

Rohatyn

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Finally, having received a request from the faithful Jews of Rohatyn to resume the trading fair that had long been held in Rohatyn on Tuesdays, for which they are ready to produce valid documentation, [we are ready] to designate Tuesday as the trading fair day.

Privilege granted by King John II Casimir Vasa to the Jews of Rohatyn, Lviv, May 21, 1663

Roksolana and the antlers ¶

In the Middle Ages, the Opole region, where Rohatyn is located, was part of Kievan Rus (Duchy of Kiev). The village of Filipowice, on the site of which the town was established, is mentioned in primary sources as early as 1184. At that time, the ruler of this area was Yaroslav Osmomysl, Prince of Halych. As the legend has it, Yaroslav's wife once got lost while hunting, noticed a red stag with huge antlers, and followed it until she found the Prince and his party. The place where the woman encountered the extraordinary animal became a princely hunting ground, and subsequently a town emerged around it. In honour of this animal the town boasts deer's antlers in its coat-of-arms – and the name Rohatyn seems to come from this,

too: the Polish for antlers is *rogi*, the Ukrainian is *pozu*, pronounced *rohy*, and the Russian is *poza*, pronounced *roga*. The town name Rohatyn first appears in documents dating back to the 1390s, but it was not until 1415 that the town was granted the Magdeburg right. It was then that the founder of the town, Wólczko Przesłużyc, took on the family name Rohatyński. In the 16th century, Rohatyn was surrounded by a moat, ramparts, and a wooden palisade, later replaced with a stone wall. One could enter the town through the gates and drawbridges: the Halych Gate, the Lviv Gate, and the Cracow Gate. In 1523, Otto Chodecki, the chief of Rohatyn palatinate and the Voivode of Sandomierz, granted the town the privilege of a weekly trading fair.

In the 15th–17th centuries, Tatars from the Crimean Khanate who sought to take captives often raided Rohatyn lands. During one of these raids, they kidnapped the daughter of a local Orthodox priest, Nastia (Anastasia) Lisowska (as the 19th-century scholars agreed to call her, since her true name has never been established). The girl was sold into the sultan's harem in Istanbul. Thanks to her exceptional beauty and intelligence, she soon became the wife of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent. Tradition has it that, at her request, the sultan promised never to invade her native lands. Her Persian name was Hürrem, but she entered the legend under the name **Roksolana**. In



A The market square in Rohatyn, destroyed by warfare, ca. 1915, collection of the National Library, Poland (www.polona.pl)



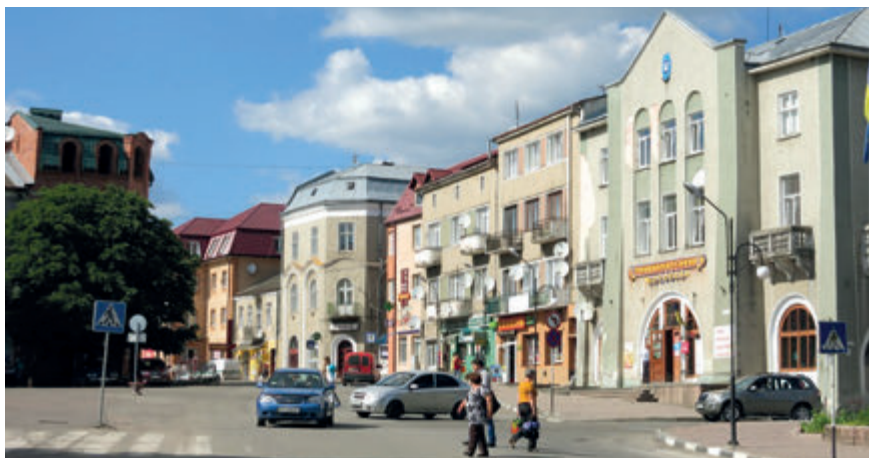
B Greetings from Rohatyn, a postcard, before 1918, collection of the National Library, Poland (www.polona.pl)

1566, Selim II, one of her sons, succeeded Suleiman on the Ottoman throne. Roksolana died in 1558 and was buried in Istanbul. In 1999, a monument to this famous daughter of Rohatyn was unveiled in the town's central square.

