and wicked to another and without thought gas them and cremate them. How the prisoners who did survive carried on every day. How everything from hair to clothing to gold was worth money to the Nazi party and how one mad man convinced an entire nation.

I'm glad I don't understand and that is what makes me human.

We did the tour unguided and I'm glad we did, we needed the time to absorb what we were seeing and feeling. It's best to get there early to avoid the queues and big groups. Get a paper guide for 5 zloty, it has lots of information in it. Set aside a good few hours for Auschwitz 1 and Birkenau. When you are done I suggest a quiet end to your day to reflect and appreciate everything you have.

I don't think I could have visited Poland and not visited Auschwitz. Amidst the countries beautiful scenery is a place of such horror.

35. Never Forget

This is a place that I thought I would never go to but it was included in our holiday so I decided to go and visit. I don't want to say that I enjoyed it because the things that went on in this awful place I can't even get over the thought of them, but the tour guide which we had I must say he was amazing he knew everything and explained all we needed to know even if we didn't really want to know. I just can't grasp how anyone could kill so many people of all ages it just beggars belief and when I went into some of the rooms and saw the amount of personal belongings to the Jews it just brings a lump to my throat. The walking tour is set around the work camp but we also made a stop at the extermination camp with the train tracks leading into the camp, if you were sent here that was it, I just couldn't grasp the size of this place it was huge and I mean huge and for the Nazis to keep Auschwitz a secret is beyond understanding. If you get the chance to visit I would suggest it I'm glad I got the chance to see it with my own eyes.

36. Difficult to review

We booked to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau independently as we didn't wish to be in a huge group. We booked a guide through the museum and our group was about 15 in number. We arrived at about 8.15am for the tour starting at 9.00am and were glad we did as the site became much busier later on during the day and did take on somewhat of a tourist "attraction" feel.

The security staff at the entrance are not the most pleasant and overly officious. Our guide was very informative and didn't hold back at all on her feelings with regard to what happened and quite rightly in my opinion made you feel very guilty that more was not done to try and stop the mass extermination which took place. I was in 2 minds as to whether to visit or not as it did seem somewhat ghoulish. By the end of our long guided tour (over 6 hours and approx 8 kms of walking) I didn't feel ghoulish just incredibly sad. While we obviously knew some facts about the sites we learnt a huge amount more about what happened.

The scale of Birkenau leaves you in no doubt as to the numbers of people the Nazis were "processing" and if WW11 had continued there were plans for a huge expansion.

Would I recommend people to visit? I'm not sure, it is not and never should be viewed as an attraction, more in my mind it serves as a reminder of how ghastly human beings can be and that atrocities were carried out in the recent past by educated people.

37. Emotional

I wasn't sure what to expect when I visited here. I have visited a concentration camp previously (Sachsenhausen) but obviously it wasn't on the same scale as Auschwitz-Birkenau.

I visited on the 16th on September and was on the 11:30am English speaking tour. Firstly, the tour guide we had was fantastic. I'm not sure how long he's been doing the job but he spoke with such passion and feeling. Really very good at his job.

I experienced a lot of emotions on the day, mostly anger and sadness. I'm not sure I can say I enjoyed it. Can you 'enjoy' such a thing? As someone with a very keen interest in history it was on my list of places to visit for a long time and I am definitely glad I went. It was just a very strange day. Very difficult to sum up one's feelings.

There were all sorts of different people there, and on our tour, people of all different backgrounds and from different countries and I'm very glad that everyone respected the place and its significance.

All in all, very sobering and emotional. An absolute m

38. We must learn from this...

Whilst my 16 yr old daughter was visiting friends in Hamburg we took the Eurobus overnight coach to Oswiecim which was efficient, cheap and as ok as a long coach journey can be.

Dropped outside Lidl and a garage we stocked up and bought a map to find out where the museum is. Warning to independent travellers, there are NO signs to the Museum...

Whilst I totally understand the town doesn't want to be remembered for the extermination camp, I do find it more than a little odd that it's existence isn't even acknowledged this way...

When I asked about this in villa Green - the lovely, quiet B&B we stayed in later, they said they didn't get much tourism from the museum.... But 3 groups were staying that night to see the museum.....

Anyway, the museum is a 2 km walk from the drop off point for Eurobus (this must be a cheap, good service since we were the only non- polish or Germans on both trips) For a total non polish speaker, the language can be v difficult and fewer folk speak English than in Germany where we're spoilt! But everyone was v kind.

The museum itself is an absolute must do in everyone's lifetime. It took longer to get there than I thought and we were too late to get in and just wander so we had to book onto a 70zloty tour (about £14 for 1 adult:1 student) but am so glad we did... The guide, Gregory, was an excellent English speaker and incredibly informative and respectful through the 3.5 hr tour of both sites.

I've just had to delete my brief description of what you see, as I read it back and realised that they probably cannot allow such things on trip adviser..... Suffice to say that much is included in the trip and they allow visitors into the first gas chamber and there are no ropes around the execution wall - if you cannot feel the spirit of Auschwitz in those places, you have to get more in touch with your emotions...

Auschwitz Birkenhau is a 5 min free shuttle bus away and is HUGE. 126 acres of brick chimneys from the barracks, 4 gas chambers/incinerators and the memorial.... Whilst Gregory patiently answered questions, a Jewish group were singing as they placed their wreath - a moment that will stay with me forever...

The walk to the end of the railway ramp to the memorial is 800m long and in the hot sun of 30*+, this may have been difficult for older visitors - but worth it. Take a hat and water with you if

the weather is good. We would have stayed longer on this site but were exhausted and boiling - a privilege we had but inmates did not.....

There is an opportunity to buy unique books in all languages but they are generally quite dear - it doesn't seem respectful to take photos after a while but small photo books with explanations are only 7 zloty (about £1.20). A guidebook is also cheap.

Neither did it feel respectful to tip Gregory, (and we were v short on zloty) so I wrote to the director of education for the Holocaust trust and got a personalised reply the next day - let's learn to appreciate each other a little more

Realistically, I think I got more out of it than my 16 year old daughter but hope that as we continue to reflect on this unique trip throughout the years, it will try to enhance our compassion for ourselves and each other.....

39. A very important visit

I think the effect a visit to Auschwitz - Birkenau has on most people has been covered numerous times in many reviews below. I was no exception, I found it very upsetting and truly horrific!

At first I was going to visit by bus from Kraków and without a guide, but after reading so many reviews that seemed conflicting about the best way to visit or whether to use a guide or not I found it all a bit bewildering! So, since it was my first visit and I didn't want to mess up such an important visit I chose a tour guide from 'Discover Kraków ' for 135PLN or (zloty) per person. It was the best choice in the circumstances. The cost covered transportation from our Hotel and a brilliant tour guide. I don't think there is an entrance fee, but if you 'go it' alone you have to get there early (between 8am and 10am so I was told) to get in before the tours arrive or book a 'slot' on line.

Unlike, in other reviews our guide had an excellent grasp of many languages, especially English, but her knowledge of the camp was excellent and very informative, plus the whole tour was at a gentle and sensitive pace. I'm really glad my wife and I chose this option because we arrived in an air conditioned minibus (it was 35°C outside), it was packed full of visitors (coach loads) - so quite a challenge to negotiate the crowds upon arrival. I dare say to seasoned explorers such a challenge wouldn't have bothered them and I'm usually like that myself, but for this particular visit I'm really glad we chose the very easy (and excellent value for money- sorry to use such a term for such a sensitive visit) option. We arrived fresh (considering the heat) and was guided around effortlessly and with plenty of time to appreciate and experience, with sensitivity the huge range of emotional reactions and feelings that are evoked from being present in the camp.

On a practical level there are many steps (but this didn't seem to put off many disabled visitors that were visiting) and there was a lot of walking - especially at Auschwitz II Birkenau. Also if you need the loo it costs 1 zloty - it may be handy to have some coins with you.

Although, I became very upset when I saw the enormous mounds of human hair, shoes cases and children's wear at Auschwitz I, I personally became overwhelmed by seeing the huge scale of the Auschwitz II Birkenau camp - especially if you can view it like we did from the top of the entrance watch tower (which I think is called the gate of death)

The scale and the experience of both camps is truly horrifying! It was a very important visit for me and taught me a lot about myself and humanity.

40. A distressing, but an essential visit.

I have reviewed this as excellent, although I'm not sure that this is the correct word. The tour guide was very knowledgeable and it lasted about 3 hours. I am glad that we visited as it puts things into perspective. Whilst I am reasonably aware of the history of the second world war, the visit here brought home the scale and scope of the suffering.

41. A tough but worthwhile visit

We were taken around by a very knowledgeable guide. I'm sure it's different for each visitor but the horror of this place hits you at different times. When you first enter Auschwitz I you could be forgiven for believing the place does not seem so daunting. That illusion quickly evaporates. Birkenau immediately strikes you with its sheer scale and the depraved efficiency of the whole process. I'm glad this abomination has been preserved to continue telling its story.

42. A must if you visit this part of Poland

Having made my trip to Poland specifically to visit here, I was glad I came.

I'm not sure words can sum up the place, however it's a place to be visited when you have ample time to take on board what is being presented to you.

It's a whole day experience and one that you can't rush through to do the place justice.

43. Overwhelming experience

My husband and I decided to take a small trip to Oswiecim to visit Auschwitz I & Auschwitz II - Birkenau and I'm glad that we did. The first camp was decently sized and you can walk around with no trouble at all. We forgone going on a tour and we're glad that we did, as from what we've encountered, the tour guides on took the people on tour on such a rapid pace going to only the "important" parts and missing the national exhibitions in certain blocks. We're glad that we chose on buying a guidebook (5zloty) and just reading off of signs. I was deeply horrified and saddened on the prisoner's living situations, even deeply more so, when I saw the vast amounts of shoes, suitcases, glasses and human hair made into textiles on display. When we finally saw the gas chamber/crematorium, my heart just sank. Especially when seeing the scratches made from the prisoners on the gas chambers walls before their death. The atmosphere in the chamber was heavy. I was on a morose mood from then on.

We then drove to the second camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau and my jaw dropped from the massive size of the camp compared to the first. There were vast amounts of barbed wire everywhere and more barracks for prisoners with even more devastating living situations for the prisoners. Not gonna lie, it was hard to even walk in the barracks, you just feel the depressing atmosphere. It took us 3-4 hours to go around the camp, only reason was on how tired I got from walking. That's how vast the grounds are. Visiting both camps left such an impression on me that I will never forget.

The only downside was the disrespect from the hoards of teenagers from the Israel groups. They felt such entitlement to them, that they just did whatever they please. Even when using the toilets they threw paper towels on the floor, jumping through chains, stepping on areas where preservation works were being held and when asked to be silent they would rather take selfies or group pictures. Even blocking certain visitors in viewing exhibitions. Needless to say, my husband and I avoided the groups.

44. Heart-wrenching and eye-opening

I have visited Auschwitz twice, and the second time was more heartbreaking for me.

When I first visited a few years ago during the winter, I went with a tour group. The tour guide was good, but I love history and like to spend as much time immersing myself in historic places, so I thought we didn't spend enough time in either of the camps - I made a promise to myself to come back and visit Auschwitz without a tour guide.

I visited now in June with my mom. We arrived before 10am to get in without a guide, and to

try and see as much as possible - I'm so glad we did that. I've tried my best to read up as much as I could about Auschwitz and the Holocaust so I could explain things to my mom, but I obviously wasn't as good as a guide. That aside, we spent maybe 4 hours in Auschwitz 1 and 3 hours at Birkenau, and I felt we still didn't see enough. In reality, it's rather impossible to see every part of Auschwitz-Birkenau in one day...maybe it is possible, but then you'd want to have lunch and you get tired from walking around.

This 2nd visit to Auschwitz was more heartbreaking for me, because I got to see a lot more and read things more in detail without being rushed. I also managed to walk around more at Birkenau where the international memorial is located.

Just thinking now about my visit there is bringing tears to my eyes, to think that such a barbaric thing could occur (and still does in this day and age).

Please visit this site.

45. A must

I left this place in tears, but I'm glad I had the courage to go. I learned so much from the Holocaust and it is completely different than watching it on Tv or reading a book about it. You get a tour, my tour guide spoke perfect English and was very knowledgeable, they are huge on respect since it's a sacred place. Highly recommend it

46. A sobering, thought-provoking visit

It's completely inappropriate to consider Auschwitz-Birkenau a "tourist destination", and for that reason I don't feel I can write this review from any other perspective than my own feelings after visiting (although I am willing to answer questions if it will help). I wasn't at all sure how I would feel about coming here. I accompanied my sister, who was keen to come and bear witness - again, this was not tourism for us and we took no photos. I didn't know whether the knowledge of what happened would be too much to take, and I admit to feeling quite nervous - we were, after all, volunteering to step into a place that 1.5 million people stepped into 70 years previously with no hope of coming out alive. I spent my time at Auschwitz in quiet contemplation. Indeed, many people were silent throughout the entire tour (about 3 hours), clearly struggling to comprehend the incomprehensible. I remain unable to grasp the scale of the crimes that took place here - the numbers are too huge, and I simply don't have the capacity to imagine such horrors (for which I'm glad, actually). I don't regret coming to Auschwitz. I strongly believe that the events of the Holocaust should never be allowed to be forgotten, and these camps serve as a poignant lasting reminder - and warning.

47. Hell On Earth

My wife wouldn't visit the camps; she stayed back at our hotel, and I don't blame her. I'm very glad I went, and I think it is good to be reminded that this evil took place. There are anti Semites who deny the holocaust today; after seeing this place you will want to laugh in their face.

As a Catholic it was moving to see the exact spot where Saint Maximilian Kolbe sacrificed his life for another prisoner, and the small cell where he was imprisoned before his murder.

Walking through the gas chambers, by the ovens, and seeing the displays of human hair, shoes, and other belongings is like immersing yourself in a horror story, but this one was very real.

48. Educating

Visited auschwitz Birkenau on the 26th March and so glad we made the trip it's very interesting yet very sad learning what actually went on there...think its best to have a guide as they are very informative and are well knowledged about everything...There are some things there that some people might find disturbing but everyone should keep learning of the atrocities that went on there for the sake of everyone who lost their lives and the survivors who of now I'm sure are very few. We didn't get to see everything as it was very busy but I would recommend a visit after all it is part of history that should never be forgotten. A very emotional visit.

49. I may not have the right words. Just go with open eyes and ears and learn I can't do justice to this experience with my words. I only know what I and my wife felt when being expertly guided around both Auschwitz 1 and Birkenhau. It was truly moving and we have learned so much. In parts it was very upsetting and thought provoking and one couple in our small group had a personal connection to it (mother survived and still living in the US). I'm sure you can get an idea from other reviews about what you actually do and see but we decided to take it as it came - I'm glad we did. It enhanced the experience for us.

If you do nothing else in Poland/Krakow you must do this but ,of course, with respect and for the right reasons. One tip - remember you may have someone in your group who has that personal

50. *I'M GLAD I WENT*

A sobering experience. The tour was informative and thorough.

I don't rate this as "excellent" in that I enjoyed being there, but I am certainly glad I took the time to pay my respects.

The main part of the camp (the brick buildings) has been turned into a large museum-- an exhibit. It's mostly filled with things that were left there upon the liberation. This "museum" adds drastically to the experience and personalizes it.

Visit not only the first portion of Auschwitz, but the second portion also, where the train tracks enter and lead to nowhere.

It is an experience I will never forget. I am glad I paid my respects to what happened here by learning about it.

51. Very moving--please show respect

Of our 2.5 week tour of the Baltic area and Lithuania and Poland, I would have to say that this was the most memorable experience. I had done research and even though we arrived at our hotel at midnight, I requested an early start from Krakow so we left at 7:30 with our private driver because I wanted to be there and "feel" the place before it got overrun with throngs of people who probably just wanted to say that they had been there. Our guide, I'm sorry I cannot recall her correct name but it was a Polish version of "Agnes", was excellent! It was rough getting mom around the grounds in her manual wheelchair but we managed though she couldn't go into any of the buildings besides the main one due to the stairs. There was hardly anyone around though it did pick up about 45 minutes after we arrived (got there around 9am). I really cannot describe the feeling I had--it's just an experience you have to live yourself. There was one exhibit that had tons of hair shaven from the Jewish victims and a sign before you entered

that stated something like "please show respect--no photography"; well, don't know you have the stupid people who just have to have a picture without respecting what all those people went through. Just ticks me off majorly!!! The was the one room that Ibroke down in tears in. It was that powerful. We continued exploring the buildings which are mostly barren inside but have pictures/displays/explanations/etc. throughout. The last part of this section of the tour--we went into one of the gas chambers. Again, I'm glad we took a private tour because we got to experience it with no one else inside talking up a storm. Mom said maybe we should've had more people to see what it really may have been like (about 700 people squished into this little room) but I just wanted the quietness to reflect. When you walked thru you were in the actual chamber and could see the skylight where the gas was dispensed. Then you went through another door and saw the crematorium. Is it sickening, yes. But it is still an experience you'll never forget. We went to Birkenau next. It was more widely laid out and got a chance to go up in the main watchtower and got a bird's eye view of the entire complex. We didn't explore it in detail like Auschwitz but it was still awe-inspiring. This is a must see--you will not believe how man can treat there fellow man. You will leave having a memory that you will never forget...

52. An experience

A place you will never forget. Somewhere I'm glad I went too, to see what actually happened at these camps. Really hits home when your there! Very emotional place!

53. Important visit

The site is a must-see and is definitely worth it, but I think that's fairly obvious so instead I'm going to go into tips and logistics instead. I'd searched forums and looked for information before I went about the best way to get there and whether to do a tour, or take the train or take a bus. I pieced together the information that I gathered and I think I got it pretty right, so wanted to share that to make it easy for others, as well as a couple of suggestions about things I would do differently next time.

First up, don't do a half-day tour. I'm normally fairly quick going through museums and read fast, but I spend 7 hours here. Half a day just wouldn't have been enough. I went on my own and was glad I did.

I'd been deciding between a bus and a train but in the end chose the train for 2 main reasons. I wanted to get there when the site opened to try to avoid crowds, and there was a train that left really early - at about 5:55am - and that's the one I took. It was scheduled to arrive at about 7:40, and then with a 20 minute walk to the site, that got me there pretty much right when it opened at 8am. There was a large school group there but few others visitors. Yes the bus is cheaper but they didn't seem to go that early and information was hard to find. The other reason I chose the train was because I had done a Jewish walking tour the day before and my guide said he always recommends the train because that's how the prisoners were transported there so it feels a bit more authentic. The train was on time and comfortable. Tickets were easy to purchase and not expensive.

At the site itself I just walked around on my own. If doing this I suggest buying a map of the site to help orientate yourself, and heading straight for the "popular" rooms like where the hair, glasses and prostheses are, and the one with the scroll of all the names. These are really poignant but they fill up later in the day with large groups and it can become a bit of a crush which means you lose some of that time to stand and reflect. I can't comment on whether the tours are worthwhile or not because I didn't do one, but the ones I saw were very large groups and I'm not sure that there was much time to really look at things properly. I'm sure they would have had some interesting stories however to help bring the site to life. I didn't buy a map to

begin with and found myself kind of wandering aimlessly.

The other mistake I made was not taking with me a train and bus timetable. It meant that when I was ready to leave I didn't know whether the train, bus or minibus was coming first and had to just take a punt and choose a stop to wait at. I chose wrong and had to wait about half an hour for the bus.

Last tip: Definitely go to Auschwitz II-Birkenau. There is so much to see there and it is much more spread out and quiet so you can really walk around undisturbed and reflect. Because of this I found I got more out of this part than the Auschwitz I site which was unfortunately just a bit too crowded, even in late October.

54. An experience

We booked this tour through escape2poland.com which was great. Pick up and drop off was done from our apartment. At Auschwitz we were greeted by our tour guide who assigned us to a same language group and gave us headphones to hear her talk. Going through the camp was interesting, so much history and insight into what the Nazis thought was a moral thing to do to win the war. There is an airy silence across the whole site and few times I was taken aback by what I saw. At the end you were given time to walk around by yourself to take it all in or take photos. You're allowed to take photos but in certain areas the guide told us we weren't allowed out of respect.

Overall it was an experience I'm glad I've got, to see the mass size of the sight. An example of this are the beds that held up to 10 people, me alone would not have fit in the bed I can't imagine being in their shoes. I understand how easy I have it from visiting.

55. Indescribable, incomprehensible.

I visited Auschwitz in March 2014 with my two older brothers (42, 45) and my father who is 68.

I think the fact that I was there with most of my family made it all the more upsetting somehow. How many families went through the gates, and never came out.

We visited on the Tuesday, I drove from Krakow and took a little over an hour. We decided to do the four-hour tour, and our guide was an older woman and was very knowledgeable and answered all questions thoroughly, very honestly and confidently. We did not get to see into all the brick barracks in Auschwitz I that house different displays and exhibitions, however.

There followed a short bus trip that brought us to Birkenau, the sheer size of which absolutely blew me away. It is staggering. To stand in front of the archway under which so many people were brought to their death, and which I have seen and studied for many years was indescribable. Surreal.

As we walked out of one of the women's barracks, the group was silent. As I was holding the door for a girl behind me, a lone child outside called out for his mother. "Mama!!, Mama!!!". It may seem strange to say, but that is my abiding memory of the place. How many times had children like that little one shouted those words there. It was haunting, upsetting.

When we were talking in Krakow on the following Thursday evening about what to do on the Friday, my eldest brother said "Ya know I wouldn't mind going back to Auschwitz again" The four of us looked at each other, and we agreed we'd go back the following day. I drove out again, and instead of doing the tour again, we decided to just do our own thing.

I spent another 4 hours walking around the camp. On my own, with my own thoughts. We stayed in Auschwitz I this time, and I visited everything there was to visit, read everything there was to read, seen everything there was to see. I'm glad I done it - the tour on the Tuesday was very overwhelming, it was hard to take everything in. It is still impossible to comprehend everything that happened there, but I am so glad that I took the opportunity to go back.

It's 4 months ago now since I was in Poland, and it's a beautiful country, with lovely people. But it feels like only yesterday that that little child wascalling out, looking for his mam. I'll never forget the feelings I had in that place.

And I hope the world never forgets either.

56. Amazing!!

This is one of, if not the best tour I have ever done. Thought provoking and very touching. Our tour guide Lukas was very good and had a great deal of knowledge. It was a very long tour which lasted 3 and a half hours in total with a maximum off 32 degrees Celsius. Although we were outside for a majority of this tour it was one of the best experiences. You also take a trip to Birkenau during the tour which is probably more what you expect to see when doing this trip. Auschwitz was definitely not what Iexpected a concentration camp to be like but I'm glad I did this tour. This is a must when travelling to Krakow!!

57. Everyone should exprience this

We booked the trip through the hotel but you can get it cheaper elsewhere. The tour was well organised, we were picked up from our hotel, it takes about an hour to get there - we were also shown a film on the way. The English speaking guide was very good but it did feel a little rushed at times, I would have liked more time to read some of the exhibits and reflect on what I was seeing; there are a lot of tours going on at the same time though so I think that's why they have to keep it moving. I was particularly struck by the Birkenau camp when we walked in the footsteps of all those people unknowingly heading for the gas chambers. It's hard to imagine the atrocities that occurred here even though I have read about it and now seen the place first hand but I'm glad I did go, not only from an education point of view, but also to give me perspective when I'm moaning about the small things in life.

58. Everyone should visit this place

We stayed in Krakow for the weekend and booked our tour via the internet with Krakow Tours . The driver turned up at our hotel at exactly the time we were told and took us first to Birkenau ,the tour guide arrived about 15minutes after us and the tour started.

Birkenau was fascinating and our guide made the experience interesting , these poor people were treated so badly it is unbelievable , mans inhumanity to man....I wouldn't recommend this tour to people who have trouble walking long distances as the place is massive and to be honest everyone was glad to get back to the mini bus for a wee rest!

We then went to Auschwitz 1 and weren't prepared for the sights we saw, the rooms full of human hair, the specs, the brushes, the personal belongings the rows upon rows of photographs of these poor young and old people who were murdered by the Nazis but the most most poignant was the gas chambers, this place will be in my mind till Idie...it was horrid.....disturbing...evil.....there is no words to describe this place.....

I love history and have watched loads of programmes and read several books about Auschwitz - Birkenau , I thought these places wouldn't effect me.....how wrong was I....but I will say I'm glad I went ...I'm glad I saw how Inhumane and brutal the National Socialists movement

in Germany was and how evil their leaders were.....it humbles me to think our parents and grandparents fought to defeat this tyrant...

59. A must see for anyone.

We booked to go with Krakville which was 99pln each, this included a bus there an english guide, a bus from Auschwitz to Birkenau and then back to Krakow. We left at 10.30 am and got back at 5pm.

I'm not as interested in history as much as my wife but I'm glad I went. It really is a must see for everybody. I want to go back to Auschwitz again because as we were with the guide we didn't go into every building available so next time we'll spend more time there, as 2 - 2 and a half hours wasn't enough.

60. Hard to 'rate' but worth seeing

There are plenty of tour operators who offer trips at a fair price, around £25 in some cases. The actual entry into the museum is only 40 zloty (between 10am-3pm) and Birkenau is free so don't be conned by operators charging more - get the local train for 19 zloty return.

when I arrived at Auschwitz museum the queue was over 100m long so I walked the 3km to Birkenau, the free part of the museums.

Birkenau is the main killing factory with the infamous train track and watch tower seen in many photos. It is over 45 acres in size and you can wonder around at your leisure rather than being hurried through Auschwitz Museum by the tour guides. There is lots to see such as the ashes ponds and insides the bunks, as well as the gas chambers which have been blown up but the remains still partially stand.

A very open area so bring an umbrella if weather is dodgy, was glad it rained when I was there as it's not the place to enjoy a sunny day out! Important to be respectful too - lots of tourists aren't and I saw people climbing and walking off track onto the fields to take pictures - don't be that person!

61. A day of mixed emotions and learning

A truly emotional day exploring how humans can be so good and bad. From the minute the tour starts you'll be captivated and shocked at the treatment of the inmates. As a hesitant visitor cajoled by my wife I'm so glad I made this journey and I will be forever grateful for my lot in life. A must visit for every adult.

62. An upsetting but not to be missed experience

I visited Auschwitz Birkenau with my Mum and although it was upsetting I'm so glad I did. Hearing stories from grandparents about war times and learning about the 2nd World War at school many moons ago could never really have prepared me for this experience. To see how innocent human beings were treated was truly awful and harrowing! The inhumanity and cruelty really was hard to comprehend. It must never be allowed to be forgotten as it would be an insult to all of those who died at the hands of those animals! To think that there is discussion in England about removing it from school syllabuses is also a disgrace and should never happen. What was also disgraceful was the group of Americans in our tour group who did not seem able to follow simple instructions of when photographs were not permitted and thought it was acceptable to take happy/smiling group photos in the standing cells and other areas. It amazed

me the lack respect that some people have! A truly moving experience that I will never forget or ever want to forget!

63. Deeply moving experience.

I have wanted to go to Auschwitz for some years and always thought I was prepared for the experience, but I don't think anyone can prepare for the horrifying and emotional sights Auschwitz gives. We decided on an independent tour, taking a local bus, buying the cheap guide book on arrival which proved extremely helpful in explaining both Auschwitz and Birkenau. The organised group tours were crowded, even in low season and we felt we made the right and far cheaper choice. Both Auschwitz and Birkenau are deeply moving places and I was shocked at how evocative and emotional the exhibitions and sights were. Despite this, it is a must see if only to pay respects to those who lost their lives there but also to gain a greater insight into the horrors of the Nazi regime. Nothing can prepare you for this visit but expect to be horrified and moved beyond belief. I'm glad to have visited but the images will stay with me for a very long time. That's what you should be prepared for.

64. This should be a must see for everyone, it is so moving.

Sorry for the delay in submitting this. You are visiting two separate sites (if you wish) - Auschwitz #1 is the brick built barracks blocks seen in the film Schindler's List; this is the main site with the gates and slogan '*Arbeit Macht Frei'.

Auschwitz #2 (Birkenau) is visited by a free bus service to and from #1 site...this is a vast site of wooden bunk blocks with the memorable straight railway line, the brick arch entering the between two compounds, which many may relate to the name Auschwitz.

*This slogan is also placed over the gates of Site #1 and I understand others as well.

My wife and I visited here on 8.8.13. on one of the hottest days of August (40 deg.). We arrived independently with no formal tour booked, in mid morning and the official carpark was nearly full. There are several unofficial carparks on the way in, but we ignored them.

Everything is extremely well organised from the tickets/and headset issues through to the cafeteria and the bus service.

Take at least one bottle of water with you if it is a hot day, you'll be glad you did as you cannot easily break out of a guided tour. We also visited the cafeteria towards the end of the visit which was nothing special, but it was a hot day and they were getting ready to close up. So take a sandwich with you as well.

We also visited the bookshops and didn't find them particularly attractive I'm afraid. The two sites are the main attraction and we were not ready for the books which although interesting were more facts.

We paid and collected our headsets and went into the entry area. There must have been 70 people of many nations milling around in this compound; which in itself was ironic. We were waiting for our English speaking Polish guide and I wish I could remember our guide's name as she was a lovely lady who proceeded to take us around the main points of the 'generic' camp in and out of various buildings, explaining as she did exactly where we were and what had occurred there. This tour took about one and a half hours. I have put this as 'generic' because later on it was possible to return and view 'specific' exhibitions on one's own pace and unaccompanied.

Having completed our 'generic' tour, our guide took us on one of the buses to #2 Site and spent another half hour with us before leaving us to look around. This site is so vast one could spend

all day walking and not cover it, so most people stayed at the arrival end and looked around there.

When we returned to #1 Site I visited three of the 'specific' blocks of exhibits; which had been given over to different Nationalities - The Polish, Belgian and French. Each block had dealt with the subject in a different manner which made the content refreshing and interesting (given that we had already had nearly 3 hours of this visit). I wish I had more time to visit these.

Many of the booklets we'd researched stated one cannot take photos. This appears to have changed and may be incorrect...there are a few places which our guide told us were prohibited; such as scenes of martyrdom or the main sites of execution.

The rest of the time you must be aware of the feelings of other members of your group who may be descendants and require special understanding.

Our guide briefed us thoroughly at the start and then related everything in a professional and clear manner and had obviously done a lot of research into her job. We asked her whether she received any counselling supervision for her work as we imagined it must be harrowing with some groups. She said that none of the guides do and all guides are freelance. Also this is the most satisfying work she has ever done and one of her highlights was an elderly semi deaf S. African who arrived in summer clothes to minus 10 degrees and she took him around on his own....that must have been very special!

Be prepared to walk at least two to two miles and sometimes on uneven ground. Some of the exhibits are on first and second floors or in basements, and I didn't see any proper wheelchair access. Please ring and check if you need this.

I personally don't think I would take a child/juvenile as they may get bored quickly and that would destroy the visit.

All explanatory signs are in at three languages - Polish, English and I think Hebrew.

Each group can be 20-30 people and there can be several groups going through a building at a time viewing the exhibits, so be patient it really is worth it.

Am I glad we went? Absolutely I think everyone should see this and remember it forever.

Will I go again? Probably in a couple of years time.

Lastly, I know that over 6 million died here and that last year over 6 million visited this place! The trustees are achieving their aim to make sure everyone remembers these awful acts. Please keep this going by visiting

65. Sombre, emotional, hard to believe, but not to be missed.

Made a trip to Krakow especially to see Auschwitz. I grew up hearing about WWII and what the Nazis had done, especially to the Jewish people, but to see and hear about it in person was a very sobering experience. It made it so real for me to try to imagine what it must've been like. Mind-blowing to think that Hitler could've convinced people to treat other people like that. I'll never forget it, but I'm glad that I went; excellent reminder to the world to never let that happen again.

66. Humbling....Must see

While visiting Krakow, my friend and I decided to book a tour to Auschwitz, and I'm glad we did.

It's located about an hour and a half away from downtown Krakow. I don't know how easy it would be to get there on your own, but we were on a tour bus, and he knew the way around very well.

When we began our tour through Auschwitz, you immediately feel amazed and shocked that you are actually standing on the same ground where all these atrocities happened. Our tour guide was a Polish man, and spoke great English. He was so knowledgeable, and answered any question that anyone had about the history.

The entire tour was about 3 hours of all walking. Be sure to bring good shoes, bottled water, and a snack because there is nowhere to stop for food while on the tour. Only in between tours of Auschwitz and Birkenau.

It is a very humbling, and haunting experience. There were things in there that I heard about on TV, but never would have imagined to see in real life. I will never forget the tour that I took there. I think everyone should go see it while staying in Krakow. You won't regret it.

67. A Sad Place but a Must Visit

I wasn't sure if I was going to take a bus or train here myself but I'm glad I chose to go with a tour out of Krakow. They picked us up door to door and it wasn't that expensive. It costs more than going on your own but you don't have to worry about whether you'll get a seat or not for the ride there and back. Also, our mini bus was very comfortable. We got a very good English guide who really knew his history about every exhibit and room. He explained everything and walked at a moderate pace. Even though it was a sad day, it is a place that I am happy I was able to see. It's a lot of walking at Auschwitz I and II but it's something you'll never forget.

68. Very Humbling!!!

Just writing to concur with previous reviews.

A place which everyone should have on their places to visit.

A very humbling experience.

Just to add a BIG thank you to our guide Meryk (Hope I've spelt this correctly)

It's a shame though that some groups wish to disgrace the British people.

We arrived just as a bus load of lads from Wales turned up swigging from their cans of lager (had witnessed the same the day before from this bunch in Krakow square) then proceeded to stagger around for the duration of their tour, although I think they had it cut short.

An absolute disgrace!!!!!!

We aren't all like this I'm glad to say

69. excellent place for learning

A must see if you are visiting Poland, the museum tour gave a great in depth details about the history of this prison site. Those stories give me goosebumps but I'm glad that I took on the trip on my own after missing the hotel tour bus. I highly recommend this. The bus from Krakow takes approximately 1.5hrs from the main bus station, do expect lots of walking during the tour and prepare umbrella and warm clothing if it is a rainy day as I was shivering during the tour! Thank God I have my umbrella!

70. Reflective and humbling

I wasn't keen to visit but my partner really wanted to go, I'm now glad I went but it was a very humbling experience.

We booked the tour before we left England and were picked up from our hotel and taken direct to Auschwitz where we met our guide and we were given headsets to hear her. The guide spoke very good English and was very knowledgeable. The tour took us all around the camp and there is lots to see, some of the areas you visit consist of pictures whereas some contain actual things owned by prisoners and these were very moving.

The most moving area for me was the long walls containing photographs of all the prisoners and dates of how long they survived, also the pictures of small children was also hard to see.

As part of the tour we also went over to Birkenau, although smaller than Auschwitz it was equally as moving.

Wouldn't be the easiest place to negotiate for those with mobility problems as it's exactly as it was and hasn't been made into a tourist attraction so some areas have rough terrain.

I would recommend a visit as it really does make you think about the history and how fortunate we are today and it certainly makes you think. I can't deny though, it is a very moving and emotional experience

71. everyone should visit this place!

We went to Auschwitz with one of the tour companies in Krakow and spent about 3.5 hours there. Everything there was shocking, very emotionally draining, and sad, but I'm truly glad I had a chance to visit. Our tour guide at the museum was very knowledgeable and informative, but I really wish we hadn't rushed through all the sites and had had more time to reflect the lives of the victims and their families. As other reviewers have already mentioned, I think everyone should visit this place at least once in their lifetime. Very educational and possibly life-changing.

72. Should be on everyone's bucket list.

So much has already been said in detail. Both sites are a must do at least once in a lifetime and will leave you with so much to think about. The immense ability of man to be so inhumane and cruel beggars belief even if you have read all about the camps-nothing prepares you for the scale of sacrifice and depravity and suffering in one place on Earth.

I'll mention more about the negatives just to prepare people but do not let this detract from the site. It's a genuine experience and I'm sure this will be different for every visitor.

My biggest gripe is the lack of facilities for disabled people. Getting around is not easy especially in wheelchairs. Many exhibitions are upstairs and facilities including toilets are via stairs. For a world heritage site this basically isn't good enough. Poland needs to put a lot of thought into how to improve this and noting how much efforts other countries must do regarding access I'm surprised that it can be allowed to be so bad.

Secondly all tours are escorted and are usually pretty hurried. Go expecting this and understanding that over a million visit every year. It's just the way it is. The tours are good and knowledgeable. If you feel you want to read every post, spend time reflecting and so on maybe arrange to stay locally, spread the trip over a few days or arrange a taxi or car hire so you are not so tied.

I visited with ²Poland who were excellent.

I spoke to a very religious man at the site who I was glad to spend some moments with. He felt strongly that the site should not be open at all on the basis that so many had been murdered and that it should be seen as a shrine or graveyard. We disagreed, I strongly believe that everyone on earth should be taken to the camps, so that we learn that without law and accountability for all

we are capable of monstrous acts of barbarity. I look at the news and look at Syria and wonder have we changed at all. That was my sadness the fact that even today we are still capable of cruelty and often incapable as a race of stopping it. So I understand the deep faith of some regarding the site but the site also has lessons and significance to all of us and as such we all must have the right to visit and I hope learn. But I do agree that a place of such awful suffering and death should be treated with respect at least when visiting and I'm sure most people do just that.

Both sites are very different yet equally interesting. Don't just do one unless you have to.

Personally I found Birkenau the more intense purely on the sheer scale of the place.

Of all the places I have visited this impacted me most and the memories will be everlasting.....

73. A must do in a lifetime

We went on this trip as we felt it was something you need to do. But even though I've heard about what happened to people here you can never imagine it. It was extremely moving & I'm glad I have done it but def a very somber experience. We did the tour starting at Auschwitz & then on to Birkenau (via organised tour bus) & our guide was Anna, her knowledge & way she told us what happened made you realise how horrific it was there. She had a way of making you realise how bad it was & you still would never imagine the horrors. The whole tour took about 4hrs but that wasn't long enough as there were still buildings & rooms we hadn't seen & didn't get time to see. The displays they have, hit you & can be very upsetting along with the pictures of prisoners & seeing when they went into camp & when they died. The gas chambers & crematorium are just horrific, & when you're at Birkenau the walk along the platforms to the gas chambers & memorial, thoughts are horrible, and you realise how lucky you are. A must do but bear in mind that this place will effect you, the thoughts & pictures, seeing the faces of those who died from babies to old people. It's awful. But it's amazing that how the snow & cold made it very reflective & how there weren't many people so you had time to absorb the experience

74. Haunting

I have read many books about Auschwitz and have always felt I wouldn't want to visit it, but I am very glad that I have been. I found the sheer enormity and scale almost too difficult to comprehend.

Our guide was excellent, the way she put across the information in such an informative and heartfelt way. I'm afraid I don't know her name. I shall never forget her saying that now we would walk the path that the prisoners walked to the gas chamber at Birkenau.

I found the huge glass wall of human hair almost too difficult to walk past. The inside of the huts at Birkenau were distressing. The thing I found the most haunting was filing through the gas chamber and thinking about all the people who were gassed there through no fault of their own.

I think this is a trip that everybody should do and saying you couldn't bear it is not good enough. Millions of people had no choice.

On a practical note, there isn't very much time on arrival, and in between Auschwitz and the Birkenau tour and then at the end to get anything to eat if you are on a tour. We only managed a chocolate bar and some water. But the prisoners of Auschwitz didn't even have this.

75. sobering place but amazing

I was unsure whether to visit here at first but I'm so glad I did .my husband and I booked through our hotel (Chopin).the tour company was CRACKOW TOURS .we were picked up at our hotel about 8 am .a few pick ups along the way.then made our way to the camp , en route we were all

shown a short 50 min film about the history of the camp ...an eye opener for sure. once at the camp we were shown to our camp guide area (we were a group of about 20), we were all given a headset each, our guide was called Evelina, an amazing girl who had a vast knowledge of this place and her information was put across to us in a heartfelt, 'put yourself in their place' kind of way ...which you do need to do in my opinion, the part of the camp where you see the piles of hair, bags, shoes, glasses, brushes etc really are quite hard to take in ...I had a good cry at some parts, this is not the place for you if you do not want to see a horrific yet amazingly historic place. it is the tour guide that makes this place for me ...she grew up in that area and knows survivors....hence her impassioned portrayal...there are some areas which photos are NOT allowed...a mark of respect ...one of our group flouted this rule which I found very offensive ...this is a place of reflection and huge respect must be given here. I have also e mailed the camp director to pass on our thanks to our guide.

wear comfy shoes and give yourself a full day ...possibly take a snack for lunch as you may not have enough time for a sit down lunch (only because there is so much to see and listen to) although I think that lunch will be the furthest thing from your mind when you start this tour...we were dropped off back at our hotel at about 4pm ...journey time is about 90 mins ...the Crackow tours guide was as equally as excellent it needs to be said ..highly organised with a lot of knowledge too

76. Very Crowded! But Very Educational.

We visited Auschwitz-Birkenau in October and enjoyed pleasant weather. I expected there to be fewer crowds at that time, but it was still very busy. Can't imagine how busy it gets in the summer months. The crowds take away some of the atmosphere, but the visit was still great, sobering and very educational. Such a sad memory of what happened here.

We tried to book a private tour a few days ahead of time, but they could not accommodate our request. So we took a general guided tour of both sites. Our guide was excellent and spoke very good English. Auschwitz was fascinating with the original structures and original crematorium, jail block and death yard (death wall). It was very tough to see some of the sites, but I'm glad we did.

Everyone should visit here once in a lifetime as a reminder of how to respect humankind.

77. Harrowing, but a very worthwhile experience.

Very upsetting at times. The guides are very knowledgeable and are happy to answer any questions you may have. It really has to be seen to be believed, there is a feeling there that cannot be accurately described. Very interesting, and I'm glad I went.

We went with Escape2Poland, and would definitely recommend them. (They also do airport pick ups- they were great)

78. Incredible

Very thought provoking. Everyone should visit this museum as part of life's learning experiences.

We visited in temperatures just below zero, in warm clothing, but there were no complaints as you hear what the inhabitants lived like and what they went through.

The piles of possessions, shoes and human hair moves you to tears.

A fantastic but solemn experience.

Not meant to wow you, but to inform you.

We travelled with Escape2poland, we were picked up from our hotel and watched a video of a Russian photographer whom filmed the liberation and his interview of what he saw and

experienced. This video set the scene of a very very good tour.
I'm so glad we booked this and would urge everyone to see this.

79. A Harrowing Experience but we're †glad‡ we went

We used Krakville Tours for our visit. We travelled in an air-conditioned minibus to Auschwitz so the small number in our group made it a more pleasant trip than the big coaches used by some operators. The journey from Krakow lasted around 1 hr 20 mins. The video we were shown on the way prepared us for the harrowing experience of the visit but nothing can compare with actually being there. It's not something you enjoy, but we were glad we went. The services of an English speaking guide were included in the total cost. Previous reviewers have mentioned groups of 50 but we were divided into groups of no more than 16. Each visitor receives a pair of headphones and a radio receiver which is tuned into a different channel for each guide. The guide can thereby explain everything to his/her group without having to shout and this maintains the necessary respect for the surroundings. It was crowded and the groups had to keep moving but it still took us 3 hours to see Auschwitz and Birkenau so if you want to see more at a slower pace I can only suggest a return visit, this time without using a guide. I strongly recommend using a guide on a first visit. Our guide explained clearly the dreadful things that went on and I'm sure I wasn't the only one close to tears. At one point you stand near the railway track at the exact place where a photograph in front of you was taken showing a group of mothers and children who were told that they were on their way to a shower before being rehoused. In reality within 2 hours they would all have been gassed and cremated. This memorial must be preserved so that future generations aren't allowed to forget what happened and the necessity to protect

80. Everyone must see!

How some people can say that it never happened, is beyond me.! Both Auschwitz 1 and 2 are free to enter. A guided tour you must pay for, anyone that goes to the museums between 10 and 3 must take a guided tour. You are not allowed bags, so dont forget to drop it into the bag holding place for 2pln, also the toilets are 1pln. Tours are in english all the time so you dont have to wait long, the average size of the group is 30 people. The tour for 2 students was 60pln in total. It lasts for 3 hours, 2 hours in Auschwitz 1 and the last hour in Auschwitz 2. The bus to Auschwitz 2 is free whether you are with a tour or not, you can just hop on whenever you want. It is very busy from 10 to 3, I'm glad we had a guide, he told us alot of stuff that wasn't wrote on the signs, but it was very busy with 3,4,5 groups of people all trying to get into the same buildings, we came back after 3 and strolled around ourselves, we saw more buildings that the tour doesnt go into. In Auschwitz 2, make sure to take your time and see all the site. Mant people just go down to the end of the train tracks but dont go beyond, it is massive, follow the path at the back towards the woods and you will find many sites were ashes are left, and the Kanada block. Most of all, have respect, I heard a boy asking his parents could he take rocks form Auschwitz to sell them on Ebay to get rich..come on like!

81. A Sombre Lesson From History

Whilst a visit to Auschwitz - Birkenau could never ever be described as a pleasurable experience it is one i'm glad we made and it will live forever in my memory as a lesson to one of the lowest points of human history.

We were shown a documentary film on the bus as we travelled on the coach from Krakow to Auschwitz which took about an hour to get to. It was a good preparation for the rest of the visit. On arrival at the visitor centre it was very busy but once they got you organised you were given a head set to listen to your tour guide as you were taken around the camp. This camp was not

like what i expected and was two storey brick buildings. You were taken inside several of them and saw conditions the prisoners were kept and other moving exhibits such as piles of personal effects taken off the inmates which the nazi's had not transported back to germany before the camp's liberation. You see the execution wall which was used on some inmates, which has flowers and candles left and are also able to walk through the only remaining gas chamber although some might find this part too much.

After going briefly back on the bus you were taken to the Birkenau site about a mile away.

Apart from the the brick entrance building the rest of the camp was the wooden huts i was expecting. Parts of the site had been destroyed by the nazi's in an attempt to conceal evidence of their crimes but enough of the place remained on what was an enormous site.

I'd heard that no bird sing's in this place and even though the area is semi rural it was true in fact i did not even see a single bird at either site.

All in all a truly moving and unforgettable visit.

82. What more can anybody say!

This is my second visit to Auschwitz but my first to Birkenau. I first visited Auschwitz as a teenager with my friends and found it an utterly moving experience but often wondered if I had taken it all in. I've since studied the topic and now know in greater detail what exactly happened and more importantly why. I still struggle with how it was ever allowed to happen but this is not the place to debate this. Many words have been written about how one feels so I won't repeat them here. Over the years I've always said I wished to go back. I wanted to see what my perspective would be as the years have passed and my knowledge has increased. I also felt a need to visit Birkenhau – my Auschwitz experience somehow not complete! I am so glad I did and therefore would recommend people to visit both sites. Some of my friends say it would 'upset' them too much if they visited. I respect this but also believe that to some extent this is the reason to visit – we shouldn't avoid reality, there are too many people willing to say it never happened or to dismiss it as something trivial; I think everybody should see what man can achieve when left unchecked! If you are wavering as to whether or not to visit I would strongly urge you to visit.

This time I got the opportunity to visit Birkenau. This part of the camp is far more realistic than Auschwitz. It's the part that most will have seen in films and pictures etc. It's the second camp and the main extermination facility and which was mostly wooden barracks most of which were destroyed. I felt I had missed this important part during my first visit, and although it is a dreadful place, I would strongly encourage you to take the short journey to this camp. Passing through the gates, then walking along the rail line the carriages containing the prisoners would have used is hard to describe. Being told by the guide that as the prisoners got off the carriage it was at this point that they were either sent left to immediate extermination or right to hard labour by a simple show of thumb is difficult to accept. How could anyone have been part of this? Birkenhau is quite large. You are able to enter some of the huts and see the squalid living conditions. You are able to visit the memorials beside the demolished gas chambers – this is quite stomach turning. The scale of the place and how it was organised for mass murder and getting the very last ounce of energy from each and every prisoner was for me disturbing. Our tour did not have time to ascend the tower at the gate but others did – the reason given was one of time so I suppose it's luck of the draw or maybe something that you have to specifically request.

Auschwitz itself (the main camp and now museum) was originally a Polish cavalry barracks.

The buildings are brick built and most have survived. So too did the gas chamber and even the commandant's house where he raised a family, unbelievably next to this camp where such suffering and misery took place. The camp, which is now a museum, incorporates exhibits from all over the original Auschwitz - Birkenau complex and for the most part it is done extremely well. Many reviews will explain in far greater detail what can be witnessed and each will have their own particular leaning to what is significant for them. For me, on my second visit, it was the cell of Father Maximilian Kolbe, the Catholic priest, who gave his life in return for that of another prisoner. To see the cell where he died and to witness the drawing of a cross on the wall, whether one believes in religion or not, is a truly remarkable testament to the faith of this man who despite everything going on around him still believed.