The Jews of Rohatyn ¶ The earliest reference to Rohatyn Jews dates to a 1463 document, written by nobleman Jan Skarbek. The document mentions the Rohatyn richest Jewish merchant, the cattle trader Shimshon of Zhydachiv (Shimshon mi-Zhidachov). The document implies there was a small and stratified Jewish community in town as early as the late 15th century. Nearly two centuries later, in 1633, King Władysław IV Vasa granted the Jews of Rohatyn with a wide-range privilege to settle in the town, trade in the market square, own inns, produce and sell liquor, trade in beer and mead, build a synagogue, and establish their own cemetery. Jewish privileges matched those of the town Christian inhabitants. The privileges were confirmed and reinforced by the subsequent kings, John II Casimir Vasa and Michał Korybut Wiśniowiecki. ¶ The town Jewish population, along other

inhabitants of Rohatyn, suffered greatly from the warfare and mass violence during the Tatar, Turkish, and Cossack raids in the 17th century, and the economic situation of the town – and of the Jews – significantly deteriorated. In 1648, during the Cossack revolution and the peasant war against Polish urbanized and fortified areas, Rohatyn was captured by the Cossacks of Bohdan Khmelnytsky. It took the Jewish refugees a long time to come back and rebuild their community. On December 23, 1675, the *sejmik* (regional diet) of Halych discussed the necessity temporarily to exempt the Jews of Red Ruthenia from poll tax, which they were not able to pay because of the post-war devastation and economic downfall. In his decree of July 27, 1694, King John III Sobieski stated that *the Jews in Red Ruthenia had suffered more than other Jews did*.

Moshe ben Daniel was one of the Rohatyn rabbinic scholars in the second half of the 17th century. In 1693, he published *Sugiyot ha-Talmud* (Heb.: Talmudic debates), a solid discussion of polemical issues in the Talmud. His work was



The centre of Rohatyn – Roksolany Square, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

considered so important that the Dutch Calvinist and philosopher Bashuysen reissued it in Germany in 1707 in the original Hebrew with Latin translation.

False messiahs ¶ Early modern Rohatyn Jews, like other early modern Jews in the Diaspora, experienced significant impact of the Jewish millenarian (messianic) movements, the adherents and leaders of which prophesized the immediacy of redemption, the end of the *golus* (Yid.: exile), the return to the Holy Land, antinomian approach to rituals and commandments of Judaism, and a revolutionary change of authority, switched from the rabbinic leaders to the messianic figures such as Sabbetai Zevi (1626–1676). Sabbateanism, the movement initiated by Sabbetai and his prophet, Natan of Gaza (Haazti), was particularly popular in Ruthenia and Podolia. When the Sabbatean prophets and believers were excommunicated elsewhere in Central Europe, for example, in Amsterdam, the Jewish communities in Zovkva and Rohatyn greeted them. The adherents of the movement were representatives of distinguished families, not necessarily the gullible folk. For example, the first Sabbatean

in Rohatyn was Elisha Shor, a descendant of the prominent rabbinic scholar Zalman Naftali Shor. ¶ With the conversion of Sabbetai Tsvi to Islam and the excommunication of the leaders of the movement, Sabbateanism went underground, where the antinomian religious ideas generated the rise of Frankism, a new pseudo-messianic movement of religious enthusiasm, which antinomian kabbalistic-based ideas galvanized Jews in Ruthenia, Volhynia, and Podolia. In the 1750s, adherents of Frankism were quite influential in Rohatyn. Jacob Frank, the founder of the movement who presented himself as a new Jewish messiah visited Rohatyn in 1755 during his trip to Galicia. He was received there by Elisha Shor’s family. Frank’s visits were reportedly accompanied by a number of scandals involving ritual sex orgies, which, according to Frank, should have released the sparks of divine light captured by the shards of human sexuality. The open conflict with traditional Jews caused the number of Frankists in Rohatyn to