Many aspects of the 'museum' have changed since my last visit and to some extent, and I feel wrong for saying this, but the site is becoming somewhat sanitised and gaining more of a 'museum' feel rather than the rawness of what actually happened, something still available from a visit to Birkenau – probably for the best but it is changing. I suppose, given that my first visit was just after the iron curtain had come down, that this is to be expected but I hope that the museum remains its rawness and doesn't remove too many aspects from public view. One of the things I remembered from my first visit was a whole section of a building's wall containing children's shoes, toys and clothes etc. This moved me tremendously and I was working up to seeing this again; however these items are now contained in a small display case – still harrowing but shows how it is changing. I also remember going through the main entrance of the gas chamber and then passing the cremators etc – and then having the relief of exiting at the other end, something denied to the prisoners. However this time you could only enter at the cremators (exit). Again, this is enough for most but is another example of how the museum is changing and the experience you have differs. I'm sure there are valid reasons for such actions but it is an observation I noted.

If this is your first visit to Auschwitz then I would recommend you take a guided tour, either from the city you are staying in, such as Krakow, or one provided by Auschwitz itself. Yes, there are times when you are quickly moved through the various areas but the tour guide does explain the history and reality of life at the camp. Perhaps on a second visit you wouldn't need this and can spend more time at parts that have more significance to you. Walking past various buildings I noticed blocks dedicated to various sections of society and countries. We must always remember that other faiths and sections of society fell victim to the Nazi regime. Auschwitz as a whole is simply an experience like no other – it provokes so many thoughts. The emotion of walking into the main gas chamber and cremation area is quite disturbing to the soul and something you will never quite forget.

Review level: VERY GOOD (83 – 103).

83. Harrowing but informative

It's so important to learn about something so awful to prevent anything like this happening ever again, I felt obliged to visit and see for myself the conditions people were placed in. Very upsetting and harrowing, but I'm glad we went and learnt a lot from it.

84. 'Conveyor-belt' tourism and 'assembly-line' processing of visitors

I'm still trying to convince myself that my visit to Auschwitz was really worth the effort. On the whole, I think it probably was.

However, to my great disappointment, the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex is a site of 'conveyor-belt' tourism and 'assembly line' processing of visitors.

This historical, somber locale was clogged with tour buses, minivans, cars, motorcycles and bicycles. It was also swarming with thousands and thousands of tourists - almost ironic, given that 75 years ago, people were desperate to get out rather than to get in!

Attach the sticker to your shirt! Open your bag, please! Here are your headphones and receiver. Follow that guide over there!

Over there??? How long to figure out exactly where 'over there' is!!! Hundreds of tour guides and thousands of visitors all milling about 'over there'.

There was very little time to read exhibit labels. It was difficult to get photos that weren't cluttered with hordes of people. Many of the guides seemed like automatons, churning out rote, monotone presentations. There was no time at all for quiet reflection!

Having said that, I can't really suggest a viable solution to any of these problems. Maybe a DIY during 'off hours'?

To my great surprise, I, myself, felt rather 'detached' from the whole Auschwitz experience. Perhaps part of the problem was the sheer number of victims who perished there. My brain simply couldn't compute or maybe I've just become desensitised. I kept thinking of Dictator Josef Stalin's words: 'One death is a tragedy; a million is a statistic.'

Overall, I'm glad I went to this site. However, I can get a far better appreciation of Auschwitz's historic and historical significance by watching any of the many YouTube videos available on the Internet.

Suggestions re an on-site visit:

1. Wear sturdy walking shoes; ditch the flip flops and sandals. Surfaces are uneven and, in places, very difficult to navigate, particularly at the Birkenau site.
2. Take a good supply of zloty coins: using the WC costs 1.50 zloty.
3. Take a bottle of water! It can get very hot by midday.
4. Pick up the little guide booklet at the bookstore by the entrance. It costs 5 zloty, but can be very informative for those times when you simply cannot keep up with the fast-walking, fast-

talking 'real live' guide.

5. Do respect the rules and regulations regarding taking photographs. Photo privileges are quite generous, as it is. The only room that I saw that was off-limits for photos was the 'hair room'. But, predictably, there were still people clicking away at the piles of hair behind the glass. There is something really disgusting about these kinds of people.

85. †Glad† †I† went

We made our own way to Auschwitz rather than an organised tour as it's quite simple to do and very cheap, as well as not being tied to someone else's schedule. We got the bus from main bus station in Kraków, very cheap and took one and half hours journey. On arriving at Auschwitz we joined a guided tour, it was very good value at 40 slotys, and the guide was excellent in her information, her manner and her presentation. The whole experience was well presented and I'm glad I visited, and I would recommend others to do so.

86. A bit too Hollywood for me

I'm glad I went, but the experience was disappointing for me on a number of levels.

First, the crowds! We did visit on a Sunday, but our guide said it was always like that. This makes it hard to see things and really experience what it was really like for the people interred here.

Second, it is too rushed. I don't know whether they want visitors to experience a bit of what it was like for the prisoners, but we were herded in and out of places like sheep, with barely a moment to take in the extraordinary buildings and artefacts that were beautifully curated, and taking photos was just about impossible with all the crowds.

That was just Auschwitz. Then we went to Birkenau and it was almost the opposite. A long and tedious walk without being able to stop for any length of time down to the bombed out gas chambers, then without a minute to internalise or show respect for those who lost their lives here we were once again herded to the next viewing place.

Our guide was very knowledgeable (or at least knew her lines well) but I found her attitude a little crass at times, such as calling the 'death wall' a special place in a tone that almost made it sound like fun. Maybe she was just trying to keep it a bit light, but I didn't appreciate it.

In short, I feel that in the interests of serving mass visitors they have taken the heart and soul out of Auschwitz-Birkenau. This doesn't make it less important to see, but it was disappointing. A few years ago we visited Sachsenhausen near Berlin and it was a much more informative and moving experience.

87. Never Again Should Humankind Allow Atrocities Of This Magnitude!!!

We went on a guided English tour to Auschwitz and Birkenau during our visit to Krakow. This was arranged through Premier Tours.

The two concentration camps are full of indelible history arising from a sad chapter in the history of mankind. It is disturbing to note how deemed power and superiority complexes led to such levels of massacres and genocides.

There's lots of walking to be done. It therefore would help to wear comfortable shoes. The Auschwitz 1 tour lasted for about two hours while the Auschwitz 2 (Birkenau) tour took an hour to 1.5 hours. We came face to face with the stark reality that we had previously read about in history books, or watched in the movies.

The processes ranging from screening of the people, separating the strong from the weak as they arrived, the blatant torture, slave labour, general disrespect of human rights, deliberate non-provision of medical treatment to the sick, robbing the inmates off their belongings, poor sanitary and living conditions, all leave a lump in one's throat. Even the dead didn't escape the looting as

their teeth and hair were stolen from them.

It was so moving to note that innocent men, women and children were unwittingly led to their deaths in the gas chambers under the pretext of going to shower.

The partial destruction of the camps in a bid to cover up the evil deeds carried out was also astounding in a sad, sombre way.

I could go on and on. This is a place one needs to see, experience and learn from during one's lifetime. Despite the tragic issues associated with the camps, I'm nonetheless glad that I visited Auschwitz and Berkanau. The lessons learnt made me a better person in understanding the history from a different perspective, even though I was still left with lots of unanswered questions.

Never again should the human race allow tragedies of such magnitudes to happen under their watch.

This is a "must visit" place when in Krakow or the Oświęcim area.

88. Worth every Zloty

I'm glad we went. It's mind numbing at the time, the horror of what you see hits you later. I was pleased to see a lot of 'young adults' on the tours, and without exception, everyone was pretty silent and very respectful.

There's not a lot you can say about the experience, it's obviously an individual thing so I'm basing my review on practicalities rather than emotion.

I pre-booked a tour on the internet, it initially took a while to sort out as I was told they'd changed their booking system and we could only book in a few months time. But once the new system was up and running it was easy enough to book. I did a group booking for two which cost 250 Zloty (about €63), I was easily able to download the tickets online. But to be honest I wasn't yet quite sure what I had booked! Was it to join a bigger 'english' tour, were we on a private tour, or what!

We took our own car to Oświęcim. There are several parking areas, I'm not sure if they have different charges but we parked easily in the one clearly signposted as 'Museum parking' but be warned, you pay as you go in and they only accept Zloty. It cost 10 Zloty to park for the day (about €2.50).

We arrived at about 9.15 for our scheduled tour at 9.45 which was a good thing as security declared my very normal sized and almost empty handbag as too big! Only thing I could do was leave it in the car which was a bit of a pain and from what I could see totally pointless from a security point of view. It meant for the entirety of the tour I had to juggle with a hat, gloves, camera, tissues and money (all necessities for this trip). My advice is to take one of those small foldable "Longchamp type" bags. Go through security with the bag folded up to the small size, and wear everything else. Once you have passed through the security checks you can open up the bag and throw everything inside.

There were quite a lot of people about but it wasn't overcrowded and we didn't experience any problems with queueing. We were told that summer is very crowded so go in winter if you can. The biting cold and mud underfoot also put into perspective what those thousands of people faced in the camps on a daily basis. (Just add starving, no warm clothing/blankets, sadistic cruelty and in-humane conditions)

We were pleased to discover that the tour I'd paid for was .. just for the two of us and our own english-speaking guide.

Our guide Lydia was professional and explained things in minute detail. We travel independently and like to mosey around places on our own and without interference, but in this

instance we would have missed so many interesting facts and insights that Lydia was able to provide. Worth every Zloty!

After a couple of hours at Auschwitz I we had a quick coffee break. Sadly the facilities are sub-standard. Once again only Zloty are accepted, you can exchange euro there but the office appeared to be closed at lunchtime!

The authorities don't want you to take food or drink into the museum - fair-play but then they should provide adequate facilities!

It's a long and tiring day so have a flask of coffee or water in your car and take an energy bar or two!

After the short break, on to Birkenau. We would normally have been able to drive and park there, but because of the 70th memorial services the parking was closed so we took the free shuttle instead. It's about a 10 minute drive - I wouldn't attempt to walk it, as there is already a fair bit of walking to do once you are at Birkenau.

It was a pity not to be able to enter see the original arrival point, but the tent (for the memorial service) was in the process of being dismantled, so that area was out of bounds. The vastness and atmosphere of Birkenau is simply shocking. A lot of structures have already disappeared, our guide explained that they were built with no foundations and the area is damp and muddy so the structures are crumbling...I hope they manage to preserve and rehabilitate as much as they can so that all future generations can see this place for themselves.

Not that you need to be shocked any more than you are already are, but the stats of how many people were in a dorm/bed could be illustrated so well by having a portion of the room as a re-enactment scene.

All in all we were there for about 6 hours - not a nice day out, but every living soul on earth should visit here.

89. Don't bother booking a tour guide.

I have wanted to visit Auschwitz for many years and I'm glad I've now been. I had booked a tour as I didn't want to miss anything but I must say this was disappointing. I think it was free to enter, you only paid for a tour. The guide was good to start with but the tour was quite rushed. The group sizes were too big, luckily at Auschwitz we had headsets so it didn't matter if we were away from the guide we could still hear her. The main problem was, we caught up to the group in front and the one behind us caught up to us so in some places there were far too many people in the rooms and we could hear the other guides speaking to their groups which was very off putting. The guide from the group behind ours even pushed me in the back at one point as we obviously weren't moving along fast enough.

I felt that Auschwitz itself felt too touristy, seemed almost set up, the rooms should have been left in their raw state and not painted over. The most upsetting areas were the one's that hadn't been touched as it felt so real. It was still an emotional tour but nowhere near as sad as Birkenau, this will stay with me forever. The weather was awful, cold, heavy rain and snow, which only heightened the senses and brought home what horrors went on there. It is such a desolate place, eerily quiet and very moving.

We didn't get to see the Death Gate as it was covered as the 70th anniversary service had just been held there. The walk along the train tracks was heartbreaking, I was visualising what those poor souls were seeing as they got off the trains and actually walked in their footsteps.

The tour guide once again spoilt this part as we had no headsets this time and because of the weather she just rushed off ahead of the group, the only people who could hear her, on the two occasions she stopped, were the people next to her, she didn't wait for the rest of the group to catch up.

I will definitely be going back but will not bother with the tours, I would prefer to walk around in my own time.

Disappointingly the shops were shut by the time we got back to Auschwitz (we were on the 12:20 tour), it was a 3 hour tour, so I didn't have the chance to buy a book that I had wanted to pick up.

90. Auschwitz: The Dark Side of Human and History First Hand

This Dark Chapter of "Human History" sadly didn't start in 1939 or did finish in 1945 but the sheer brutality of this period demonstrated well in this place set out as museum like no others. So a visit must be a must on anybody's agenda .BUT YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED ; The whole visit is nearly a full day affair and I sincerely advise to go with an organised tour since most people are visiting that way and one can be lost or pushed out a bit . Most beneficial is the transport as is in "middle of nowhere" kind of thing and the security of a group ,guide ,designated transport etc worth considering. Need to take an earlier tour in the day than later ,have a good breakfast ,as not much on offer even with a tour and comfortable shoes and clothes and water are very useful. The price of the tour and the entry ticket DOES NOT INCLUDE the entry to the Toilets ! Which I found very strange for an State run establishment ! The cost is around \$30-35 .

91. Incredible and sobering site.

words don't really cover what this place was about. It was mind blowing and emotional, a place that everyone should visit and continue to share with later generations so that they can learn and not forget about the suffering humans can cause.

The visit was a little let tarnished by being racially abused and shouted at by a polish visitor. The gentleman who was abusing me didn't realise that my wife is polish and was able to translate everything he was saying. Oh well, just a little ironic that he visited this place but holds these out dated views that contributed to these kinds of places being created. Maybe the world still hasn't moved on as far as we thought....

92. Very good but very messy!

Off course it is very interesting. Great visit to understand what happened during this terrible time.

Great guide.

Big problems: it is extremely messy. not organised very well. They said we would have a guide in English at 09:30 and at 10:00 we were still waiting. When we asked about the guide they said that we have to wait until 10:30... Their reply was .. it is not our fault.

Very overcrowded and we were extremely surprised to see that they only have one visit a day for French, German or Russian speakers... Very surprising !!!!!

93. city trip in Krakau 1.

Auschwitz – Birkenau.

We went to Krakau in the year 2011 for a weekend trip, but so now in this time we wanted to talk about our experience!

The first place we have visited is the “Concentration Camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau”, which is divided in two parts. The first part is where the train arrived and the people were selected.

The biggest part of the camp is destroyed so a few Barak's are there, but only the fact of walking on that place is making you quiet.

After this you return to the “Museum” where you get a guided tour and a headphone so you can

hear the explanation in different languages?

The things you see there, you cannot imagine that they were done by human beings, the top of the hill is when you arrive in the place where they keep the "7000 Kg. human hair" they could put the hand on by the liberation of the camp, they do not know how many Kg. were destroyed before the liberation.

We can recommend this visit to the world, you should have seen this!

94. Emotional moving experience

Took the guided tour, it is so busy that the guide spent half the time explaining why it was cut short as groups were following. Auschwitz 1 was very busy and the exhibits powerful, the suffering unimaginable and brings the horrors previously only seen on TV to reality, real people like you and me with the same hopes and dreams. Auschwitz 2 was a far bigger complex and as such the herds going round were slightly apart, noticed that not one bird seen in or over this vast

95. Rugby scrum

Though I would recommend anybody to visit this important historical site I would say do it on your own without a tour company as it did feel rushed the groups being taken around the camps were far too big and they were moving along before you had a chance to read or see anything and the entrance was a free for all people pushing headsets everywhere needs organising better.

96. Harrowing

I felt I had to make this visit and I found it every bit as sad as I expected. I went to honour all those brave men, women and children who died there, it was the least I could do. We got there in our hotel taxi and we had our own driver for the day. Entry into Auschwitz is free but we opted to go round with a guide so we had to pay to join the guide. It was interesting going round the different blocks and there were about 16 in our party. There is a block where there is a display of hair belonging to all the prisoners of the camp. I found this very upsetting and felt it should have been buried. I didn't see the need for this as everything else is so graphic. I also missed out the SS block as they did such cruel things. I went to Birkenau and stood where the prisoners were sorted for life or death. I found the place strangely silent and there weren't any birds around even though there were trees. I found the whole experience very moving and couldn't help but say a quiet prayer for all those people who were so brave.

97. Tough history lesson

This is a place that everyone should visit at just once in a lifetime. You will learn how cruel humans can be... The belongings left by the exterminated prisoners, piles of their hair, glasses, empty cans of the poisonous gas... and a visit to a gas chamber. Words can hardly express what you will see and experience, especially if you just open your mind, listen to your tour guide and use your imagination. Then you'll understand what the holocaust was really about...

98. Haunting and informative

We toured Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau in Feb. 2014. Everything seems untouched by time. It is important to read up on the subject before arriving. We had a tour guide that had a very rehearsed script. There were no pauses for questions, which is a downside on such a poignant site. This is an important place to see and the information, pictures, and artifacts presented throughout are presented with clarity. There was one important omission, however. The lack of information about the death of the homosexuals at the camps was a great omission. The tour guide, again, was quite rehearsed to raise the questions about the actions of the individual officers who worked at the camps. While the guide was important to point out what

each building contained, and to set the atmosphere of each area of the camps we toured, it is also important to read about the facts of the Holocaust beforehand. Go, and expect to cry. On a practical note, there are ATMS and toilets (which cost 10 zloty). There are vending machines and a small kiosk to buy snacks, but no restaurant.

99. Everyone should visit at least once

Before we went to Auschwitz my friends from London where "easy" about going there, after the visit they admitted it should be seen by everyone at least once in their lives...that's how much they did not realize...It's a must see!

I've been to Auschwitz-Birkenau twice, both times with English speaking tour guides and although the museum "speaks" for itself I have to rate my first tour in 2012 higher, this time we were given perfect story of the camp, which is shocking, but for me it was lacking the more detailed description of relations between people in the camp. To better imagine what people went through in Auschwitz, apart from visiting the place I would recommend to read at least one book with memories of those who survived as that helps to build a fuller picture. Auschwitz-Birkenau is a must see!

100. Auschwitz -mixed feelings Birkenau -humbling

I have very mixed feelings about Auschwitz. It has been rebuilt so it looks like any army barracks. We went as independent visitors and frankly the guides are rude, they just push you out of the way to let their speed walking party through. Many of the barrack blocks are sponsored by various nations and much of the information was contradictory and confusing. Birkenau for me was so different. The camp was burnt by the Nazis and the liberating Russians. Some of the barrack blocks have been restored and the conditions are truly awful, the rest have been left so as far as the eye can see there are tjust he brick outlines and fireplace stacks of so many barracks where human beings were expected to survive in nothing more than striped PJs and on 200 calories a day - truly humbling. Go and see for yourself. If you need mobility access this may be a challenge

101. We should all see this

Visiting Krakow for three days this was top of my list of things to see. There are lots of information places in the city to book this tour. It cost 89 Pln which included an hours journey there and back, a guide And the shuttle bus between both camps.

I was moved by the whole experience, we had a very good guide Anna ,she was interesting and had compassion even though she must do this everyday.

If was extremely cold which made all the more realistic , especially when we got to Birkenau, such a huge vast bleak place.

There is only a small counter serving hot drinks and snacks, no cafe so I would suggest taking a packed lunch .

Definately worth a visit, it's a pity the world has not learnt from this terrible genocide.

102. Must-see, this is a shocking period of history which must not be forgotten

Firstly, everyone should visit the two camps (Auschwitz I & Auschwitz II-Birkenau) if presented with the opportunity. This is a very important and tragic part of history which must be remembered to ensure that it never happens again. I can't say that I enjoyed my visit as the sites are sad and confronting places. Everyone has their own experience.

I cannot give a full 5-star rating because of the way the tours are organised. Quite a few years

ago the Polish authorities decided not to charge entry to the memorial sites as they are so important that everyone should be able to visit. Although it is possible to visit on your own for free, it is designed in a way that you almost have to pay for a guide. I think it would be very difficult to see everything on your own, let alone get there, and you wouldn't get as much out of it without a guide. It would make it easier if there were more signs not only directing people to the sites, but also around the camps. Without a guide you would miss most of the important parts.

The tour wasn't bad, but the headsets which just about everyone has to wear kept malfunctioning. You will almost certainly get a Polish guide; our guide had okay English but not fluent.

Anyway, definitely visit, but you really do need to pay for a guide to get the most out of it, and I think this is unfortunate.

103. Haunting

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is a haunting tour. Be prepared to see just how many people were killed during Hitler's time--Jews, especially, and also Poles, and the children, oh, so poor innocent children. I will never forget the room that showed the hair of the people that they had killed. There was a tall pile of this and to think that this just came from one warehouse. The Nazis cut the hair of their victims and used the hair as fertilizer, insulation, etc. There were warehouses full of this along with spectacles. Imagine a mound of spectacles and to think that they belonged to that many people. The hair was especially gruesome. They are all gray by now because of the dust but photos of this exhibit show that there were blonde, brown, gray and black hair in this pile. It just makes it more tragic and more real. This museum shows you the horrors and the atrocity of the Nazis.

Auschwitz was very haunting--to see the makeshift buildings that the Jews were housed in, to hear the cruelty of the Nazis against them, was sobering and very sad. The whole place was heavy with tragedy. We thought that Terezin was bad and we went away from that tour with heavy hearts, but this was far worse. As one prisoner who survived both Terezin and Auschwitz wrote, Terezin was heaven compared to Auschwitz.

Review level: AVERAGE (104 – 191).

104. Little new for me

I have already seen two German Concentration camps and one Cambodian one. Auschwitz-Birkenau is supposed to be the best preserved and most informative of all of them but I didn't get that impression while we were there.

I suppose when you've already seen such a camp and realise the depths of depravity to which human beings can sink not a lot surprises you. Much of the grimmer aspects of Auschwitz was destroyed by the German authorities just before the end of World War 2 in an attempt to hide the evidence. What did remain and really shocked me was the living conditions under which the inmates were expected (or not expected - starvation was one "acceptable" method of extermination) to survive. The so-called beds were just shelves stacked three high and about 6 feet long and 10 to 12 feet wide. That meant that up to 10 people would be lying side by side on these shelves and it does not take much imagination to see how the ones in the lower bunks would suffer with diseases like dysentery present in the inmates lying above.

We were on a trip organised through our hotel. The cost was about £30 which included the 80 minutes transport from our Krakow hotel, admission and guide. There is a security check on entry. These places are still meccas for some Neo-Nazis. You should be prepared for an arduous day. One person in the group was wearing a GPS logger and we walked either four and a half miles or four and a half kilometres during our visit. Temperatures were about zero and there was snow and ice about. That brings home to you just how the inmates must have suffered in their thin clothing in even lower temperatures.

I don't think I'll bother to see any more such camps (did you know there were about 40,000 of them?) as I learn little new with each succeeding visit. This was the busiest with hundred of visitors daily, so it is good that people are still prepared to be reminded of just how inhumane certain regimes can be. If you haven't been to a concentration camp before by all means go. Such atrocities should never be forgotten.

105. Tragic History

It is a tragic part of history but one that needs to be understood and no better than to see it first hand and understand what people went through. Walking through the Auschwitz provides a glimpse of what transpired but no one can really understand the horrors that occurred here although there is

106. Way too crowded

I wanted to see Auschwitz out of respect for those that died there. I was hoping for a 'shrine' to their memory. I am still glad I went and would recommend that everyone goes to be reminded of the atrocities that occurred under the Nazis and that should never be allowed to occur again. What I did not like was the crowds and crowds of people and the 'over touristy' nature of the tour. There was very little time and space for personal reflection. Despite this, you should consider a visit but it's not for everybody.

107. Tips for individual visitors

Long awaited day trip we made to Auschwitz. Accessing the sites are free of charge but you need to book in advance from the available timeslots. We made a 2pm booking available for individuals, means no guide joining us. Parking is easy around Auschwitz 1 for ~10PLN for the day. With your pre booked ticket you can advance to the entrance skipping the long lines. I

recommend to buy a guide book for a few zlotys available on multiple languages which really guides you thru building by building and room by room. Be careful with the timing this time of the year as it gets dark around 16:30. We spent 2hrs at site 1 (luckily they let us enter before 2pm). Make the visit with respect, many visitors forgot this with being noisy, loud, joking or doing selfie under the "arbeit macht frei" sign. No comment.

There is a free bus going to site 2 / Birkenau. This is huge ! We wanted to see the very back of the site too and ended up in the dark being the last two visitors. The last bus back to site 1 (where parked the car) left by 16:30 which was disappointing. Thanks to the bookshop guy, we managed to call a taxi. Be prepared - come early or park your car around.

Well, no matter if you are protestant, catholic, jewish, buddhist or else it is worth to see as it is not only about the Jewish holocaust, it's way beyond that.

108. Too many people - the number ought to be limited

This, of course, is a historic place and should be preserved, but the number trudging through the place should be curtailed. People are literally jostling, especially inside the barracks and the aisles of the crematoria, etc. Please mind that this is a 1.5-hr. drive from Krakow in Poland.

109. Excellent museum, shame about the crowds

We took the bus to Auschwitz from the main bus station behind Krakow Główny train station. It is really easy to get to, just follow the signs through the train station. We got the 8:05am bus and bought tickets from the ticket booth on the ground floor of the bus station. It was 14PLN for two of us single fare. Don't get a return ticket just in case it's a different bus company and they are specific about the times. Open returns aren't really a thing. We arrived at 9:30am and so didn't have to take a tour which I always find a bit much, or pay for entry.

It is an amazing place with lots to see but the whole experience is somewhat marred by the overwhelming number of tour groups. There are huge numbers of people all crowded around guides who talk loudly and block your ability to see anything. In the more emotional and thought provoking exhibits, there they are again talking loudly so that no one has the opportunity to take in the atmosphere. Even in the gas chamber where the signs ask for silence, the tour guides were still talking loudly. I found myself becoming irritated in a place that really should be about tolerance and respect.

Auschwitz II is easily reachable by the free shuttle bus that stops in the same place as the public bus and they go every 10 minutes. Here, it was easier to avoid the crowds as there is no set route. It is a phenomenal place and the sheer size is astounding. There is a donation box at the entrance to this museum which we put in to.

The return buses are every 20 minutes from Auschwitz I and you just pay the driver.

I would recommend taking lunch as it takes a good chunk of the day and the food outlets are small.

110. Very sad

This tour really was amazing and even though you are seeing everything with your own eyes it still feels very surreal and sad. I had booked the tour through the hotel and found it very reasonably priced. My only problem was the speed to which we were run through the tour our guide had no time at all for people who wanted to look around properly. I spent most of the tour

trying to keep up with her. At the end i wanted to go up to the watch tour but was told that without a guide that was not possible (our guide had already left as i said she seemed in a hurry). Only wish we had more time to experience it.

111. Not what I expected

We visited the camp and much to my surprise, i found it to be very sanitised. I am of an age where I am fully aware of the atrocities committed and indeed having read a number of books on the subject. I did not get the feeling that over a million souls had been murdered there and indeed Camp 1 (former Polish Barracks) was unlike my conception of the camp. Brick built buildings still standing would have possibly been an improvement to some of the victims when they arrived. The huts we visited did not portray the despair and cruelty which took place. I am sure that there are other huts we did not see as the tour was something of a whistle stop. Camp 2 which had the remains of the showers and ovens again did not in my view fully suggest the horrors which had taken place. A subjective view I appreciate and I am probably in the minority but our group of four friends felt similarly in their view.

Obviously the camp cannot be recreated to fully show the horrors and whilst being glad of the visit, I did not feel very moved until I saw a young (Jewish) girl terribly upset carrying a photograph - possibly of a family member who died there.

A place to visit - yes of course- but it did not (to me) fully represent what had gone on before

112. Too many people

If you had the chance to visit other concentration camps, do not go to Auschwitz. Since it's the most popular, it's overcrowded. It's not Well organized, you need to book weeks in advance and the guides are not very good. You think it will be a place of comemoration but it's not really. Tourists are mostly not respectful.

113. It's a must visit but the crowds and the security spoil it

I have been to auschwitz before about 8 years ago. It is now so popular that you cannot visit quietly on your own until after all of the Group tours have visited. We got a 15.00 hrs ticket but the simple fact is that there is no public transport to get you back to Kraków after a visit at that time. So we went on a group tour with hundreds of others all in groups , all queuing up in the rain to go through a completely unnecessary airport style security check. Don't these security people carry out a risk assessment ? If there was a bomber, surely he would set off a bomb where the hundred of people are gathered waiting to go through security ? The security checkpoint escalates the risk to the public because it causes a large gathering of people. The risk to the public is minimal, more likely non-existent at this venue. When you do get through you are whisked around by a tour guide with groups in front and behind and no time to stop and study any of the exhibits.

Ok it's a must visit but it's spoilt by large groups of people and surly, badly behaved, disinterested teenagers, presumably from some sort of educational establishment for the backward.

Give it miss if is raining and try and go off season

114. Heart breaking

My family and I went with see Kraków tours to the Auschwitz and Bikenau concentration camps .. Whilst I found it truly heart breaking I would recommend all to visit this museum.

Negatives I found I have a 76 year old father who found it hard to keep up with the tour guide from the museum she actually was a fast brisk walker I understand for crowd control as their are

large volumes of people at the camp but I did think we were practically run through the camp's and whilst I did not want to spend an extended amount of time in these horrible places, I did worry for my dad who is elderly and had difficulty keeping up, several times we lost sight entirely of the tour guide. She didn't even bother to check that the whole group was there.

Overall I do think this museum is a must visit to learn of the harrowing awful history that occurred at the campsites so that hopefully we learn

115. Shocking site, shockingly managed.

With all respect to the victims the site does very little to truly unlock the horrors of what happened in the most evil site in Europe. There was very little to instruct people on what to do getting into the site, thousands of people pushed and shoved to get into the museum. The tours themselves were informative and needed to be due to a very limited amount of provided information. The tour guides themselves seemed very rushed as groups clashed to squeeze into the many buildings on the site. However most of these problems were probably down to our trip occurring in the peak of the summer. Therefore if possible I think it'd be recommendable to visit away from major holiday times. The camp grounds themselves were very harrowing with many buildings fitted as they would have been in the war. The atmosphere is spine tingling when you can escape the crowds. I would recommend going to the second camp but don't feel pressured to move with your group as it felt very rushed, spend a few hours in the main camp as the tour in the second camp was very recycled and similar to what you heard in the first place. To conclude it is a must-do in the Kraków area, there are very few places in the world like it as long as you can take your fellow tourists with a pinch of salt due to disrespectful comments and behaviour.

116. Sombre, mixed feelings.

Not sure how to rate this one. It's not a tourist attraction but with 1.72m visitors this year, it sure feels like one. I'm not sure why visitor numbers have increased but maybe more flights mean more people?

I've seen films and documentaries as well as reading Anne Frank's diary so as I was visiting Krakow it seemed fitting to see the history, horror and sheer scale of the place in person.

It's hard to take it all in. Some of the other visitors weren't behaving appropriately in my opinion, taking selfies (yes, feally), which did not compute.

Very moving.

117. Dealing with mobility issues in the auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

The museum itself was deeply disturbing as expected. What i didnt expect was that, as a disabled person, i had difficulty managing, though it could have been worse. Wheelchairs are available at the tour building, but they are almost useless, as the pavers on the paths and roads are almost impossible to maneuver with one. The museum buildings have been respectfully left unchanged, and have no lifts or ramps. Fortunately, i was having a good day, and was able to manage, or i would have missed a lot--

118. A historic place, not well organised

We visited both Auschwitz I and II during world youth days, on our own. After arriving in Krakow we got a bus that costed around 4 euros to drive you very close to Auschwitz I (90 min). There you can visit the site for free or get a guide (that you will pay). The day we arrived no guides or headphones were available and the houses were closed to visit. After this a free

shuttle transfers you to Birkenau which is also free to visit and much bigger than I. The big issue is that from site II, no buses or taxis are available and you have to walk 3 km to get to the train station(!!!). Also backpacks not allowed in I and II and luggage lockers available at a nearby restaurant.

119. *You Must Be Lucky!*

Reviewed 3 August 2016

The Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum is a difficult and emotional experience to begin with. The museum staff appoints a guide and you join a group, but you have to be fortunate to get a decent guide. We visited in June, and it was very hot--over 100 degrees F. Our guide rushed us through the buildings and was uncaring about some older folks having a difficult time keeping up. She was not cooperative about responding to questions. Of all places to encounter possible antisemitism, she stressed how horrible it was for Polish citizens, but talked little about the Jews who were massacred here. Though the museum is well worth the visit and the history lesson is something never to be forgotten, I hope others will get a better guide!

120. *The terrors that happened and shouldn't ever be forgotten!*

I just would like to make clear that my review doesn't downplay the importance of seeing this place. This is a compelling and unique experience. Whilst, it is very upsetting to see, it also is very important that everyone experience it and learn about the terrors that happened and shouldn't ever be forgotten. Trying to find any words which sum up the visit is difficult. There is almost no noise, people don't seem to talk. There is a very specific heaviness about the site.

Visiting Auschwitz is a must if you are in Krakow. I would, however, recommend visiting under one's own steam - and not just to save the money.

I was not greatly impressed with the organisation of the tour groups. Very often you are in a room with other tour groups and it is difficult to hear. All the displays are very well described in English and the guide often adds little that is not written down. Also, if you go without the group, you can make your own pace. The exhibits are fascinating and going with the group you just do not have time to view many of them. Our guide would explain a part of Auschwitz and then hurry you on before you had chance to read the boards of information relevant to that part. This resulted in glancing through a window rather than standing there and taking in the surroundings. Because the place is so busy you are a little bit herded along like cattle.

You are given a radio set and headphones and are told which channel to turn to. The tour guide uses this to talk you through the visit. A great idea - if the guide actually speaks into their microphone the entire time. Another problem with this is that there is numerous other guide parties going on at the same time and sometimes you would pick up the other guide signal as you walked past and hear them chatting instead.

It was my second visit in Auschwitz. As much as I think it should be once in a lifetime experience, this time I was visiting Krakow with a group of Spanish friends very interested in history. My friends didn't speak either Polish or English so we had no other choice but opt for a guided tour in Spanish.

The guide as knowledgeable as he was started the tour without checking if all the participants are there [we had people running after the group to catch up], then rushed through Auschwitz part and to make things even worst went to Birkenau with only very small part of the group without waiting for the rest of us. We were supposed to meet at the bus stop in 10 min after

finishing Auschwitz tour but when we showed at the bus stop at the meeting time guide was nowhere to be seen and so was the South American part of the group. To be perfectly frank, the guide didn't really interact with anyone but the South American tourists in our group which I found very rude.

To sum up, I totally recommend visiting Auschwitz but if you can do so independently so that you can walk around in your own time and absorb all the information. The atrocities that occurred at this place must never, ever be forgotten so it never happens again.

121. Bad timing

We visited Auschwitz during the time when pope was in Krakow, there were exhibitions limitation due to lots of people visiting

122. Chilling but not as suspected

The tour of Auschwitz-Birkenau was beyond interesting. Our tour guide told us so many things about WW2 and Hitler's reign that we had no idea about. The tour was a once in a lifetime experience. Although it was spine tingling learning about the terrors, but I can't help feel that it was somewhat ruined by tourism. I had expected to feel worse and deeply moved by the tour but unfortunately I feel that because there was so many tours on at once and a lot of people walking around it kind of ruined the feeling.

I would still recommend Auschwitz to everyone but I do hope they cut back of the amount of tours daily in order to preserve the sense of feeling and allow people to remember those who suffered.

123. Invaluable experience, terrible organization

My review doesn't downplay the importance of seeing this place. It's life changing and should be done, period.

But the details and organization of the grounds is terrible and desperately needs to be redone. First off, despite the 1.7 million annual visitors (almost all as a trip from Krakow) they don't make transport easy.

I took a train there - which was fine, but required a taxi ride from the station to the museum. To avoid this I took a bus home...infrequent departures, hot, cramped, with loud euro techno music. No organization for bus line, just a free for all. In retrospect I would suggest paying the absurdly high price for private transport in order to avoid this mess.

I booked my guided tour with the museum online beforehand. Don't do that.

I arrived 45 minutes before my tour time only to find a very long, chaotic queue to get through security. No one knew where to go and no one was there to direct people. Folks were cutting in line and shoving. Those who hadn't read the bag limitation warnings were turned away after waiting through the entire ghastly line.

I finally got through the metal detectors well after my tour start time. The employee at the entrance just said, "you'll just have to find them." This is entirely impossible without assistance. Thankfully I got help from a kind soul and joined my tour. The guide was excellent, informative and respectful. The museum grounds though were mobbed and poorly managed, requiring everyone to feel a bit rushed past all the incredibly interesting sites.

I was so grateful for the guide. If trying it solo I might have given up due to the crowds. Poorly functioning, archaic headsets were another point of frustration.

If you can do it, please see this critically important place to learn, spread awareness and pay

respect. But do it with a heavy dose of patience. This place desperately needs improvements in organization to handle the crowds. It was a mess.

124. Harrowing place but disappointing tour

No one can question the horrible things that went on here so let me say from the off that I'm not rating the camp or its history at all. That would be ridiculous. What I'm rating is the tour. It moved too quickly and gave no time to contemplate. There were too many tours in at once, causing it to feel cramped, especially in the buildings.

125. Badly organised museum

Considering the material they have to work with here you'd think they'd do a better job than the museums in Warsaw and so on. They do not. The exhibits are scattered all over the place and you just sort of wander in and out of buildings. They have arrows but they may need to consult somebody at ikea how to arrange these a little better. Many buildings were completely empty as people didn't seem to know you could go in them. Some were closed for no apparent reason and some were under maintenance. Many of the exhibits are repetitive anyway. Auschwitz II is more interesting but largely in ruins thanks to the nazis and what's left is falling apart and half of the buildings are under repairs. They have a little scam running at the entrance where they refuse to let bags in even under the 30x20x10cm size limit and force you to pay a 3 zloty fee for the privilege of uncomfortably carrying around a plastic bag if you want to take water etc. There is no reason for this as the museum was not overcrowded, maybe 50 people in a whole square km and I booked the last spot in my time slot so I'm not sure what is going on with their quotas. Also keep in mind the last bus back to Krakow leaves 45 minutes before the museum closes in summer, illogical.

126. How can I have only rated the place as AVERAGE when it is so overpoweringly moving?

The crowds waiting to visit are huge the queue for tickets is long and the tours are controlled by language and there are no solo visits possible. So if you visit you must be in an organised tour and if you are English speaker, those tours are late in the day: 3.30 when we arrived at 12 noon. We were in a hire car so could go to BIRKENAU unsupervised and there it is possible to appreciate the solemn loneliness of the location. Crumbling brick buildings being overwhelmed by brambles and ivy... and a single cattle truck on a rusting railway siding reminds one of the awfulness of the arrival spot where 63000 victims arrived from France between 1943 and 1944. That is our lasting memory of BIRKENAU Unfortunately we could not join the educational tour of the vast complex of buildings that overwhelms the visitors who get tickets to enter. But hope this advice helps I speak Italian and French but chose not to join those two early tours because my wife would have been in her wheelchair at the back of the large group and not understand the guides talk. One final fact... for any independent visitor- say from Greece, Netherlands, or North Europe- who would need to join the English language group, we met a Greek in the SCHINDLER MUSEUM in Krakow who did just that; the tour ended at about 5.30 and she went to the huge restaurant on the AUSCHWITZ site. No public transport connects with Krakow after 6pm.. So get there before 11 a.m and join a tour that you can't understand... the size of the site and the photo display area outside the enclosed site gives you all the information, visually you need. We drove to KETY, south of the museum, after our Birkenau experience and found a lovely restaurant in a pretty village square.

127. Practical advice

Buy your ticket before you arrive. Most of the time these are guided tours although my advice is also to try and come self guided as well you will get far more from the visit.

The car park is close to the entrance of auschwitz one but this is less than clear.

Leave your bags in your car as only the smallest ones, handbags included, will be allowed on the site.

Take an umbrella all the guides do.

Go to the loo before you come as there are no obvious facilities.

Dont expect a museum in the entry building this is just for security and where the tours start from. Although there is a film which is interesting as you wait.

Dont expect any help or guidance from the staff. Tour guides quality varies enormously.

Auschwitz 2 is a far more impactful site if you only have a short time to visit go there.

128. A place

Auschwitz-Birkenau has been well reviewed in TripAdvisor so just a brief note. It is extremely crowded. Balancing one's thoughts and emotions with the onslaught of what one sees, what one hears and the crowd is part of the experience. This place of murder is enormous. It is not appropriate for children. While there may be a desire to expose one's children to this horrendous part of human history, please consider the solemnity, the remembrance, and the respect of those who were killed. There is no charge for visiting the site. There is a charge for the tour. Our tour was about 10 people. Many facts and figures were given. The guide spent relatively greater time talking about Polish resistance and criminals that were killed in the camp with a fair amount of time spent on a Polish priest. The "egalitarian" approach to those murdered did not emphasize or put into perspective that about 1,100,000 European Jews were killed there; nearly 10 times that of the number of Poles. It is a most memorable experience; one that will provide much to reflect upon.

129. Great Historical Site

My family and I were very excited to visit the camp. We read and watched movies. Being there was actually surreal reading all the signs and being at the actual places was emotional. I went with my 5-9 YR old - 5 didn't care so much - 9 yr. old understood and liked it for about an hour. They offer free tours or do it your self tour. I choose do it myself BC of the children and the timeline. the Walking tours don't go to all the exhibitions (just the main ones) and your on their time. I was there on a Saturday so by mid day it was packed - If you get there early is good but some of the exhibitions don't open until later on the day. Plan your visit with care and if you have children be mindful of waiting times and the very emotional plp that cant see children being children.

130. This is in relation to the tour

I went with a guided tour and the tour guide was very knowledgeable. You are given a headphones and a radio at the start. However our group was too large and at times I could hear the guide talking in a different room while I was standing in line on a stairs full of people waiting to get into the same room. Smaller groups or a self guided tour would make it a lot

easier to move around. There are a lot of narrow, enclosed corridors which are packed with people so this might be difficult if you are claustrophobic. Our guide did not bring us everywhere but it is a long walk so do wear comfortable walking shoes.

Food and drink are not allowed inside, bags are checked and you go through what looks to be a metal detector before entering. Bag sizes are measured and large handbags are not allowed in. I'm not sure why but I think it might be because some corridors are very narrow and crowded inside so larger bags could be a space issue. In Birkenau this is not the case and larger bags were let in.

131. Glad i went but ...

I am so glad i went here to learn about the terrible history but the experience was not that great. We had a guided tour as it seems almost everyone does and so it just feels like you are in a cattle market herded around.

There were times i was bored and the guide went on too much and other times i wanted to spend longer looking at things but the guide passed by quickly.

The place itself is really well maintained and lets the full scale of what went on hit you so i think the only mistake i made was to go on a tour.

This is a must visit place when in Poland but If there is an option to go around and look at your own pace definitely do it that way!

132. Somewhat disappointing

First of all I must say it was very crowded. We were visiting without a guide and was very hard to see something because of the large groups visiting there.

The outside is something special indeed. But just for a moment. The inside is not impressive. Many pictures and a few rooms with artefacts from that period. If you read a book about that place is more interesting than seeing it.

At the entrance there are security measures like on the airport.

The road from Krakow is about 1h and 30 min. The entrance is free without a guide.

133. Alright, don't overreact at the rating - let me explain...

(Long review, but I assure you it's worth the read.)

Auschwitz is, in the loosest sense of the word, incredible. It's truly astonishing that this place even exists, let alone went undetected for so long or was a site of so much horror. It's a site which, as you wander around, you really cannot comprehend or put into context. The evil here was just too great.

If you want to connect with a truly dark, twisted, evil period of history and marvel at just how terrible humans can be, while paying an insurmountable measure of respect to the dead, then you need to visit. I'm glad I visited. I'd still recommend it to everyone. You have to see it to believe what you've heard.

So why the three stars?

Because while Auschwitz itself is a must-see memorial, it's run pretty ineffectively.

Let me point out some major flaws in the running of the site; flaws which really damage the visitor experience.

1) The queues to get into the site are astonishing. We waited for an hour in a queue, panicking that we'd miss our 1030 booked tour, and barely moved. This is because the security check is tiresome, and there are only two people - yes, two people - checking the thousands of people who visit every day.

TOP TIP: If you have booked a tour, and already have your pass to visit, you can skip the long queues and go in the 'group queue' at the front because, technically, you are part of a group. This is not explained by signage anywhere and we only found out because we became so cold and wet that we asked someone at the front what to do.

2) The facilities seeminly haven't been updated for a few decades. The toilets, which you have to pay for, are awful. The restaurant sells dreadful food and drink, all overpriced, and vegetarians have to go hungry.

3) The tours are well-run, with around 30 people per group, but there are simply too many people visiting Auschwitz. Because of this, you don't have time to reflect on what you're seeing. There is one room - about 15 metres in length - which is full of human hair. That's human hair the Nazis shaved from the Jews when they entered the camp, so they could sell it.

The hair in this room was the hair they cut in just five days. Five days. It's heartbreaking. I cried, as do many others.

But that was the only real moment of sadness. Even going into one small gas chamber, where scratch marks of struggling, dying innocent people decorate the walls, I felt nothing. We were so rushed to go through, and there were around 60 people behind us in other tours waiting, that it was just noisy and stressful, frankly.

More time and less tours would give you time to reflect and actually pay your respects. At the moment, you feel like cows being herded around.

4) Final big criticism, linking to number 3. If you've not booked a private tour to Auschwitz, get ready for the most cramped, unsafe bus ride of your life. So there are two sites at Auschwitz - camp 1, and camp 2 (camp 3 cannot be visited). Camp 2 (Birkenau) is huge and makes up the second part of your day. If you're on a private tour, you'll get a minibus there and plenty of comfort.

However, for us who travel alone and cheaper away from tours, the shuttle bus there is literally one bus, running once every 20 minutes, that should hold around 60 people. It crams in around double that.

It's uncomfortable, impossible for the elderly or disabled, and truly a horrible experience. To make matters worse, Volkswagen have a huge sign when you exit saying they 'proudly donated' it to the museum. You'd think, given their history with the Nazis, another shuttle bus wouldn't be too hard to donate.

So overall, it's a must-do experience, but be prepared for:

- Awful queues

- A five or six hour tour with NO break
- No food outlets in Auschwitz itself (though I do understand this, as people would littler otherwise)
- A complete lack of personal space at times
- A ban on ALL baggage (seriously, all baggage bigger than an A4 piece of paper WILL NOT GET IN)
- A horrid security check

But if you eat a big early breakfast, keep in mind that you've all the time in the world, and prepare yourself for an interesting but ultimately depressing day, and you'll look back at it as, oddly, probably the best part of your trip to Poland.

134. An emotional experience ruined by the orgained tours

This is a short review (as a review of a historical place like this seems inappropriate) however I am happy to review the actual guided tour at the camp.

There are about 6,000 visitors each day!! .. all organised into groups of about 40 and then shuffled quickly through the camps in line through the buildings, interspersed with commentary from the guides through radio-earpieces.

There is no chance to ask guides questions (but only at the end do they ask for any questions but after a few seconds they disappear for their next group).

I found the guided tour setup deeply disrespectful to what had happened there. What I thought would be a deeply emotional experience almost turned into a "theme park" type feeling - which has upset me greatly.

For people who require a toilet during the 3 hour tour (of both camps) then you are out of luck. The guide made no reference to toilets and there is ONE! apparently in hut 18 and one also at the end of the second outside camp - but as I found I had to pay to enter. I had no change as I had just arrived in Poland and the tour guide sailed passed me showing his pass so he could use the toilet for free - I asked him if I could go free, but he walked off and said I had to pay. I had no change so a kind person behind me had 30 zloty and paid for me to enter. The tour guide didn't care!

I'm glad I have been here but I would have preferred to go quietly and in a small group to think about things and take in the atmosphere which unfortunately has been ruined by the tour guides and their industry.

They were so disrespectful in my opinion.

135. A sobering visit

Its unbelievable the atrocities the Polish people's, Gypsies, Jews had to suffer under the Nazi regime. Something like today with the poor Palastinians suffering a similar fate under the hands of the Isreali occupiers in Palastine. This museum displays very well the human suffering that happened and mankind still hasn't learned a lesson.

136. Well worth a visit but

A must do when on a visit to krakow but spoiled by the large size of tour groups and the number of visitors each day,they need to think less about profit and restrict the number of visitors,we visited in feb and it was extremely busy it felt like we were rushed you need more time to take things in but still a very good tour and not to be missed but could be made a much better experiance.

137. odkazane/sanitised ...