Rohatyn, former Jewish shops in Halytska St, 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the "Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre" Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

undertake radical steps. In 1759, several dozen Rohatyn followers of Jacob Frank converted to Catholicism, among them Shlomo Shor, Elisha Shor's son, who was given the baptismal name of Franciszek Łukasz Wołowski, and his three brothers: Natan who became Michał, Yehuda who became Jan, and Yitshak who became Henryk Wołowski. Eventually, Łukasz Wołowski pursued a career at the Polish king's court as a secretary to Stanisław August Poniatowski (1732–1798). Many descendants of the Wołowski family became significant cultural figures; suffice it to mention the pianist and composer Maria Szymanowska (1789–1831). One of the staunch opponents of the

Frankists in Rohatyn was Rabbi David Moshe Abraham, the author of *Mirk-
evet ha-Mishneh* (Chariot of Mishnah), a book in which, among other things, he described a devastating activity of Frankist schismatics in his town. ¶ Initially, the Jews of Rohatyn did not have their own representative in the Council of Four Lands, Vaad Arba Aratsot – a supra-communal organization which some call the Polish Jewish *sejm* (parliament), – because their community (*kehillah*) was too small; Rohatyn was represented by certain Zelig from Lviv, most likely, an influential purveyor and international merchant. However, in the first half of the 17th century, sub-*kahals* such as Rohatyn began to gain independence from the central *kahal* in Lviv. Late in the 17th century, Rohatyn regularly sent its two representatives to the Vaad, and at the beginning of the 1700s, the Jewish community of Rohatyn became completely independent from the Lviv *kahal*, legally and financially. In 1765, 797 Jews lived in the town. The entire *kehillah* of Rohatyn numbered 1,347 people at that time and had its own sub-*kahals* – in Pidkamin and Stratyn with minor Jewish communities reporting to Rohatyn.

“ Here it is: Rohatyn. It starts with mud huts, clay houses with thatched roofs that seem to weigh the buildings down to the ground; however, as we move closer to the market square, houses become more and more slender, the thatched roofs become increasingly delicate, and eventually it gives way to wooden shingles on houses of unburnt clay brick. There is also an old parish church, a Dominican monastery, Saint Barbara's Church in the market square, as well as two synagogues and five Orthodox and Uniate churches further on. Around the market square there are small houses, like mushrooms, with some sort of business in each one. A tailor, a rope-maker, a furrier – all of them Jewish, and next to them a baker by the name of Bochenek, meaning Loaf, which invariably pleases the dean as attesting to some hidden order that could be more visible and consistent, in which case people would live more virtuous lives. Next, there is the workshop of a sword-maker called Luba; though the storefront does not stand out as particularly prosperous, its

walls are freshly painted blue, and a large rusty sword hangs over the entrance – apparently, Luba is a good craftsman and his customers have deep pockets. Further on there is a saddler, who has placed a wooden trestle in front of his door with an exquisite saddle on it – the stirrups are probably silvered, judging by the way they shine. There is a faint smell of malt in the air, permeating every commodity on sale. It fills you up like bread.

In Babintsy, the outskirts of Rohatyn, there are several small breweries, and it is from there that the aroma spreads over the whole vicinity. Numerous stalls sell beer here, and the better shops also offer vodka and mead. The shop of the Jewish merchant Wakszul offers genuine Hungarian and Rhenish wine as well as the slightly tart kind that is brought all the way from Wallachia. ¶ Olga Tokarczuk, *The Books of Jacob, or a Great Journey across seven borders, five languages, and three major religions, not counting the minor ones: told by the dead and complemented by the author through conjecture, taken from a wide variety of books and enhanced by imagination, which is the greatest natural human faculty* (Translated from: *Księgi Jakubowe*, Cracow 2014).