Some of the reviews talk about 'never forget', 'lesson for humanity', etc, etc. Then there are others than talk about excessive photography (with flash), the chattering tourists and the general lack of understanding what a location like this should convey.

Personally, I don't want to see inside each block. Visiting two blocks to understand what happened is sufficient. Observing the wall where 1000s were shot doesn't have to be accompanied by banter, laughter and chit chat.

The tours are a real pain. They are frequent and very large, and in some of the exhibition space (in the original camp) it was very cramped, particularly in the basement area. I would imagine that in the future, visitor numbers will have to be severely curtailed to protect this space as a national monument.

But then the other side is that people must remember that less than 25% of the world's population know of the extermination policy as executed by the Germans during WWII. Many people who come to see this location probably have forgotten about it once they're on the bus going back to their hotel.

The interesting aspect of Auschwitz is how it's seen and remembered by the Polish people themselves. The early information panels clearly tell you that the first 'victims' were ethnic Poles. Not Russian soldiers, Polish Jews (actually, by the time Auschwitz expanded to become a death camp, most Polish Jews had already been murdered elsewhere), foreign Jews or Gypsies: but ethnic Poles. From what I've read, very, very few people survived the death camp. Many of those who speak about being a survivor of Auschwitz worked as labours in camp 1, so in one regard they cannot convey the horror. That's reserved for the dead, and they do not speak.

I took photographs but I've not decided on whether or not I'll keep them. But then again, if I went to Pompeii, Oradour sur Glane or Lidice, would I walk about and photograph there? I didn't for the latter two ...

Go early when it first opens and try to visit out of season. Otherwise, the idea that this place of unimaginable death has become some sort of theme park, begins to gather momentum. Even the questions posed by TripAdvisor when uploading this review were offensive - 'Do you recommend this attraction for luxury travellers?' What's that about?

138. Avoid the paid tour

It's very difficult to know what rating to give our visit to Auschwitz, but I would split the day into two parts - the camp itself, and the tour.

Visiting the camp is a profound experience, especially standing in the gas chambers where literally thousands were murdered. Seeing the piles of possessions, - cases, spectacles, human hair - along with photos of many victims is hard to stomach. The ruthlessness with which the Nazis raided and sold the prisoners personal belongings, right down to their gold teeth, is appalling.

However, if I could give one piece of advice, I would ABSOLUTELY AVOID DOING THE TOUR. I think we had an especially bad tour guide, but she was totally devoid of emotion and connection with the human suffering which took place here. The tour was ridiculously rushed,

we were unable to visit at least half of the displays and worst of all given no time whatsoever to reflect and absorb the atrocities. We were marched through the gas chamber in less than a minute. Frankly the tour was a complete and utter joke, a shocking waste of time and money and quite honestly disrespectful to those who died here, and to those who want to hear their stories.

All in all, I recommend visiting, but do it on your own terms , take your time and give yourself chance to reflect on each section to really make worthwhile.

139. Interesting to see

As it is a very sad historic place it was never going to be fun but it was interesting to see. Our tour was around 3 hours though which felt very long. The food and drink here is expensive as with all places of this kind.

140. Not what we were expecting

Not to minimize the grave events that took place here but it felt more like a museum than a memorial. Even though we visited in January, it was extremely crowded. There were so many tour groups and the tour leaders would stop in front of buildings to speak with the group and block everyone else from entering the room. We had been to Dachau before and it felt more respectful of the history.

141. Reality

The experience is something that I will never forget. The reality of this place and the events that took place here should be etched in the minds of all people for all time. What I saw will never be forgotten. I was very disappointed with the guide. I took the English tour but the guide had such a heavy accent, she was very hard to understand. She could not answer many of the questions place to her or did not understand them. She became defensive when asked questions about the Polish people and their relationship to the events that took place at the time. She even told one of the members tout group that Poland was never a communist country. She did not allow time to really stop and look at what we were seeing or take pictures where allowed. She even ignored some question that were asked of her. Again the experience is one that must not be missed, I just hope you get a better tour guide and one you can understand in your own language.

142. Could have more history

My tour of Auschwitz was good but I certainly wish there were more features. I'm a student of history so seeing Auschwitz didn't phase me at all, I was intrigued at the camps and its history. I do wish that perhaps other features were presented. I thought the tour was pretty short and it could've been extended for people like me who are really passionate and interested in the history of World War II. I would've loved to see inside the home of Rudolf Hoss or get closer to it and I would've been fascinated to see where Dr. Mengele performed his experiments. I was even shocked that they didn't show the building where it was likely that Anne Frank lived in after her capture. I figured at least this would be a selling point to tourists. I do think it is worth it to visit Auschwitz, but if you're really into history like I am be prepared to be a little disappointed.

143. Informative, emotional, but something was missing...

It was really great experience to walk through one of the biggest death factories all over the world. There are several expositions in some blocks/buildings where prisoners udes to live (so it is possible to survive here in winter months, because expositions are inside), for example you

can see many shoes, bags, hair of prisoners etc, it is really emotional. There is a guide who can tell you many information about this concentration camp. Then you can take a free bus and go to Birkenau, see the railway station where prisoners used to come by train, see where the biggest crematoriums used to be. But I think, if you see some movies or documanteries about Auschwitz, there would be nothing new for you.

144. Didn't do it for me...

I expected a highly emotional remembrance and homage to those who suffered, and actually got a theme park 'trot through' experience that for me did not do the import of the place justice. It was less of a remembrance and recognition of the evil that was done here than an 'fun day out' visiting a murder theme park. I did not feel at any point that the magnitude of what had happened here was really brought home to many - epitomised by a group standing in front of the cattle truck - in which many people had died - on the Birkenau site for a photo and being told to 'smile'...! Maybe its me, but I found this very offensive. It was, regardless of the best efforts of our guide, an exercise in getting as many people through as possible. There was not time to stop and pause for thought, to reflect on what had happened in this place, to appreciate just how many people had been murdered to produce the display of hair (at that a miniscule fraction of the camp's total 'production') and the abhorrent use of that hair to make socks for submariners...I'm sorry, but I expected to come away from here feeling something of the inhumanity of man and having the lessons underscored and reinforced, but all I brought away was frustration, sore feet and a nasty nagging feeling that humanity could so easily, through its trivialisation of such important places and events, go the same way again. Maybe if that's the case for most people, the museum is actually more of a success than I give it credit for. Unfortunately, having been there, I suspect it is a tiny minority of those who visit who come away feeling this.

145. Probably better with a guide

We visited here independently and although it was an eye opening experience, without a tour it was not very obvious which parts are the best to see. There is a lot of information and too much to see/read in a few hours. Would be helpful if it was made clear where each part of the camp is situated so you can pick and choose which bits to see rather than walking aimlessly. Auchwitz more interesting than birkenau although birkenau is much more vast and gives a better understanding of the scale of what happened- though there is less to see here. In hindsight, booking a tour would have probably been a more fulfilling time spent here as a lot of time was spent wandering around trying to find places E.g. The shower rooms.

146. Good to see if you are in Krakow

Very sad place i dont know how to rate this good or bad I really dont know, but it is a place to visit if you like history. I found this interesting

147. A must see

A must see for every person, so we don't forget out tragic and disgusting passed. It very emotional walking through the museum and seeing the sheer size of the atrocities that took place here. The guide I had was not the best and its seemed a very rushed tour, on multiple occasions I had lost my tour group as they where moving to fast due to the tour guide which mad it extremely hard to even read the information displayed around the camp. PHOTOS..... At the beginning of the tour the guide mentioned the areas that people could not take photos, let and be hold people where taking selfies in gas chambers etc. I find it

extremely disrespectful for that to happen and when the tour guide sees it and does nothing, I find that even worse.

148. Draining day.

Auschwitz is accessible by train from Krakow, but it takes 1hr 45mins and then a 20 minute walk to the camp. It is a long journey before you even get there. We were forced to join a tour as we got there in peak time. The tour guide was VERY good, but I do feel that it took away from the experience as you weren't able to reflect as much. Also it is very time consuming tour and due to train we were only able to glance at the second camp, but even that was worthwhile as the camp is a shocking size.

Must go to remember how horrid the past has been.

149. A Must See but an honest critique

My three star has no reflection on the Holocaust as I am Jewish and this was a tough place to go for me as many of my family members have died here. My critique has to do purely about as an attraction.

Preparation besides the emotional. Bring food and drinks because it is ver limited here and basically nothing when you enter the concentration camp.

Here are some suggestions. (Please don't get mad reading this. I am not trying to be disrespectful.)

1. It opens at 8am in the morning. Most people come from Krakow which is 1.5 hours away. I needed caffeine and a bathroom when I got there as I got up at 5:30am to come for my 8am time slot. I know it would be disrespectful to build on these historical grounds but I cannot be the only person needing to go to the bathroom, get some water and a coffee.
2. Exhibits- I have been to the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem and Washington DC. What makes this different is that it is actually on the worst concentration camp sight of the war. It was emotional knowing that so many people have been killed here and reading about it on the tour and then seeing the actual sight was powerful. With being at an actual concentration camp, I feel that exhibits with mannequins would add a huge powerful, emotional, and realistic effect to the experience instead of putting museums and exhibits in the sleeping bunkers.
3. Bus schedule- The bus driver which actually has nothing to do with the museum could have told everybody that the pick-up times a clearly listed at the drop-off and emphasize that it is roughly once an hour. I would have planned my visit better if I knew that. Instead, I waited 40 minutes for the bus because I left Auschwitz and I couldn't get back in and there was nothing outside the attraction to kill time.
4. I did a self tour with my gentile girlfriend. We were the first time slot of the day. However, we went into the first museum and read information for an hour and a half. When we came out the place has been overtaken by guided tour groups. They move so slow and are nearly impossible to pace in the exhibits. Again, it would be disrespectful to alter the buildings of such a sight but maybe something better can be done.
5. It was nice that this was free for a self-guided tour. Maybe a place for donations could be added for maintenance of the attraction or improvements.

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150. Maybe take a tour from Krakow

Of course, anyone who is in this area should go to Auschwitz. This review is intended to provide an opinion to the operators of this memorial and museum and international donors.

Having been to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in DC, and Dachau, this was an upsetting experience for reasons other than those that you would expect. The Auschwitz tour we took, provided by the museum itself, dealt so much with the first prisoners of Auschwitz (political prisoners) rather than with the fact that this is the site where almost half of the Jews of Europe were murdered. Birkenau was like an afterthought on the tour. There was a lack of reckoning with the genocide of the Jews here that was palpable-- for example, the word "murder" was used repeatedly at Dachau and not at all here. There was little discussion of the percentage of the Jewish population of Poland before the Holocaust (for example, 1/3 of the population of some cities), of the percentage of Jews killed (nearly 90%), or of how Poland was complicit in the murder of its Jewish population. There was also a focus on uplifting stories of a few survivors, like a girl who played with a kitten and a man whom a priest volunteered to die in place of, and not enough of the systematic dehumanization and murder of the vast VAST majority of people who were deported here. An audio guide featuring real survivors stories or excerpts from Night and Primo Levi's books that doesn't whitewash the horror that took place here and that situates the Holocaust's enormity in its historical place would be so much better. Where is the Jewish community (not that it should be all on their shoulders) to fund a fitting museum here, like those at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum, and Dachau? This site is the only Holocaust site that most casual tourists will ever visit. It must do better.

151. Inconsistent Tour Routes

I had difficulty connecting with the history here. I feel that my tour guide Anna wasn't engaging enough and frankly I found out later through observation that not all tour guides show you everything. I found other tour groups in places I didn't visit in my tour. Imperative places which made me connect to the area. However I want to know where the consistency is.

And it's hard to connect with such beautiful surrounds. I found the tour covered half of the exhibit at most.

Otherwise very insightful place with self guiding signage tours almost more informative than our tour guide.

152. Weird feelings

Museum has a huge exposition of all the worst things that happened here. It really moves with your feelings when you see the place where thousands of people were executed

153. It has to be done

We visited with a guided tour . I thought it was a little disorganized and although the lady guiding our tour was very nice , any questions asked weren't really answered .

I have to say I am not sure what happens to all the money they raise from the tours but I do think they could have made some paths as it was all big stones , which made it difficult to walk on and this wouldn't detract from the atrocities that went on here .

Make sure you wear very sturdy shoes . It is no good unfortunately for anyone disabled .

It is a must do regardless of this as it is part of recent history . I found the most moving part for me was all the suitcases behind glass with peoples names and a number lovingly put on their suitcase thinking they would get their belonging back . It wasn't to be . Mans inhumanity to man .

154. Mixed feelings.

We took a guided tour from our hotel in Krakow. As part of history we felt compelled to visit whilst in Poland. Wish we had not gone in August, thousands of visitors, herded around a bit like sheep, so the solemnity of the occasion was missed by a country mile. Queues were horrendous, and found there was little time even for a toilet break. Just not what we expected, after visiting Terezin in the Czech republic some years ago. So if like us you feel a need to go try and avoid the main holiday period and take a picnic.

155. Horrible Lack of Signage

OK, so you're a city in Poland with a world-infamous former Nazi concentration camp on your doorstep. What do you do? Make it nearly impossible to find! Today we had an impossibly frustrating time getting to the memorial site because of the nearly TOTAL lack of signs directing the roughly 1.6 MILLION visitors to this site. Of course, 95 percent of those huge numbers came by tour bus. Woe to you if you come on your own by car as we did. I want to slap the mayor in the face after our frustrating half hour just trying to get to the site. Abysmal traffic, lack of signs and oh get this! Locals who don't know either!!! Total FAIL on the part of the local tourism "officials" with obviously other priorities.

156. Everyone needs to see it!!!

I can't say I was disappointed but I think my expectations were different. It is exactly as it was 70 years ago altho there is a commercialism creeping in which I don't agree with. I think it's totally wrong to charge to use the toilets..surely that's going a bit far? But..everyone in their lifetime should..if the opportunity arises..visit this place to show what a nation is capable of and that it MUST never happen again!!!!

157. Average just for the organisation- the place and its museum are excellent

So you know what happened here and you can learn all the worst of it in detail. the place is indeed a fantastic insight and worth visiting. however the set up and management is not that good. it costs 25zł per person for a polish guide and 40zł for a foreigner. there weren't as many english guides as i thought there should be and you might have to wait an hour before one is scheduled. so, i bought a polish ticket and went in with them and walked the place myself. there are plenty of info boards and the rest doesn't need much explanation. you won't leave here chirpy that's for sure. However it's real history. bags bigger than 30cm need storing at a cost and the toilets are 1zł. never feel that you should pay to use the loo in places where you pay to get in!! More ticket booths should be open and more guides in english more often, rather than russian, german and italian. English is widely spoken and would serve more people. tip- go before 11am or after 3pm when it's free to enter in your own time and won't cost you anything, i would imagine it's quieter at 7am too.

158. must visit

this historic site has so much to tell, however I do feel that the Museum could make so much more of itself. I have visited many museums on the Holocaust around the world and I was really looking forward to coming here, even with the terrible things that happened here this is such an important historic site. Show less

159. Over commercialised.

I was keen to see Auschwitz-Birkenau. We booked our trip for 0945 which meant we didn't have to use a guide and could go around at our own pace. It was insanely busy as soon as we arrived and only got more crowded as the day went on.

Auschwitz I was interesting with lots of exhibitions in the blocks to see. However, little feel of how it would have originally been remains, as extensive work has been done to turn it into a museum.

Birkenau is a short bus away, which is free. The huge majority of the original buildings have been knocked down now, destroying an important piece of history which is a great shame. The surviving buildings look brand new, as though they have been rebuilt, and smell like a hardwood store. On the other side of the site, we could see workmen constructing more buildings, which was very shocking.

In my opinion, both sites have been commercialised to such an extent that it has ruined the historical and emotional aspects. There are a lot of restaurants and hotels between Auschwitz and Birkenau which seemed very strange also. For me, it would have been better to leave the sites as they were found and not alter them at all so visitors could experience the genuine Auschwitz, not a modified and preserved version.

160. hard work, but worth it

long, long, long, long queues on a very hot day....no reduction for Non-Polish pensioners!! lots and lots of steps...Hours of walking and lots of steps at Birkenau..lots of miles to walk at Auschwitz

161. Auschwitz

Organisation of the visit is a disgrace. We could not find the museum for a start, poor road signs. Such a place deserves a lot of respect and space to take it all in. Tour guides mumbling their commentary in poor English and rushing crowds through do not help at all. Would have been so much better if we had an audio guide with pre-recorded commentary we could stop or pause and just walk around on our own and read all the inscriptions.

162. spoilt by disrespectful neanderthals

I have wanted to visit this site after listening to stories from a member of my family who helped liberate one of the camps in Germany. Auschwitz was always the most mentioned camp and probably the most infamous. My wife and I were disappointed and somewhat upset by other persons visiting at the same time, a number of whom had personal music playing, dropping litter and being generally obnoxious. this may have not been the norm, but we found this to be distasteful. The atmosphere here is solemn, and respect must be shown, when we found ourselves in a quiet part away from the normal tourist parts. I found it eerily quiet and grim, you can almost feel the presence of the lost souls in this place. That, I feel, is enough said about the actual camp. Birkenau is basically a ruin with a few inmate huts still viewable and a memorial to view, there is a sole railway carriage to see which sits on the rails going through the camp, but having done some research, this is NOT of the type typically used to transport people here. There is very little to see, but still needs visiting. You DO NOT NEED A GUIDED TOUR. if you arrive before 10.00 hrs you can tour the camp unaccompanied, go at your own pace and not feel rushed, the guided tours move very quickly as they have limited time to waste on mere mortals such as us, the tourists. I spoke to 2 guides who were standing about waiting for a group to move and found them rude, arrogant and condescending. Go on your own, entry is free, but you do need all day to see both sites comfortably. car parking is free, the camp has its own car parks, avoid people you see trying to direct you elsewhere than the camp entry road, as you will end up paying to park and visiting nearby shops. Arrive as early as possible (8a.m.0 and avoid

the rush, Auschwitz gets VERY busy for what was, essentially, an extermination camp. Lastly, be careful of the size and type of bag or handbag you wish to take in with you as only a certain size, etc is allowed. There is a size scale on display for comparison. The staff on the entrance will turn you away if not satisfied, and they should be called guards because their attitude I found to be offensive and some appeared to dislike British or Americans, in that I saw several stopped and searched, whereas I observed German women allowed in with handbags/shopping bags big enough to hide a small car inside! Overall I highly recommend everyone who is able to visit Auschwitz-Birkenau I found it a very moving experience. BUT there is a lot that could easily be corrected to make the visit a much better experience. in my humble opinion, if an entrance fee was charged this would be a great help in the upkeep of the museum and would possibly keep the morons away.

163. Must see but no emotion

Auschwitz is horrible. As a Unesco heritage sight it does not do proper respect for the atrocities committed.

We arrived and had colored tags put on us based on the tour we were assigned to. I asked do they understand the irony or how inappropriate this was... No.

The tour was riddled with a weird political agenda of the guide and did not focus on the phenomena or the atrocities surrounding the place.

This is a must see place but the program and the venue are botched.

164. interesting place

very interesting place as history is concerned, it should be seen as a reminder to everyone about terrible things in Europe. But the current concept of "museum" and his tour is terrible

165. Interesting and confrontational museum

Do not mistake this for a fun tourist attraction. It is a museum to learn about the past. It is very interesting and confrontational as it explicitly explains the atrocities committed in the camp.

There were a number of people in our group crying.

Our tour guide was impressively knowledgeable but which guide you get seems to be luck.

The major downside is that the tours are very poorly organised so it was quite chaotic and groups kept bumping into each other. This really detracted from the experience and is why I am giving it a lower score. We waited for ages for our group to be organised and as a result we only had time to see Auschwitz I, not Auschwitz-Birkenau as well (we had paid for both).

Be aware that you have to pay to use the bathroom so bring change.

166. Dissatisfied

What to say? I was here 15 years ago and things were a lot different. Birkenau is very impressive and made me realise how horrible things must have been. We were there early so not very busy. Parking is only allowed at the designated parking lot.

You can only visit the watchtower in a group. A group tour must be booked in advance and you must pay for the guide.

I was anxious about Auschwitz I because of the visit 15 years ago. Upon arrival I was shocked. There were at least 40 buses standing there and we had to wait in a long queue before we could enter. We booked tickets in advance but it stated nowhere that you don't have to wait in the

same line as the people who did not book in advance.

The security check was shocking. Same as on an airport. Finally, we booked for 15.10 but got in at 16.00 hrs, we could enter the museum. There were so many people that it looked like an amusement park. Sorry for that, but people were also laughing and making pictures at barracks and electric fences while laughing and smiling. Really sickening!

The large number of groups made looking around impossible and entering buildings was like entering an attraction; little by little standing in line and queuing.

Go visit Birkenau and if you can Theresienstadt in the Czech Republic. Less people and more realistic. Auschwitz I has turned into a worldwide circus

167. A Little Disappointing

It's difficult to explain but I was left feeling disappointed with my visit to Auschwitz, perhaps this is a little inevitable with somewhere as famous for all the wrong reasons as this museum. As others have noted, it's very commercial with hordes of tourists being escorted around in groups, which makes it feel very production-line-ish and a little surreal. Some quiet time to wander on your own, some more information to read (rather than only listening to the monotone of your tour guide), some audio-visual presentations, and a better organized entry and exit system would definitely help.

168. Important Experience but badly run.

We took a bus from the basement floor of bus station which was inexpensive (7zł). Look at huge timetable in bus station for Oswiecim and it will give you which bay your bus is at. The bus will then have a sign in the window. The journey takes about an hour and a half. Do not buy a return ticket as there are many bus companies that can take you back and you don't want to have to wait around for your specific bus.

Once there the chaos began. People everywhere, no real directions where to go. We had bought our ticket online prior to our trip and booked an English speaking tour. Queued to get in what we presumed was the entrance. When we reached the top I was told my handbag was too big and I had to pay to have it stored away. I was uncomfortable leaving my bag but I had no choice. (It was an average sized handbag and if it's small enough for Ryanair it should be small enough for anywhere :-))

Then I had to go through a metal detector which was more rigorous than any airport I've been in. I set it off and they were not happy. The guy said I must have something under my dress which is ridiculous but a girl then came over to scan me. At my back the scanner beeped and she says yes you have something under there. Confused and bewildered I said yes I'm wearing a bra. Oh right she said, laughs and walks off.

After being given our headsets we waited half an hour for our tour time. We were not told about the film we are supposed to watch beforehand and we missed it. Our tour was called on time but then we waited for it to begin outside in the blazing hot sun for another 20 mins. It was 30 degrees the day we visited.

Our guide was nice but her accent was a little strong and at times I zoned out because I couldn't understand her. We went around the museum which consists of a large number of buildings. It's an experience I will never forget and to be honest can't really explain. It's just something you

have to do.

There was a number of people in wheelchairs on our tour and while they could hear everything going on they were unable to actually go into any of the buildings.

This part of the tour took about 2 and a half hours. With the heat of the day and the journey just to get there we were already pretty tired and at this stage at least a quarter of the people on our tour left. We were given 10 minutes to take a toilet break, grab some more water and head to the bus to take us to Birkenau which is 10 minutes away.

Birkenau or Auschwitz 2 is a second camp and here you can visit a memorial, an ash pit and some of the rooms that people slept/lived in. For the most part you are outside and its a kilometer from the entrance to the memorial so you are going to walk a minimum of 2 kilometers here. It was hard work standing in the sun listening to our guide for roughly an hour. It is still something I am so glad I did. You return back to Auschwitz 1 on the bus and its at this same stop that you can catch a bus back to Krakow (Dont forget to pick up your handbags ladies) Everyone slept on the bus on the way home. We were exhausted. From leaving our hotel in the morning and doing it all ourselves to arriving back it took us from 9.30am-6.30pm so don't plan on doing anything else on this day. (Im sure going on a private tour is a little different)

I can't say I enjoyed this trip both because it is harrowing and because of how its run but I would still recommend it and think its something everyone needs to see. Never Forget.

169. Rushed....not given time to explore

I probably should of not done the tour, but got there by my own steam. I wanted to explore the site myself, and take my time reading and absorbing. Unfortunately, tour groups just keep pushing you through so you only get seconds to see something. No time to read anything, or see other parts of the site. I will be avoiding tours on future holidays and business trips because they don't deliver what I expect.

170. Book tickets online

Touching place but frustrating day. Arrived very early but all English tours booked so u cannot get into the museum until 3. There is a free bus to the main camp donated but vw nice touch. Its a massive camp & brings home how calculated this extermination campaign was. Definitely visit just be better organised than I wad

171. Auschwitz/Birkenau tour .

Auschwitz tour very good and interseting, but very crowded - kept getting mixed with other groups. Birkenhau - the Guide walked quite fast, not allowing much time to look around - also we could not hear the commentary,so did not get much information

172. Be careful - pickpockets in action

Unfortunately our trip to this incredibly moving site was spoiled by my mum's purse being pick pocketed whilst we were in one of the busy museum buildings. Some of the buildings you are squashed into with other tour guided groups swopping positions on a regular basis. We visited on a Sunday it was very busy - there were many clusters of people hanging around so it was hard to narrow down who the pickpockets could have been.

Don't let this put you off visiting this thought provoking site but just be careful with your belongings

173. Figure out a Way to Avoid the Crowds and the Poor Operations!!!!

The assumption is you will travel here, because it is something to be seen. No arguments from me.

However, all efforts should be made to figure out how to see the place without the crowds. As I write this I see another review to my right on the screen that describes this place as 'like Disneyland' and I couldn't agree more. As a matter of fact their first sentence is mine too. I also booked a 10:30 English speaking tour and gave us half an hour to check in, that is to get through the doors. I thought it was a good plan. Well it wasn't.

You can visit Auschwitz and Birkenau on your own. Start at Auschwitz as soon as it opens and then catch the shuttle bus to Birkenau. There is definitely something to be said about absorbing the place, and all of its meaning, without the throngs of tourists. But you need to get there early. Perhaps stay overnight in Oswiecim to get there early.

You need tickets for a tour and the tickets sell out in advance so purchase tickets on-line way in advance of your visit. And when you have tickets, get there at least 1 1/2 hours early, maybe 2 hours. The line to get in when we were there was maybe 75 people long, but it didn't move. Some people were cutting in front of us. I started getting nervous because we weren't going to get in by 10:30. I approached a number of employees who were working outside. They didn't appear to be giving instructions, asking for those who had tours to move upfront, trying to make sure people didn't cut in front or provide any sort of information to the crowd waiting to get in. They just stood there. I left my family in line to ask someone by the doors what people with tickets were supposed to do if their tour was starting. They told me to come through the group line. Once we got through the group line we were shuffled in through security quickly, were given headsets and told to chase our English speaking tour down. Supposedly there is a movie to watch before the tour. We had no time for that. We ran through the 'Arbeit Macht Frei' gate and caught our tour. Additional people joined our tour for the next 15 minutes. There were so many people. Two really excellent mentions should be the English speaking tour guide who was just great and the communication system the tours used. Our guide had a microphone that transmitted to our headsets so we could hear her when we weren't right by her which was often the case as we moved in single file past many displays and as we climbed and descended stairways.

The shuttle bus to Birkenau was a disaster. We were packed in like sardines. I was near the door. A number of us were told to lean in onto others as the bus doors closed so we weren't injured.

At Birkenau we didn't have the headsets and it was much harder to hear our tour guide because at many of the stops there were a number of tour guides and all of the noise made it hard to just hear your tour guide.

There is some type of operational review that needs to be done with this place or the number of tourists has to be limited even more. We were there on April 3rd and all we could think of is "what does the place feel like during peak tourist season?"

174. Like Disneyland, far too busy to appreciate

Thought I was being slick booking the first English speaking tour at 10:30am of a morning. Boy was I wrong. Tour groups of up to 30 start the tour every 15 minutes.

You can't see much and get near to exhibits as there are so many people in front of you.

The guide was very good but you get dragged everywhere.

As I was staying across the street, I made sure that I was there the following day at 8am, so I could walk around to get a 'feel' for the place and show my respects before the big tour buses start turning up from Krakow from 9:30am onwards.

There were no crowds at 8am and I could wander around, with no tour guide and just take my

time, letting the history and horror of what happened to those poor people sink in.

If you have the money, i think you can pay for a private tour that starts at 8am, so you pretty much have the exhibits to yourselves before the masses arrive.

I dont think it is right that one of the original gas chambers where people were murdered the furnaces has been rebuilt and the chimney also. For what purpose? The tourists? We know what when on there, rebuilding things isnt needed.

It is a good museum but i feel, like everything else, it has become a tourist trap.

It is good that people come to educate themselves about the holocaust and the museum needs to make money, but limiting numbers would be helpful.

175. Worth visiting but I just felt something was missing.

Visiting Auschwitz and Birkenau was the reason for our break in Krakow.

We got to Auschwitz before 10.00am so could enter for free without using a tour guide. I am pleased we did this as the tour groups are very regimented. It gets very busy. We went into most of the exhibition halls and many were very moving but it was somewhat sterile and did not quite hit the emotions as hard as I think it should. I cannot really explain why it is just how I feel.

Birkenau was more moving. It is a must to visit and good to see so many people, including younger people, going there and I can only hope it helps highlight and stop man's inhumanity to fellow man.

176. Entry

I just entered to have a ticket, then they send me back again to leave my lackage, so leave your lackage 1st on the left before the museum gate, it costs 3 zl, then I had a ticket with a tour guid, I passed through the style gate then went to the cinema for a documentary after that I recieved my radio guid and waited for the guid

177. Never To be Forgotten

We managed to book a personal guide on line through the official website which is highly recommended. However the administration is sadly lacking and the arrival procedures from parking to entry is very confusing and totally dis organised. Park in the Museum parking and have Zlotys ready, forget Euro they have an exchange bureau inside to change! You would not believe how the Euro is alien to Poles despite EU membership!!!! Everywhere.

The camp and exhibits at Auschwitz are very real and the proof is evident everywhere, this did happen! The Birkenheau camp is massive and you need good walking shoes and mud proofed, the transit bus will take you there.

We visited on the day of the 70th Anniversary liberation which restricted us a little but this place will never be forgotten.

178. Don't come to Kraków just to visit Auschwitz

I came to this site to see for myself the atrocities against thousands of people who did not deserve it. I was looking for a moving experience, something that would make me understand a fraction of what the Jewish people went through. Unfortunately there are just too many people, the tour is far too rushed and the staff are incredibly rude and not helpful in the slightest. For a world class museum the facilities are, quite frankly cheap; not appropriate for the amount of people who enter each year. I also had the Belgium minister for Defence on my tour. The Ministers entourage were not a problem the guide however catered that tour for the VIP and barely spoke to the group, ie constant private discussion not over the system. In my opinion there are plenty of other places in Europe to learn about the holocaust and the plight of the

Jewish people. Auschwitz is not one of them. My advice, don't come to Kraków just to see Auschwitz.

179. I'd never go back to Poland

I'll start by saying that the entire train journey from Krakow to here, every 5 minutes or so I'd look out the window of the train and see graffiti with stars of David and red lines going through them (like no smoking) except for no Jews.

This country is rife with racism and the mentality clearly hasn't changed.

Auschwitz brings people all over the world to this place and is a lucrative business for Poland which by the looks and feel of it, that's the lasting legacy... money.

The place itself was the purpose for my trip to Poland on a 15 day Euro trip doing a crazy 15 countries in 15 days. The restaurant on location was not very nice either, rude staff! but ok food. Well, I got this off the bucket list.

Brace yourselves mentally before visiting this place and they charge you to use the toilet.

180. horrific but remember your manners

Everyone should see this once . Fact. The Holocaust is horror . Fact. You would however hope that school groups from Israel would refrain from pushing everyone out of the way to view the museum and not climb over exhibitions as if your historic suffering entitled you to do so. The population of the world should behold the horror of this disgusting place without naughty children who should , you would hope, know better , and have some respect . I thought about sitting down on the latrines but refrained out of respect only to see hordes of military clad teenagers leap over then as if it was an assault course. Peace is equal rights and justice, religion divides . Just be human and remember

181. A lesson on inhumanity but avoid the guided tours....

This place is a memorial to those who suffered greatly and is a reminder of mans inhumanity to many races and creeds. Its history should never be forgotten or ever repeated. It is easy to reach by bus or train and we only paid for the guided tour (40ztl). We ended our tour disappointed that it was too rushed. You did not have enough time to look at picture or displays before the next group of tourists entered the area and you had to keep up with your guide. Areas like the displays of hair, shoes, suitcases, death wall, gas chamber and crematorium were a poignant reminder of the suffering but outside of that you did not get a real feel of the camps. Our guide even removed a tissue and excused herself to wipe away a tear to try to ramp up the emotion. Our tour of Auschwitz lasted 90 mins and Birkenau 60 mins well short of the average 3 and a half to 4 hours that was recommended. It would be best to go to Auschwitz before 10am and wander around for free and at your own pace. You will get a deeper understanding of your visit.

182. Moving without being harrowing

I felt almost obliged to visit Auschwitz and the sister camp of Birkenau by being in the area. I expected it to be more harrowing than it was. Auschwitz is much smaller than I had thought and the blocks remain as they were. Small things were very moving, the fact that the stairs on the accomodation blocks wer warn, the cracks of light through boarded up windows and the watch towers; the more obvious diaplays of thousandsof shoes and suitcaes, hair, and brushes was also very moving. The photographs are also very moving. The only downside was being on an English speaking tour, the group was far too large (over 30 people) and their was no control of the guide so people wandered off and got lost and its only when you lose you audio that you relais you have lost your group. Maybe have more guides so the groups size is more manageable.

183. Polish 'English speaking' tour guides need to improve their English and be more sensitive to their audience

It would have helped if the Polish guide knew how to pronounce the words she'd obviously learnt by rote. She mentioned the 'ray-tee-ons' several times, until I realised she meant 'rations' and in the meantime had missed further crucial information. I couldn't hear what she said the hair was used for (we all had headphones but she didn't speak clearly). I asked others in the group and they said it was used for fat. I knew that was wrong as the human fat was used for soap. Only later with another unrelated tour in Krakow did I discover it was used for matting.

I asked the guide there about the controversy regarding the Carmelite Monastery that had claimed the site in the 1970's. She said it was all propaganda and they were only using one building and had erected a crucifix. I didn't have the inclination or energy to try to explain to her how inflammatory and offensive this symbol is, especially where the perpetrators were followers of that faith.

184. NOT a museum but a landmark of human suffering.

I visited twice, once part of a guided tour in May, and then a month later on my own. I recommend going alone. The crowds after 10 am in May were crushing and noisy and it was hard to hear the commentary even with headphones, or to concentrate on the sights.

Visit the memorials and ruins at the back of Birkenau. Quite a lot of walking, so take water. When I approached the crematoria ruins there, I detected a strong burning smell, but it soon dissipated. I wished I had brought flowers as an offering for the large memorial to all those murdered at the camp. Poor signage and time constraints prevented me from finding the Jewish and Roma memorials at Birkenau, which were supposedly nearby.

The film is not offered in English very often and the Polish version does not have subtitles. It is old war footage of the camp.

There is a lot of territory to cover so one day is really not sufficient, especially given the crowding. What the guides offer SHOULD be offered on audio without heavy accent.

Overall, the scene is chaotic and getting around is time consuming.

Be sure to have a look at the boxcars in Birkenau, a memorial to the Hungarian Jews.

185. A lot depends on guide

While this is a place every one must visit, the experience could have been better if the guide could speak better English. We joined a compulsory guided tour with an oldish female guide who was quite rude when we said we could not hear. Her reaction amazed us as we expected more compassion specially at this historic place. She did not wait to ensure that everyone had the correct channel on the receiving device nor did she wait for the whole group to be around before she commenced her narration. Unless you were right behind her in this group of nearly 30-35 and could lip read as well, it was not easy to follow her. However, you can still visualise all that had happened here and it is hard not to be moved by what you see. The only reason I am giving this attraction 3 stars is due to our experience with the guide.

186. Not as i expected

Offcourse we have all seen the tv-documentairies and offcourse we SHOULD all see what humanity is capable of, but it just didn't do it for me.

So extremely commercialized and so extremely busy! The tour guide was very good, knew a lot and spoke very well and passionate but... she was in a hurry.

I have seen more camps and this one is not in my top 5. Birkenau was absolutely impressive because of the hugeness, but Auschwitz was just not so impressive as i thought.

187. Avoid over-crowded tourist peak season!

I visited Auschwitz and Birkenau in late July 2014 and was quite disappointed in the overall experience and I felt compelled to write about it. Before I booked my visit I was faced with the dilemma of joining a group tour or going on my own. After reading several posts on the subject I decided to go on my own.

I took an 8:05 bus (not a mini-van) from the Krakow Główny station and arrived at Auschwitz around 9:30. As long as you arrive before 10 am you have the option to walk through the museum completely on your own. From 10 am on you are required to join a tour. However, there seemed no point in doing it on my own since there were hundreds and hundreds of tourists and group tours already in the "queue" by the time I arrived. I knew it would be crowded with tourists but I wasn't prepared for this. The situation outside the entrance was a bit chaotic as people were just being herded in through the gate like cattle. I was surprised and quite shocked that the overall atmosphere was more of a rock concert or a Boxing Day sale than that of a revered place of historical importance. It was a disappointing start. The staff, however, were very polite, patient and helpful; they were just doing their job.

So I bought my ticket and joined a tour that started at 10 am. There were approximately 30 in my group. We were told that the tour of Auschwitz I would last approximately 2 hours and then Birkenau (Auschwitz II) would last approximately 1 hour. That's the standard tour and I thought that would be sufficient and since I was on my own I could stay after and walk around for as long as I wanted. Our tour guide (looking around at the crowds of people) pointed out that the museum was designed to accommodate 300,000 visitors per year and now they have more than 1.2 million visitors per year!

What was most frustrating was that the first tour took 2 hours not because of the detailed historical information provided by our tour guide, but because we spent most of our time waiting for other group tours to exit buildings before we could enter. There were hordes and hordes of people inside buildings, waiting to enter, just exiting, in between etc. Even though groups went together into all the buildings and were required to wait, the buildings inside were still way beyond maximum capacity making it extremely unpleasant, over-crowded and not nearly possible to fully absorb the sites or to read the placards. Even if I had not joined a tour and had walked through on my own, I would still be fighting with elbows in my face and iPads pointed at my head. I was expecting my visit of Auschwitz to be a very emotional and moving one. Instead I felt like I was in line to see the Mona Lisa. This was the situation for Auschwitz I.

Next our tour group took a shuttle bus to Birkenau. Birkenau is the size of a small airport so, fortunately, the tour groups were spread out quite a bit. This part of the tour was much better but I was still disturbed by what I had experienced at Auschwitz. After the guided tour ended I was on my own to walk around Birkenau or go back to Auschwitz I.

So, if you're planning a visit to Auschwitz I would strongly discourage you to go during the peak tourist season (May to September). If you have no choice then perhaps you can visit after 3 pm when it is slightly less crowded. Apart from this tour, I had such an amazing experience in Krakow. I really loved the city and I think the people were very friendly and kind. I also went on the salt mine tour the next day which was so well organized and tourist-friendly compared to Auschwitz.

I strongly feel that something needs to be done to protect and preserve Auschwitz. There are

several religious groups who feel that it should be permanently closed to visitors. I don't think that's the answer either. However, during peak season they should seriously consider limiting the number of tourists per day and staggering visiting times, otherwise I fear that the emotional significance of a place of historical importance like Auschwitz will be diminished by tourism.

188. The Museum traded honesty for Polish reputation, to its discredit

I just got back from the Museum at the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. One is not able to visit the camp without a guide, provided by the State-owned museum.

I won't write about the camps or the tour without first addressing a key fact about the camps as they operated: Information about the camps and what was going on within them was limited and mixed at the time. In social contexts truth itself is elusive, and people sometimes choose to act on what would be convenient for them to believe instead of what actually seems likelier.

At the time the camps were operational, most people in the civilized world at least knew the serious speculation about what the camps were up to. Most European Jews at least knew the rumors about the camps, for example, and some chose to flee or join Partisan groups – but many others hoped against hope that the rumors were false.

Of course many people were able to be very clear about the truth, because they had less personally at stake than those deciding between risky flight or risky trust of authority. Jews living thousands of miles away found it easier to be honest with themselves than the Jews facing the terrible choice, and so were less likely to believe the lies about the camps.

Certainly the allied governments knew very clearly what was going on, but did not make liberating the camps a priority (partly to protect sources of intelligence, and partly to concentrate the war effort on closing the circle around the Axis powers).

The people of Poland who lived in the vicinity of the camps certainly knew. Polish leaders certainly knew. There are endless proofs of Polish collaborators.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau museums were first set up in the very early post-war period.

Presumably by the Polish government that was set up in large part according to Stalin's wishes and according to the Bolshevik program, according to the shameful agreements reached in Yalta (without any members of the Polish-government-in-exile, who had been duly and legally elected prior to the simultaneous invasion by the Bolsheviks and Germans).

It's almost 25 years since the illegal government of Poland fell, and more than 65 years after the camps were liberated. But, unfortunately, the museum presents the history of the camps in a manner that is more in line with what one would expect from the late Communist government than with what one expects from a Parliamentary democracy.

I suppose that I came to the museum and the camp, in part, to see and hear an apology on behalf of the Polish people, for the role which a not-small number of collaborators played in the Holocaust. I do not deny that there were strong and decent Poles, or that Poles were victimized by both Nazis and Bolsheviks. But many Poles collaborated willingly. And, I would contend, with their eyes open – though the official line of the museum disagrees with me here.

Not only were Poland's collaborators ignored and glossed over in the tour, a great deal of “spin” was applied to make questions of collaboration go away. At every turn the exhibit and guide showed, underscored and drew attention to the efforts by the Germans to hide the truth from the wider world. The implication was that the Polish people at the time were only victims and had no idea what was happening under their noses. This claim was actually stated as a fact by our guide, though I don't know how many guides make this claim on their tours.

Of course, they want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to ignore the existence of collaborators, but to still have heroes. At every opportunity it was mentioned that this-or-that photograph or proof of what was going on had been smuggled out by some brave Polish local. Given that, according to the museum, some locals knew what was going on and took decent action, it is an act of fantasy to wish that nobody else around knew what was going on at all.

The French at least recognize that they had villains in the Vichy government, even if impossibly large numbers of the French in 1950 claimed to have worked for the Resistance. It's like the overwhelming number of Americans who, when asked in the late '70s how they had voted in 1972 claimed to have voted McGovern. As Plutarch once said "hypocrisy is the honor that vice pays to virtue."

The museum maintained by the Polish government, however, is behaving in a similar manner to the Japanese government, vis-a-vis China and Korea in WWII. Each is maintaining silence about unspeakable crimes committed by their own people.

The sites themselves were sickening and overwhelming, and many others have written clearly about those things, with prose and poetry that I can't match. But some portion of the sick and disgust I am left with – I don't know how much or what the mix is – is disgust at the whitewashing done by the Museum and its staff.

189. I can not rate this

It was an emotional journey. All that I have read before can not describe the feeling that I had when I saw that buildings. Right to the entrance when I saw the place where the Nazi fanfare was playing for the deported, I have made chicken skin and all the Journey kept like this. Our guide was telling us with so much compassion for what happened there, that we almost imagine that time through our eyes.

190. Auschwitz

It was very difficult to rate and give my review a title - you cannot sum up the experience of your visit in a few words. Impossible.

I have always wanted to visit Auschwitz. I was brought up in Slovakia and I grew up reading about WW2, it was something I have always taken a keen interest in since the age of about 10. I have read about this camp and the rest, Sobibor, Majdanek, Treblinka, Sachsenhausen, and the hundreds of others. I looked at countless photos, read a huge amount of literature about the survivors and their stories, the medical experiments, the gas chambers. Therefore I did not think I would leave the camp with the same sense of shock others describe. I was wrong - no amount of reading can prepare you for staring at the piles of human hair, cut from the heads of gassed victims. The baby clothes, taken from children who were dead shortly after getting off the trains. The luggage, with the owners' names on them. And seeing the barracks, the solitary cells and lastly, the crematoria. I have seen the aerial photos of the camp, but again seeing the sheer size was intense - we walked on the path where millions walked to their deaths and when we sat down on the steps by the crematoria in Birkenau, I could feel my eyes well up and I was shaking a bit.

The 3 star rating is based on the fact that unfortunately the tour and lot of the exhibits seem to concentrate on Polish inmates. All throughout the tour, it was 'Polish political prisoners, Polish Jews, Polish people'. There was very little mention of other nations, despite the fact that the memorial in Birkenau contains 22 stone plaques, each with the same message, but each in a different language - the languages spoken by people murdered in Auschwitz. One of the rooms in Auschwitz 1 contained a large display, with the estimated number of people deported to the camps - 430 thousand from Hungary, 300 thousand from Poland. Hungarian Jews were the largest deported group by far and most of the famous, instantly recognisable photos of the

selections are of Hungarian transports, yet they were not mentioned once. I understand that this was the largest camp and that Poland suffered a great deal during the war, however, the staff should be factual and unbiased and not focus largely on their own country. Also, this year happens to be the 70th anniversary of the Hungarian transports, as Hungary did not start deportations until 1944 - I saw that there was a temporary exhibit in one of the barracks, but this was again not mentioned or pointed out at all.

The above does not change the fact that this was one of the most upsetting and humbling places I have ever visited and a quote on the wall in one of the barracks will stay with me for a long time - `The one who does not remember history is bound to live through it again`.

191. a strange mixture

Anyone going to Auschwitz expects to be changed by the experience, but we were not. The main camp is not what springs to mind at the mention of Auschwitz - that is the camp at Birkenhau . The main camp is a collection of displays, albeit in original barrack blocks, of a work camp, that really look tired, offer no real narrative and give you little space for reflection. Compared with say, Yad vashem or other Holocaust museums, all you can say about this is that you were at least there. The Birkenhau leg of the tour involves a lot of walking. Truly shocking things are seen, but they could be much more effective. In Auschwitz itself there is one reconstructed gas chamber, which is a very eery place to be. All in all, needs someone to really re-design the whole experience.

Review level: POOR (192 – 218).

192. Very bleak

Came here as thought it would be a must see. However felt it was a way to get people to pay to see others misery. Guided tour and you are given a set of headphones and a radio pack for the guide to give you information as you walk around. The headphones have been used previously by many others however on questioning this was told they were new and clean health and safety none!! Anyway walked around various buildings some with just pictures on the wall others with remains - hair in particular in them. Guide kept reminding us that this was evidence it happened. Ending in gas chamber with advice notice prior to going in that people died in there, not to take photographs and be quiet as a mark of respect - surely the mark of respect would be don't allow people in there!! Found it particularly odd that people were taking selfies! Second camp was bigger, wide open and very cold easier to imagine what went on there and some memorials dotted around as reminders basically you are walking on the ashes of those killed.

193. Changes for the Worse

I visited Auschwitz a couple years ago and comparing it to today with the changes, I would say it is not as good and many of the changes are actually not beneficial to understanding the history of Auschwitz or Birkenau. First, they no longer allow unguided tours, except for limited hours, at the end of the day. The groups, even in the off-season, are over-populated, the guides do not have time to answer questions and the whole tour is rushed to the point that the guide is skipping key points of the museum, (let alone allowing time to read the displays or get pictures). To get an adequate understanding, you have to wait until tour is over and go back through when there is no requirements for guides, which with two museum grounds, almost requires two days. I am assuming that most people come here once, so for someone to get the full understanding requires backtracking. Luckily, I had been through Auschwitz before, but for my guest, it was not enjoyable. The management says that they changed the policy because of the number of people that are visiting, but, at least on the day we were there, it appeared to be the same as before. Trust me, if you are only going on the guided tour, you are missing so much. Please, go back through at your own pace and discover everything the guide skipped, (and by the way, there are buildings that cover the history of individual countries.

194. Didn't get what I wanted to from the experience

Far too many groups, felt hurried. Visitors were taking phone calls and I even saw someone playing Pokemon Go. If you want to see a disgusting representation of modern society's attitude to the world, I recommend you visit this place. No staff inside the complex whatsoever to combat this.

Not enough areas had been left as they once were - whether this was avoidable or not I do not know. I personally didn't need educating on the subject, I wanted to feel something from the visit. I left with nothing more than resentment for the way in which the day turned out. Birkenau is a far more authentic experience - I recommend spending more time there instead

195. A very disappointing trip!

I have been wanting to visit Auschwitz & Birkenau for as long as I can remember! So when my fiancée and I booked a trip to Poland, we knew this trip was at the very top of our to-do list. I had heard so much and read many reviews about how sad we would feel, that it is "harrowing" and that "not even the birds sing there". Needless to say, we were prepared.

We organised the trip through Escape2Poland who were very good... But then they handed us over to our tour guide.

When we arrived at the Aushwitz camp, all we saw was rows of coaches and hundreds of people hanging around. I know this is a popular attraction, but I literally felt like we'd just arrived at an amusement park!

My first complaint is having to pay to use the toilet facilities! (As you won't get the chance to go during the tour, this is your only chance) Now don't get me wrong, it literally only cost approx. 30p, but no one warned us to take spare change for this and that's my issue.

We were supplied with headsets so we were able to hear our guide. She was very informative when we actually got going but you really did have to try and keep up with her, otherwise it would cut out and you couldn't hear a thing. Someone in the group raised this with her... But she blamed it on the wind. This was a great shame, as I felt there was only time for a quick snap on my camera, not fully appreciating what it was I was photographing and then we had to move on. There are some things on display you are not allowed to photograph however, like the tonnes of hair for example, but not everyone respected this rule and snapped away anyway. Of course, our guide was far ahead and wasn't even aware of this.

My fiance and I both felt that we were almost on a conveyor belt. We had to wait for a group ahead to move on before we could, and we already had groups of people stacking up behind us. We didn't have time to allow all the information to sink in and reflect back. We didn't have time to even comprehend what happened there. We were given the facts and moved onto the next. I was so genuinely disappointed.

We then got back on the minibus and were driven a short distance to Birkenhau camp. We didn't have headsets this time and the tour ran smoother. There wasn't as many groups there as there was at Aushwitz camp.

Our tour guide waited for everyone to catch up this time, so there was a chance for photos. However, whenever someone asked a question, she only answered that individual. I feel that she could have answered questions to the whole group as we were all walking around together.

Overall, I'm glad we went on the trip, but I was very disappointed. I feel like it's less of a memorial and more a money-making business, getting people in and out the door. We are seriously considering going back in the future and doing a private tour of the camps to see if we have a different experience next time.

196. *Magnitude of the horror lost by way the site is run*

This review may seem inappropriate given what happened there, but I am trying to separate the two things - commemorating and remembering the absolute tragedy versus how the sites are run.

We took a private transfer having booked online onto the earliest possible English guided tour. On a quiet day at the start of the season the place was heaving by 10am. You are hooked up via ear piece to your guide (the groups are 30 people) and walked around Auschwitz first of all. You cannot stop to contemplate the horror of what you are seeing (the personal items for example) as there are so many other people flowing behind you. Our guide did not seem to welcome questions, again presumably as this slows your progress. Somewhere there needs to be a balance between ensuring people see it versus truly feel it. Food and drink are available at the entrance and in the short break between the camps.

After just under two hours you take a shuttle bus to the extermination camp at Birkenau. This is a large open site and in Summer try having something to shade you from the sun like a pocket umbrella (as the guide did). I could not believe that kids were allowed to picnic in the railway arch at the entrance, or that the lone railway carriage was not roped off to prevent smiling selfies. The Nazis destroyed much of what was here, and the memorial at the top end of the site seemed strangely unkempt considering what it is there to remember.

When we tried to talk to our guide about this he was uninterested. 'Everybody wants to see it' was his response. Doesn't excuse trying to improve it so visitors get even more out of it

197. Organisation terrible, experience should have been much worse

Its wrong to turn up at 1 o'clock in the afternoon only to be told there are no guides available and you have to go in on your own. We were only four adults and people were left for no good reason at all for over 2 and a half hours before they could go in.

Surely the purpose of this facility is to make people feel outraged by what one human did to another in the hope it would deter people from doing it again. This being the case why wasn't sound, smell and life size figures used to communicate the effect better so that people are shocked by what went on. Instead there are empty buildings with pictures on the wall with the odd few objects used. For something as bad as it was I feel an opportunity is missed.

198. How not to bring history to life

"One death is a tragedy, one million is a statistic" - Joseph Stalin.

It seems trite and disrespectful to "review" a mass extermination camp, so this is based purely on the tour.

Rather ironically, large groups are herded in to the entrance to aushwitz, frisked and labelled with stickers - the gravitas of irony becomes apparent as you walk round the camp. Without the help of our expert driver who found where we should go I imagine we would still be milling around the car park now or maybe end up in the strategically positioned KFC just outside the camp (no, sadly that's not even a distasteful joke).

Our tour guide took us round both camps alongside a few other thousand people, rushed around buildings to view a morbid collection of personal effects, negotiating past groups of disrespectful teenagers.

Information presented was generic, regularly repeated and contradicted. At very few points was there ever an opportunity to actually understand the day to day life and struggles of inhabitants let alone reflect upon the depravity of the situation. As we were herded around, I was left with a bad taste in my mouth.

Having listed to four hours of a walking, talking Wikipedia page, I was ready to go. I subsequently learned more and had more emotional connection to a 40 minute YouTube video presented by a camp survivor.

A purely sanitised, non educational and dare I say dull tour, wholly failing to bring to life the true horror of what was before us.

You must visit, but find a quiet time and have a self tour.

Never has the quote above been more true.

199. Went all that way and never got in.

We were unable to obtain a tour in any language we could understand. Between April and November you must book on line in advance. We did not know this and waited 90 minutes in line to pay for a tour only to be told there were no more tours in any language except Polish. You can go in During the Winter months for free without a guide. At no time were we advised that there limited amounts of foreign language tours. the place was packed with buses and cars. You may not bring anything bigger than a small clutch in. No large purses no back packs. Be forewarned.

200. Not for handicapped and a disappointing experience

After 1-1/2 hour bus drive from Krakow, we arrived at Auschwitz "museum" Hundreds of tour buses, thousands of tourists! Everyone herded like cattle through lines. Didn't realize Nazis destroyed nearly everything and what was left at Auschwitz were the brick buildings, cell blocks, with large rooms painted battleship gray, with large photos on walls, the same ones you can see in any book on Auschwitz or in any Holocaust museum. It was a very hot day and the rooms were stifling. There were exhibits showing shoes, suitcases, prayer shawls, pots, eyeglasses of victims, but again, those are sights available in any book on Holocaust. I have difficulty with stairs, so after 3 "cell block" buildings, I gave up. With the crowds, it was difficult to climb up and down because I couldn't get to a railing. I didn't go down into basement of building that had starvation rooms. But I assume they were just empty rooms. Outside grounds were difficult to walk on...dirt with lots of stones. I don't expect paved roads, that's for certain, but for handicapped, very difficult to walk or to push a wheelchair if one required it. We did go through crematorium and saw gallows where Hesse was hanged. Then bus to Birkenau. Nazis flattened it. I didn't bother to go into camp, really nothing to see except rooms with wooden bunks where many people slept, 12 to a bunk. Dutch couple showed me photo. Again, you can see these photos in any book on Holocaust if you are interested in the subject. Tour guide was very good. We were provided earphones and listening device and when she spoke, we heard the words through earphones. That was good. If I were to go again, I would go on my own to take my time and not be herded through. dependent travelers would have a more enlightened and moving experience. Bathroom facilities not located in the "camp", You must go to restaurant about one plus block away. Little shop sells water, ice cream, etc at entrance to Auschwitz. Restaurant at bus park at Birkenau. Simple buffet, pay by weight.

201. I'm going to pretend I didn't go

As a history teacher, I've been very interested to visit Auschwitz for a long time. It was a massive mistake to go in the middle of summer when the place was crawling with people, with tour groups everywhere being herded from site to site. It was noisy in places where it shouldn't be, with too many people posing for pictures in inappropriate places. I left after about an hour.

I'll come back another time when it isn't as busy, and I strongly suggest that those of you who are very familiar with the history of this place to do the same. If this is a fairly unfamiliar aspect of history to you, then visiting anytime will be worthwhile - but if you want to reflect and

contemplate in any meaningful way, then don't visit in summer - even if you do happen to be in the area.

202. Commercialisation has resulted in the loss of atmosphere

The guides who take you around are very poor, their knowledge is not in question but their attitude to their groups definitely needs to be changed. Our guide put her hood up on her anorak and walked in front of the group at one pace all the time talking into her microphone and it was obvious that she had learned the 'patter' off by heart but it actually 'meant' nothing to her. We were rushed around and not given time to look at the exhibits and if you did stop to look you were immediately lost to the rest of your group because she carried on without even bothering to check whether anyone had got 'mislaidd'. At one point I was so far back (because of trying to walk with my wheelchair on the rough roads) that I even lost the radio signal from her microphone. I know its excessively busy at all times of the year at Auschwitz but the guides forget that its the 'first' visit for the members of their groups and just because they are 'bored' doesn't mean that the visitors are. Personally, I was excessively disappointed by this because it had just turned what should have been a very moving experience into something of no importance. If you can afford it and have the opportunity try to get a private tour these might be better, although they are probably time limited as well. I didn't know these were available until too late. I have not been able to tick any of the boxes for 'does this attraction have the following' because it doesn't have any of them. There is a very small amount of souvenirs on sale at the entry counter.

203. Hard to go, hard not to go

We were both apprehensive of our visit to Auschwitz, but we need not have been concerned. It's a very sanitised experienced, drenched in political correctness and far less shocking than what one has probably already seen on newsreels. It is now simply a place to house the dreadful memorabilia and photos of those terrible years. If you are nearby, you should go as an homage to those who were exterminated, but Auschwitz doesn't feel like a concentration camp and, although some effort has been put into recreating Birkenau, there isn't much to see there.

204. An overcommercialised conveyor belt around a sanatized memorial

Having previously visited the prototype concentration camp at Sachsenhausen and the Wannsee Conference house - both on the outskirts of Berlin - it seemed fitting to complete the journey by coming to Oswiecim. One cannot fail to be moved by Birkenau - even though much of this extermination camp is now in ruins and many of the buildings are no longer safe to enter. But Auschwitz was a different matter - a conveyor belt of tourism from beginning to end. We had limited time, so were included in a group of about 30 with a guide.(you cannot visit between 10am and 3pm Apr-Oct without a guide - for which there is a charge). Even though it was 2 hours long, the tour felt (and was) extremely rushed. Our guide walked and talked almost continuously, so it was impossible to have more than a cursory glance at any of the exhibits - let alone the numerous information boards. Everything was behind glass, even the washrooms & toilet blocks - it all felt completely sterile. I really don't know what I had expected to experience at Auschwitz, but it wasn't this.

205. A monument to the dead and living

I didn't know what to expect but I was looking to find the camp being respectable and a place education and history. What I found was frightening for the view of commercialism. The system to get in is totally disorganised and you can be left waiting 2 or 3 hours to get a tour but don't worry, you can spend your time in the snack bars. My guide on the tour I took was very

knowledgeable and presented the facts with a good level of respect for the surroundings but the tours were crammed in one after the other and people treating the place like a theme park. I believe this experience could and should be presented in a better way.

206. Barely worth a visit

While the museum gives lengthy explanations of how and why concentration camps came into being, the impact of the atrocities was not well developed. Movies of horribly starved inmates do exist and would have greatly improved the displays. The most impactful displays were of the crematorium and gas chamber, and rooms full of confiscated possessions such as eye glasses and shoes. I would not go out of my way again to visit this camp.

207. Felt rushed and ripped off.

We took a day tour from Krakow and were looking forward to going round with a guide to get the most from the experience. The guide spoke good English but marched off with the group trailing behind. She didn't stop to explain things but did so as we were walking, through headphones that weren't very clear. There were buildings with exhibits that we skipped and we were given no time to read through any of the information boards. You had to pay extra to go to the toilet and when we ordered food from the canteen were charged extra for the container that they offered us for take away food. There is no taking away from the history and effect of the place itself but its management left a lot to be desired.

Show less

208. picadilly circus in poland. not a fitting way to remember.

I couldn't believe the rabble of people jostling for a place in the queue at Auschwitz nor that there were TICKET TOUTS selling entries to get in and get a place on a tour with a tour guide.

The concentration camp has become such a tourist attraction that it almost felt like rush hour on the tube in London, except I was listening to a Polish tour guide telling us about which blocks were used for punishment, washing and sleeping and where they disinfected the inmates for fear that the guards may also contract typhoid and other diseases.

The shock of what happened in the concentration camp in the past was pretty much overtaken by the utter shock of being pushed and pulled (and ordered) by the people and security men working at the camp in the current day... When you actually GET through security you'll be looking for the right headset, in the right language and then running to catch up with your tour guide who will probably already have "done" the first few blocks and checking to see which colour stickers the group has on to see if it matches with your own. It then becomes a race around blocks and glass boxes to see as much as possible as there is another tour group and guide waiting to pass through after you. The overwhelming sight of a large cabinet of shorn hair, another of shoes, suitcases and gas cannisters can almost pass you by as you try to take it all in whilst checking your headset is working and that you are still following the correct group.

I have no idea what I expected when I decided to go to Auschwitz, as I have read so much about it through school onwards (I'm British) and yet any ideas I had in my head were nothing like the reality of the picadilly circus that was block 11 and the court yard outside. Sentiments almost became null and void as you are whisked past.

I was less than impressed at the constant criticism of the Brits and Allies by the tour guide. I can understand the steering away from avoiding current day Germany, but I would hope that her

talk wasn't the standard script as it is deeply offensive to say that the British (Churchill in particular) didn't care what happened in the camps and that he and the British authorities were aware of what was going on but chose to do nothing. No mention of how war time and the 1940's were a different age and that one should understand that countries have protocols and rules to follow even in war time. I cannot defend one country's actions nor that of another as I did not live during that period and nor did the tour guide showing us around. I felt that the chat about the allies was so one sided that it was obscene and that if it was personal opinion that it should have been left out and she should have stuck to facts.

Much of Auschwitz (original camp) is also reconstructed.

After seeing the original camp we left our headsets and took the free bus to Birkenau. The gateway and railway tracks are instantly recognisable. Inside there isn't so much hussle and bussle and it was much easier to hear the guide and get a better connection with her - without so much of a rush. You cannot visit much of Auschwitz II anymore as much of it was damaged recently by floods. The gas chambers remain as rubble and there are plaques in various lanuages reminding us of what happened. Only one brick hut remains open for visitation and there are a few wooden huts (one is the toilet block) that has been reconstructed. Many of them were burnt by inmates to keep warm before liberation and other wooden huts were taken back to Germany.

Auschwitz II had a good little bookshop where you can purchase reading material in lots of different languages. The man working in the shop was extremely friendly and the prices were reasonable. We bought a few bits of literature and had a decent cup of coffee from the vending machine before heading back to the main camp on the bus.

I am glad I went to see Auschwitz but remain stunned at the circus that it has become.

I am not sure what one could do to improve the visitor experience but it definitely needs to be looked at by the Polish authorities as experiencing such chaos on arrival isn't fitting.

209. Disappointing and Poorly Organised

We visited on the 7th April and booked to go via See Krakow tours. Do not use them!! Try Cracow Tours instead! Disorganised and arrived late to pick us up from hotel. Information given on bus regarding places to meet up and the process of gaining access via airport security type scanners was poor. We were not advised of bag sizes allowed through(A4 only).Belongings had to be left on bus or left at left luggage which didn't look trustworthy.Advised to bring lunch to have between visiting camps but no time was given over to actually have it!Tours of actual museum and memorial were good but seems to have become commercialised and touristy. Sachsenhausen camp,near Berlin,is quieter and gives a better overview of the operation of the camps and daily life.

210. A humbling eye opener

I have a true passion for the history of WW2. Was overwhelmed with emotion when I came here. To be in such a terrifying and truly humbling place learning what lengths the nazis went to is something I will never forget. We are coming to a point in time where in the next decade there will be no living holocaust survivors to share their story, so let's encourage people to learn and most importantly never forget the millions of Jewish that died here.

211. A must see, but the support facilities need urgent attention

Witnessing the concentration camps themselves is a must-do and should get a far higher score than I have given. My low score is because of my disappointment at the visitor facilities provided by the museum, which frankly made me cross.

We visited in winter, so the township of Oświęcim looked grey and melancholy, as were the camps. This felt right and especially because the bleak wind and cold reminded you exactly how bad it must have been to exist on hardly any food and wearing only light clothing. It really is a disturbing place to visit, but a site we felt was important to witness for yourself at least once in your lifetime.

Looking back, we are pleased we went and especially at this time – 70 years since the end of the War.

I would like to see a far better visitors centre with adequate space for interactive multilingual exhibits and interpretation, given the huge numbers who arrive each day. A light tram or some other form of rapid transit (again with commentary) between the two camps would also be a better option than waiting in the cold for a bus. For us, the ticket hall was far too slow, the catering facilities were poor (hardly anywhere to sit in the winter), competing book stores confusing and cramped and the toilets were simply foul.

When we arrived (by car), having both museum staff and the competition waving madly to you to select their car parking seemed very odd, but I soon learned this was a common issue in Poland. It can be disconcerting when you are trying to locate the correct turning.

I know that Poland can do much better, having seen the excellent facilities at the salt mines by contrast. Of course, I don't mean that the place should be turned into some tatty tourist mecca or garden display and if funding is slow, obviously every penny must be spent on the challenges of conserving these fragile and horrible structures. However, the museum has over a million visitors a year and I think no one would object to paying a small fee to ensure that facilities are made the best they can be for future generations who still should come and bear witness to where these atrocities took place.

It really is too important to let decay and disrespectful not to provide world class visitor facilities.

212. Rushed and Very Busy

I know how important a memorial Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp is so I feel a little strange reviewing it. We took a group tour of the camp as part of a conference in Krakow. I am from Australia and so know very little about World War II in Europe or about the concentration camps - that has not changed despite touring Auschwitz Museum. There is very little information on what actually occurred in the camp other than a few photos in some buildings and plaques and signs at intervals. The guide provided information in each room but visits were extremely rushed as there were a huge number of groups moving through simultaneously. In two of the buildings we visited there were so many visitors that we were all told to keep to the left single file and to keep moving and not stop as there were many people behind us. This is how all the groups proceeded through the buildings - you entered, were given a thirty second spiel on what the building is or what happened there or why it is important and then you shuffle through with everyone else whilst you hear the exact same spiel being given to the group

behind you and in just a few minutes you are back outside again without ever really having the opportunity to take in and absorb what you are seeing. Our guide also skipped a very large number of the buildings due to time limitations which annoyed a number of people in our group, which including World War II archivists and researchers. On a side note, we had an elderly person with us and although a wheelchair was provided, the pathways and roads are in extremely poor condition and navigating the wheelchair was a great challenge. There is a very small restaurant on site and a kiosk selling snacks and drinks. Basic bathroom facilities are available at a number of places throughout the grounds.

I don't know if the lack of information is necessarily a bad thing and I am sure most people do prior research before visiting (I didn't do this as I was at a conference and this was just an organised side visit), but I felt pretty underwhelmed after this visit. I expected it to be quite 'in your face' and to come away feeling despondant but the rushed tour, huge crowds, and lack of visual information just left me disappointed. I took very little, if anything, away from my visit which I think is a shame for myself and a shame for the memory of what occurred here. I wouldn't recommend going to Krakow just to visit Auschwitz as there is more information and better exhibitions at a number of museums elsewhere.

Sadly disappointing.

213. Auschwitz is Sinking

1.4 million visitors came last year. It's the "must see attraction" that you have to come to apparently. Everyone you go in Cracow agents are selling "all included" tours of the death factory.

Compared to 15 years ago, the place is sinking under the weight of the mass tourism. Busload after busload arrives, clogging up the Soviet era entry hall and destroying all dignity and any possibility to reflect on what the place means.

The groups including noisy school kids who stand round laughing and joking outside, and unbelievably British stag parties, who are here to get drunk and party in Cracow. It's like Disney in reverse: people are coming in their droves, not to be made happy to be made sad and upset. Directly outside the gates there are pizza and burger places, tackily catering to the modern tourist's needs. There are even a couple of gaming machines if you fancy a go after your visit to where 1.1 million Jews died. Don't forget your 5 Zloty pack of 20 souvenir post cards.

Your visit will begin at Auschwitz I. Groups are crammed so tightly together, you feel like you're on a conveyor belt passing the mounds of human hair, spectacles etc. This is the case even out of season, not at a weekend. The last time I was there in summer it was so unbearable I couldn't go in.

After around 1.5 hours of listening to the excellently informed, if often robotic Polish guides, you'll be given a short break before heading to Auschwitz II (Birkenau) for generally a far shorter visit. Birkenau was the far bigger and arguably far more important killing centre.

There are arguably far better ways of learning about the holocaust than simply coming here (think documentaries, books or any number of museums worldwide). There are other camps that are far more peaceful, dignified places to make a pilgrimage to. Treblinka and Belzec come to

mind amongst the Death Camps; while Buchenwald, Mauthausen and Bergen-Belsen are good examples of "ordinary" Concentration Camps.

If despite this, you want to come, I strongly recommend NOT coming on a commercial tour. Birkenau deserves a really long, proper visit and you won't get it on them. Take the train to Oswiecim and then the bus to the camp. It's perfectly easy to do. Entry is free for individuals. Get here early and plan to spend $\frac{2}{3}$ of a day in total.

Go right down to the end of Birkenau, where there are few people. You'll have time to breathe, to think and to reflect. This is where the remains of two of the gas chambers are and the large prisoner monument. Visit the brick and wooden barrack buildings, which show that Auschwitz I was the infinitely better prisoner option. Birkenau was about death. Go up the watch tower and observe the scale of the place: far, far larger than Auschwitz I.

What happened here must never be forgotten, but our desire to say we've been destroying the place. It's so very sad to see.

214. Not what I expected

I expected to be moved to tears knowing what I know about Auchwitz / Birkenau. Unfortunately I found the experience quite sanitized and impersonal.

It is a very difficult place and I am unsure as to exactly what I would change, as it cannot become a theme park, but when the guides talk of 1.1 - 1.5 million it is so hard to comprehend the numbers I believe there should be some way of visually showing them. And more individual stories to humanize it and bring it to personal level. Also there is nowhere to sit and quietly contemplate what occurred here.

Some of the people I visited with have difficulty walking, this made visiting quite difficult and if you were in a wheel chair it would be almost impossible.

I am very glad I have been once, but I feel no need to return multiple times.

215. Rushed through

We were expecting a very sobering experience, but we were herded through so fast it was hard to register anything. We were more worried about being able to keep up and not lose our group. We went in August and I know it's high tourist season, but other tours seem to manage better. We were told we had to join a group and couldn't do it at our own pace. You wore headphones so the guide would be talking about things you couldn't even see yet and by the time you got to it they had moved on so you had to hurry to catch up. We had high expectations for this tour and it was our biggest disappointment. We are still glad we went to see it, but would never go again during high tourist season.

216. Feels tacky and like a tourist trap

For years and years I have wanted to visit Auschwitz, and in all honesty am sorry I did.

The place feels like it's free for all. The entire time I was there it felt like no one was in charge and no one was running the place or who the staff were, Staff walking about in jeans and t-shirts.

I think I seen 2 members of staff in a identifiable "Uniform."

The place was rammed with tourist and the whole experiences felt rushed and I had no time to connect with the place or feel anything, I came away from one of the worst places to ever exist in human history, cold, empty and indifferent. The guides seem to skip over things as try and hit you with all the basic facts as quickly as possible, get you in and get you out so they can move on tot he next group.

There was a woman in a wheel chair who was just left outside as there was no access for her.

A horrible experience and made me question who is actually behind the running of this place.

217. Disappointed

I've been a WWII fanatic ever since I was a little girl and when I found out that I would be heading to Krakow, I knew that a stop in Oswiecim to see Auschwitz was absolutely necessary if not mandatory. However, I felt that Auschwitz had become way too much like a museum and less like the sacred place where thousands of people died. I was shocked to see carpeted buildings, green grass with tailored trees and flowers (and the biggest horror of all... tourists having a picnic on the lawn where naked Jews used to have to run to avoid being shot at.) Instead of becoming somber because of the thousands of people who were killed at that concentration camp, I began to see the place as merely a glorified museum.

I'm not saying all of this to talk people out of visiting Auschwitz, because I realize that it is important to visit this concentration camp in order to fully understand history. However, I advise you to get into the right mindset before visiting. Understand that it USED to be a concentration camp and now it is just some buildings with a few remnants of WWII that are maintained merely for tourists to look at and realize that yes, the holocaust did happen, and no, we are not going to let it happen again.

218. could be interesting...

... if the guide wouldn't have stressed us all the time: fast explanations about what was written on the signs and then go to the next "attraction". We had no time to see the exposure, the letters, the pictures etc. As we took the bus to go to Birkenau, they really filled it up at the maximum, so you could stand without a grip.

It is a shame, it is an interesting museum but it is maybe better to do it on your own. I expected the guide to tell us more about anecdotes which they heard from the witnesses.

To resum: very touristic and crowded place (and we went during the week) , and quite bad guide.

Ah and btw, organise your food before going, there is only a little snack there, which is, of course crowded. And toilets costs 1 zł, so don't drink tooo much. ;-)

Review level: TERRIBLE (219 – 241).

219. Voyeurism at it's worst

I don't know what I expected before I went, but it certainly wasn't this! Don't get me wrong I am well aware of the horrific history surrounding this place, but that makes me question 3 things, firstly why does it feel like a tourist attraction (trust me that's what has happened, right down to the cafe's, the shops and all of the other related sales opportunities so gratuitously shoved at you)secondly if Hollywood hadn't told us all about it, how many of us would even bother going in the first place, there were thousands of concentration camps, some worse than Auschwitz, but we only get to hear what people want us to hear, for example have you heard of Treblinka, read up on it, shocking! Finally how, and perhaps most importantly, has Germany managed to walk away from this and so many other disgusting atrocities'they perpetrated in WW2 seemingly without any contrition, guilt or regret, the whole experience, whilst it saddened me, angered me more!

220. Disorganised, a let down

The only way to see the camp was via an organised tour guide, how wrong we was, ration was 1:30. Non stop tour, didn't pause for any photos and if you stopped tour guide kept walking. packed with students as well. Its a great shame, looking forward to piece of history let down by the organisation. If you were at the back of the 30 in group you had no chance to see anything

221. Consider any visit to Auschwitz 1

Visiting Auschwitz is an act of pilgrimage to pay your respects at the site of mass murder. I prepared for my visit by appreciating that this would be a difficult day, which would cause me a great deal of emotional upset and many tears. However, having just finished visiting the camp, I have been left with a multitude of very strong emotions, but not the ones I expected to feel.

Firstly, I was shocked to see that development of the town of Auschwitz has encroached right up to the camp. The main road runs around its perimeter and the entrance to the camp is butted by a number of restaurants. These are in addition to the restaurant which is on the site itself and the couple of fast food snack kiosks which are also present. The camp isn't approached in respectful silence, but is rather like the entrance to a theme park.

Once inside, the camp is awash with guided tours which shepherd the visitors around the exhibitions in a hurried way. I opted not to take part in a guided tour, but still found it impossible to focus on the camp in the manner I wished because of the multitude of people intent on photographing every possible aspect of what was on view. As I stood in the gas chamber, trying to focus on the evil and suffering which occurred within, I could not concentrate for the noise of cameras. The young woman next to me took a selfie in the gas chamber itself.

There are no officials regulating the behaviour of visitors. As you enter and leave the camp, you will be aware of quite raucous conversation and a great deal of laughter and high spirits, particularly from the younger visitors. There was even laughter from people joking with each other as they wandered the camp.

Auschwitz 1 is the site of mass murder. It is a graveyard. It demands the utmost respect from visitors, and yet whilst the very name of Auschwitz must surely be synonymous with evil, inhumanity and cruelty, the memory of the dead is being desecrated by a great many of the

visitors and, crucially, those who manage the camp now.

I visited Auschwitz 2 afterwards and found this to be far more moving for the simple fact that it is larger and has been less managed for visitors. I would strongly recommend anyone contemplating a visit to focus on Auschwitz 2 and not desecrate the memory of the those who were murdered at Auschwitz 1 by participating in the almost theme park experience which the authorities have shamefully allowed to propagate there.

222. Horrible and disrespectful visit of Auschwitz

The organisation was ok, so was the bus ride to Auschwitz. But the guide we had there was simply awful. She talked like a robot with her sunglasses on the whole time, she was absolutely num to everything she was saying, it was without emotions and feeling. You see such horrible things there, that you really need a guide that you can ask questions there and that explains these things to you.

But she was just rushing through everything, without taking the time even in front of the most shocking things. We had to run behind her, can you imagine this in Auschwitz?

The group was enormous (about 35 people) and everything was crowded (also with other groups), I felt really guilty to be part of a mass tourism movement in such a place, it really is somehow a tourist attraction and not a memorial anymore.

The guide was sometimes repeating herself word for word at different places, like a broken record. She didn't let us ask any questions during the tour.

I expected to take the time in this place, to reflect on the history. I expected something peaceful, informative and respectful. I was horrified by this tour. Would have been so much better to do this on my own (or hopefully with a qualified guide).

223. Low service quality

Horrible service, ticket desk with long lines was outside the building, uncovered, no backpacks are allowed, and if you want a group ticket you should buy it 6 months earlier...

224. Not disabled friendly

The roads in the camp are still in a very bad state of repair and would need a good rough terrain wheelchair to go along them. Most of the exhibits are up stairs. There is a radio communication with the guide but it gets cut off a lot when stuck outside. In the summer months due to weight of numbers you need to go in groups guided by a guide. This is a long wait in a queue. Best to check the website before setting off.

We travelled by train from Krakow, 1 1/2 hours for under 10zls, we got a coach back, much more comfortable. Train at Oświęcim very high above platform. Would not recommend wheelchair users to travel this way.

225. Handicapped Visitors Beware!

My wife and I visited Auschwitz in July 2016. My wife is unable to walk and uses a mobility scooter to get around. We were told that we would have to join a tour and were charged 80 zloty for this.

When we got into the grounds we found that none of the exhibitions are wheelchair accessible, being in buildings with steps up to the entrance and no ramps. When the guide entered any building the radio commentary cut off so my wife could not even hear the descriptions.

If you are disabled or with a disabled person, DO NOT pay for a tour, you can enter the grounds for free and see just as much

226. I gave it 1 because you can't give 0!!!

My daughter and I visited last week and we had a guided tour. Our guide, Sofia, was very good. Her knowledge of the camps was very impressive and her hatred of the nazis was almost tangible. I was shocked to see both Macdonalds and kfc have outlets very near to Auschwitz 1 and was even more so when, on entering the car park, one of the first things you see is a snack shop!!! There is also a building housing another shop selling ice creams, crisps etc and numerous vending machines. The toilets, which you have to pay for, are also in this building. So the inference is stuff yourself silly before entering a place where people starved to death. Although the experience was one that I think everyone should have, the commercial gain I found almost as disrespectful as the treatment given to those poor people. Shame on you UNESCO.

227. Draining.

I'm not going to lie, visiting this place is a penance - as it should be. It is the polar opposite of visiting Disneyland - again, as you might expect. The history of what happened at this place is just so insane that your mind really has trouble trying to process it. How even one soldier could be led to carry out the horrors that took place here, never mind the whole army of an entire country and then some, I'll never know!!

There is so much reading to do but there's only so much you can take in and it's gets to the stage of "lots of people were murdered here, here, here and here, and over there, there, there and there" driving the same sickening story home over and over.

History buffs wouldn't agree, but I think the place should be burnt to the ground... it's not like Fred & Rosemary West's home was turned into a museum, they leveled that place and Auschwitz is that times 1 billion.

So, the info was laid out well enough. The getting in is a little confusing. You have to go to one box and buy a ticket; you can only walk around on your own between so and so a time or else you have to buy a guide ticket; you can't take a bag in with you and have to pay 3 Zlots to store it; then you have to go through security checks; you can use the lavy for free inside the camp, but it's 1.50 Zlots otherwise... it all seems a bit OTT.

Thousands of people pass through here every day so expect wave after wave of coaches and people.

It is honestly one of the most draining days of your life & I think most people only go there just so they can say they have done so. It isn't nice, I'm just being honest. Do yourself a favour though and visit the little hotel over the road at the rear car park entrance for a drink or food... get out of there for a bit for a breather, I also seen one of the most angelic and beautiful women I've ever seen in my life work there - she was a much needed vision and she gave me beer.

228. Totally disappointing

What a commercialised experience of something that should be anything but! Our tour guide was so difficult to understand and we didn't have two seconds to spend looking at anything as it was jam packed full of tours and we were constantly being told to hurry up. Such a shame as instead of feeling sadness being in such a historical place we felt nothing but annoyance. Don't ever book through Escape 2 Poland!

229. Didn't even get in...

Please note that this review is of the entry procedures and not of Auschwitz itself because we didn't get through the door...

We arrived at a suitably grim Auschwitz after a two hour train journey and a walk of over a kilometre to absolute carnage.

We got our sticker and was told we could see a film at 10 o'clock because it was included so off we went towards the entrance where there were lots of people milling around looking lost, a barrier queuing system that made no sense and quite a bit of pushing going on. We made our way to the front to be told we had to wait 6 minutes then they said that my husband's bag was too big to go in. Off we went to left luggage, I kept mine because they hadn't said anything about it and it fit on the piece of paper they used to measure bags, or in our opinion it did...

Having pushed our way back to the front we were scanned and allowed to join the queue for security. Three people all measured my bag against the piece of paper and although it blatantly fit they were pulling at it and stretching it to full capacity to insist that it was too big! We were told that there was no time to discuss it and we couldn't go in...

I am well aware of the need for caution and increased security levels however this was nothing to do with that; it was sheer awkwardness as I was offered a carrier bag (for a fee) in left luggage to empty the contents of my bag into to take into the museum!! If bags are being searched then there is no reason they shouldn't be taken in.

We left because the experience had already been ruined. People should not be allowed to make money off the back of tragedy. It is a memorial not an attraction

230. Poor inaccurate translations, unchanged since 1966

I was shocked to find that Auschwitz-Birkenau has not been updated in its curation since 1966. Many of the exhibits had ceased to function, and the english translations were utterly dismal. In the polish section of the museum, there is a clear soviet influence on the text. In another exhibit, the english version states that british forces sunk a refugee ship, whereas the polish version more accurately states that the ship was accidentally sunk. When someone had tried to make this addition in biro, it has then later been scribbled out.

Also, the lack of regulation has led to groups taking, and I quote "Auschwitz Selfies", leaving litter and even smoking whilst frantically swearing down a mobile phone.

I do wish I could separate the review of Auschwitz and Birkenau, as the latter has been left untouched and the scale speaks for itself.

This place needs funding and recuration from an unbiased European agency made up of historians who have a good command of English.

231. Worse than 15 years ago, go to Birkenau rather than Auschwitz

I have visited the museum twice before but rather than getting better it has become a complete shambles and completely spoils any atmosphere the location may have had. The entry to the museum has not been planned with any logic, care or consideration for visitors. With unclear signage before approaching the entrance, I was only made aware in a very rude fashion that I would have to put my handbag in a hut for safe keeping which meant I had to go to the back of the queue. After queuing again there was no warning about the security gate which had no warning for people with pace makers, it will remove the coding for Your hotel door card. You have to remove all metal from your person as bad as being at the airport. The staff were again incredibly rude and impolite and to be honest after this I was really that bothered about seeing the museum and if I known in advance I wouldn't have bothered as it's not worth the hassle. Also there is no clear information that there is a free bus between Auschwitz and Birkenau. Birkenau captures the horror of the concentration camp and the genocide of the millions of Polish citizens, however there is no security at this site but a group of tourists from Israel showed little respect for the millions of European citizens who were killed in the camp by draping large Israeli flags, waving flags and shouting when posing for pictures on the train tracks from the death gate. Disgraceful. They should show the same respect as other visitors

232. Horrible guide

I don't advise this visit with a guide. We had a Polish woman doing a German tour. She spoke very emotionless. We were rushed so it was difficult to let anything sink in. We had 5 minutes to go to the bathroom before we had to take the bus to Birkenau. Again very monotone and rushing. We didn't go to the things we would like to have seen. After 5 hours we were tired from rushing. When we go again we will go on our own start at Birkenau and then go to Auschwitz to avoid the crowd.

233. A rather insensitive, poorly organized, hastened tour!

We visited the Museum on July 6, 2015, a rather hot summer day...

1. The visit is not "free of charge" as posted on the Museum's site: one is only allowed to visit in "guided" groups and THERE IS A CHARGE for the guide!
2. Our guide was a young person (possibly a student) with a rather - mildly put - primitive command of English, with a very limited vocabulary, mostly hesitant at his choice of adequate words. It was obvious that he was an "apprentice", accompanied/supervised by a more "senior" lady official
3. The guide(s) imposed an unreasonable fast pace on the (mostly older) group - we had to repeatedly (but unsuccessfully) ask them to slow down. We were not granted enough time (neither in the indoor section, nor on the outside grounds) to properly contemplate the exhibits. There was a general feeling of being continually hastened, pushed...
4. The outside "alleys" are unpaved, partly graveled dirt roads, necessitating solid footwear/hiking boots (desirable), much more than just ordinary sneakers. This was not clearly specified by our (outside) tour operator, hence approx. 1/2 of our group had inadequate shoes, that further slowed down the visitors' speed. The Museum should definitely provide narrow asphalt sidewalks alongside their outside "roads", since it is obviously impossible to make sure that all visitors have adequate footwear.
5. Both my wife and myself lost half of our (Eastern European) families in Auschwitz-Birkenau... At the end of the "tour" we asked for the opportunity to light candles and quietly recollect for 10-15 minutes the memory of our lost relatives. The Museum had no such room available, but – upon inquiry - we were assured that it would be a "good idea" to offer such an

opportunity! And this after 47 years of the institution's inception...

We left with the overwhelming, unpleasant impression that the Museum is clearly driving to maximize the number of visitors per (say) hour, run by a rather insensitive state bureaucracy. All said, a most tiresome and unpleasant experience!

234. Unfortunate tour guide

I am very fascinated by WWII history and have visited another concentration camp before, so I had an idea of what I was getting myself into: an informative and emotional experience that helped all of the visitors to understand and remember the terrible acts that occurred at Auschwitz. WRONG!

The tour guide's English was too fast and his accent was difficult to understand. He was completely impersonal and didn't even introduce himself before saying "follow me" and herding the group through the exhibits like cattle. He spoke in a monotone voice and gave only the most basic information about each thing that we saw. He was less animated than an audio guide and gave no anecdotes about what it may have been like to live in the camps. He also assumed that the group had a fair amount of background knowledge about the war and how concentration camps were run. I am still unclear on some of the details of what he showed us.

When we went to Birkenau the bus driver yelled at half of my group for not knowing where we were supposed to be (our guide's fault for not being at the bus stop when he told us to be). When we got to the second camp we no longer had headsets and it was raining but the guide continued to speak in his quiet, monotone voice. When one woman asked him to please speak a little louder, he snapped at her and told her "then move closer!" It was impossible for her to do so through the umbrellas, and anyone who wasn't directly in front of him was clearly straining to hear.

I really disappointed in the indifference of the guide and his presentation of the site. I feel like I was robbed of my experience. I would encourage anyone who is planning on visiting Auschwitz to book a tour through another company rather than on the memorial page website to avoid being dissatisfied with their visit.

235. STAFF IS EXTREMELY RUDE & UNHELPFUL

Of course Auschwitz is not a "fun" or "enjoyable" place to visit - it is, however, important. But I am not going to review the merits of Auschwitz, merely the way the museum is run - which is, in a word, extremely discombobulated.

I was extremely unhappy with how we were treated by the staff. The people who work there, usually wearing black "info" shirts, are not helpful AT ALL. Most speak little English & cannot answer or explain even the simplest of questions.

We arrived 30 minutes early to our tour, as the museum advised, but wanted to grab a quick bite to eat first in the restaurant. We were ready for our tour at about 1:20 & went through the line.

We found our way outside through the mass chaos & searched everywhere for our English-speaking tour but could not find it anywhere. Gigantic groups with no clear division between them crowded the small pavilion area, making it impossible to differentiate between groups or ask around for our correct one. We were on time, in the right place, but could not locate our tour group. Every "info" person we asked rolled their eyes, shrugged, told us something different, or were very short with us or ignored us. They were terribly rude, lazy, & unwilling to help. None

of them had any idea where our tour, which supposedly left a minute or two before, could have gone. All they could tell us was "look for people wearing the same sticker" - um, when I have NO CLUE where they could be (across camp, inside, outside...) & the place is far too crowded & the sticker is a tiny white square, does that really seem helpful? Seriously? Could you not have walkie-talkies or maybe even a general idea of the path taken by tour groups (who do this EVERY DAY)?!

Also, somehow we never got a sticker, which made everything even more difficult as then we could REALLY not find our tour group...& also no "info" person could tell us the correct channel to be on. We heard 4 different stories.

Long story short, we ended up spending 45 minutes of our 3-hour tour running - literally - around the entire camp, trying to locate our correct tour group. This was the trip of a lifetime for me, & I was heartbroken to miss the first half of a tour I had been looking forward to for years & started my day here in tears - but not for the right reasons.

236. Dismal, discarded, lacking humanity, the feelings amplified by the abhorrent spectacle.

It's a little before 6.00 o'clock in the morning and a church bell is tolling the town as we walk through the surprisingly narrow gate of what was the first Auschwitz concentration camp. Another was built outside the town, where the slaughter was elevated to an industrial scale. "Work Brings Freedom" spelled out in an almost jaunty ribbon of ironwork rises above us. We walk in among the long low buildings. There is nothing about the buildings themselves that's particularly menacing. They could be workshops anywhere in the world. We had a building like this at my public school.

The green grass is well kept and the trees majestic. The only way to comprehend what happened here is through the imagination. It's not difficult to close eyes and reinvent the scenarios we have seen countless times. The only difference is we can walk back through the gates and have a sobering yet chilling cup of coffee.

The forebears who stood here in 1944 would have found the gates closed, rifles trained on them, barked at by vicious thugs and savage dogs who could sentence you to death without any compunction. Because the camp is now a museum, there are signs that help the act of the imagination. The camp orchestra pictures, the do not do this or that on the order of death notices.

Inside the prison blocks are a series of displays that I find more effective than any words. Behind the panels of glass are gathered the possessions of those who perished here. There is something deeply effecting as we walk on through the silent rooms to be confronted by a mountain of hair, 80 feet long and 10 feet deep, some of the 7 tons shorn from the victims.

In another room, a sea of suitcases. battered, squeezed, crushed, and tossed onto the pile, bearing names of their owners, printed, painted or inked on the outside. But it's when you see the piles of children's shoes that it becomes very poignant.... discarded, dismal... abhorrent.

By the carpark, is a low building with a brick chimney sticking out of it. This was the armoury of the barracks converted into the first gas chamber at Auschwitz. We walk in. It's a long low dark space, maybe a 150 ft long, 20 ft wide and 10 ft high.... the dimensions of a small

nightclub. To cope with the enormous feeling of abandonment and desolation, we are suspended in another world. Its horrific.

I have always imagined this dreadful place to be utterly isolated in some apocryphal landscape, yet there are houses not a half a kilometre from the camp. To walk through is still an aseptic experience.... being here shocks and saddens. We agree, that the physical evidence of this horror should never be forgotten and left in situ forever.

The real troubling thought that never leaves you is that so many people were alive to the fact while the worse of this was happening. Civilisation is a crock.

237. Rude, objectionable and obstructive staff spoiled our day.

Our tour was booked for 10:30am and we were advised to take a 9:00am bus from Krakow. We did this and arrived at 10:20am. The first seven staff that we spoke to shrugged and walked away and we found a young couple who said that nobody spoke English. I am fluent in German and good at French, but the staff did not want to know because they knew I was English. Our line was stopped for five minutes with no explanation. The girl at the ticket desk stopped serving us to chat for five minutes to an older colleague. The girls giving out the headsets told us that the receivers were on, but they were off and on the wrong channel. Another woman told us where we could catch up with our tour, but predictably, they weren't there. We eventually found our guide and enjoyed the second half of the tour. Be aware, there are very few toilets and no cafes on the sites of these two museums. There are some good restaurants over the main road from Auschwitz. Finally, do not pay the return in advance for the bus. Your ticket is only valid for certain buses and you can simply pay the driver on any bus back to Krakow. It is very cheap. The museum staff offered us no compensation for their ineptitude.

238. Ridiculously disorganized

I have to start by saying that, for me personally, this was the most important part of the trip. We showed up only 20 minutes after opening time, ready for the day's activity.

At the entrance, there is a gaggle of approximately 130 people, no system in place to organize it, no staff attempting to give direction.

So, after pushing our way in for 43 minutes (in the cold wet snow) we are subjected to a search that is more intense than any airport security I've ever seen.

Now, another lineup (read gaggle) to get our tickets. At the wicket we are told we can't enter without a guide (read chaperone), "it's the policy", said the lady. "Ok, let's do it" we reply. Next available one is in 1.5 hrs but that one only speaks Polish, "not sure when an English speaking one is available".

Sadly, we were on a fixed schedule and didn't have the freedom to wait out for that. So, now I'll be leaving this ridiculous country without experiencing the one thing I actually cared about only because of their disorganization and absurd policy.

PS...we also decided to grab a bite to eat at the little restaurant across the street - Don't do it - the "chicken burger" "cheeseburger" and "hamburger" were all identical...and neither tasted or looked like any of the meats you'd expect to see in any of those. And, the borscht tasted like bath water.

239. Rushed, muddy, dated, confusing and just unorganised!

This is the first thing I've ever rated as terrible. I left feeling more confused and frustrated than harrowed or sad.

My recommendation is to youtube "Auschwitz tour" there are plenty of long videos there. Get to the museum early. Just do the trip yourself and take the photos you want. This way you'll get more out of it. Alternatively get a private tour. Or you can get the normal tour but be prepared to take picture and run to catch up with the tour. Not to mention having loads of strangers in your photos.

I went there in winter low season and I am very glad I did so as it would have been like Disneyland and even more rushed then it was. I have been on some great tours like Jack Daniels factory that had a lot of passion and even okay ones like Melbourne Gaol. This wasn't a scratch on them, such a shame with a such a important museum. I planned to go it alone and just take my time as I've read before the guided tours are rushed. I got there went through the airport like security. Waited in-line for ages with 2 people serving only to get a free pass.

There are no available recorded headphone tours, nor are there any leaflets or even tour books you can buy to read about the rooms your walking through. There's more information about Auschwitz in the Washington D.C. holocaust memorial museum then there is in Auschwitz camp itself. Now and again you see a little plaque with 2 sentences of writing on it. Where's the toilet? At the beginning before the turnstiles, before the massive queue and before the airport security. Unable to use the toilet until certain times, kind of ironic in this place.

So I gave up, went all the way back to the beginning, waited in line and payed for the tour, got my headphones, now what? I am sitting on a wooden bench a bit clueless now hoping to go with the flock. There's a cinema room I notice the showing is at 12:30, oh wait on the screen also shows you your English tour is starting at...12:20. ENGLISH TOURS PLEASE. Follow them let the tour begin.

The headphones are in fact there so the tour guide can walk ahead whilst your still taking pictures, reading plaques, looking at amazing drawings and pictures of the place. What ends up happening is your looking at pictures, objects etc and the tour guides talking about the next thing so it's not really a tour until Birkenau. Your not allowed to take pictures in certain areas (which happens to be the most interesting things) they say its respect, suspiciously I believe its because they want you in and out and taking photos of the interesting things will slow this group rotation process down.

Anyways on the shuttle bus to Birkenau the second part of Auschwitz, you want to get on that bus quickly to get a seat otherwise your standing crammed in like..... Anyways you get Birkenau and you start to get the moneys worth for the tour now. A warning in winter don't wear any white or material like footwear, its a little muddy.

Tours done. Do you have time to walk upstairs to the main tower, light a candle or look at the gift shops? Who knows? The shuttle bus is there already and people are getting on it. Is there another shuttle bus coming soon after that one? Who knows? Ah just get on it. Back to airport security gather your belongings and have a look at the gift shop. You will struggle to believe this but the gift shop is the size of a snack van. Smaller than a hotel room. The books are behind

the desk so don't expect a decent idea of the book or a top ten selection to look at or anything other than books, you can also buy posters to brighten up your room.

Overall this journey is unorganised. The facilities are just poor. The tour is monotonous and scripted and could do with a new lease of life. People wouldn't mind being charged a decent amount If it meant decent facilities and a quality, passionate tour.

240. Must see.

An extremely moving experience. I cannot rate it.

Arrive as early as you can before the hordes of tourists make it too crowded. My friend and I arrived at 8am (opening) to beat the summer rush. Hardly anyone was there and it was a much more quiet and respectful experience. As we left, the queues had started and loud groups were walking in.

I believe everyone should visit, but more as a mark of respect rather than a tourist trip.

241. The review that I did not want to write

if your ancestors suffered at this most horrible place and you want to visit as a way to honor their memory, I get it. But I am afraid that the rest of us might have gone there out of morbid curiosity and for that, I am ashamed of myself. Ashamed and depressed. Not what I consider vacation goals. Thousands have visited this place and are hopeful that the increased awareness will help reduce the inhumanity of this world. But the fact it you turn on the TV in Jul 2014 and atrocities persist, so what's the point?

9 thanks