Synagogues and traces of memory ¶

In the 17th century, there was a functional Jewish cemetery in Rohatyn, and at least from the beginning of the 18th century there was a synagogue. Primary documents of 1792 confirm the existence of a wooden synagogue, and it is also known that in 1826 the town had a stone synagogue. The 1846 plan of the town indicates at least six buildings used by the Jewish community for religious purposes. ¶ Most of them were situating the north-eastern part of the town, in what now is Valova Street. It was there that the main synagogue was located, together with the adjoining prayer houses for tailors and shoemakers, the main *beth midrash*, and most of the *kahal* buildings. Only one of these buildings has partly survived to the present day: the former *beth midrash*, which after 1945 was converted into a bakery and then a mechanical



A klezmer band from Rohatyn; most of the musicians were from the Faust family, 1912, collection of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research

workshop after that. The Rohatyn memorial book mentions that there were also several Hasidic synagogues in town. ¶ One of Rohatyn's synagogues was located in what is now the school in Kotsiubynsky Street; the school complex also includes the former buildings of a *mikveh* (currently a laundry), the headquarters of the Jewish communal authorities, and the former World War II Judenrat. During renovation of the school in 2011, the constructors uncovered many scraps of various kinds of documents related to the Rohatyn Jewish community. They were in various languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Russian, and German). Subsequently, they were transferred to a Jewish museum operated by the Hesed-Arieh Jewish Centre in Lviv.

Hasidism, Haskalah, Zionism

¶ In 1788, seeking to implement the recommendation of Joseph II's Edict



In the 1930s, the “Maccabee” sports club was established in Rohatyn. Its seat was located in the still surviving library building in Ivana Franka St., 2014. Photo by Viktor Zagreba, digital collection of the “Grodzka Gate – NN Theatre” Centre (www.teatrnn.pl)

of Tolerance, the Austrian authorities established in Rohatyn a secular German-language school for Jewish children (functioning until 1806). Its director was the enlightened-minded Shlomo Kornfeld. The Austrian authorities sought to reform Rohatyn Jews making them useful subjects of the Austrian emperor: they restricted the *kahal* privileges allowing it to function exclusively as a religious umbrella organization; required to keep all documentation in German; and attempted to convert the Jews from tradesmen into farmers, encouraging and sponsoring the resettlement of 12 families in the agricultural colony of Novy Babilon near Bolekhiv. ¶ Adherents of the Hasidic movement appeared in Rohatyn at the beginning of the 19th century, when Rabbi Yitzchak Meir of Peremyshliany, Rabbi Yehuda Hirsch Brandwein of Stratyn (Yid.: Stretin), and Rabbi Yitzhak Yehuda of Baranivka settled here. The Stratyn dynasty became the most influential Hasidic dynasty in Rohatyn. When in 1844, Rabbi Yehuda Hirsch Brandwein passed away, he was succeeded by his elder son Abraham Brandwein, and then, in 1865, by his grandson Nachum Brandwein. ¶ Initially, the Haskalah, or

the Jewish Enlightenment movement, had few adherents in Rohatyn, but the movement became more popular in the second half of the 19th century. In 1868, when the town council was reelected, seven out of 32 new magistrates were Jewish, most of them – *maskilim*, representatives of the Haskalah movement, proponents of the educational and religious reform of the Jewish people.

¶ When the Zionist movement established itself firmly in Galicia, the town first avowed Zionist, Shalom Melzer (1871–1909), established in Rohatyn the B'nai Zion (Heb.: Sons of Zion) organization, which by 1898 boasted 100 members. In 1907, Rohatyn Jewish women established a local women’s Zionist organisation “Ruth.” A newly established Zionist club headed by Rabbi Nathan Levin became a forum for political and social debates on issues such as the role of secular Jewish education and the need of a Jewish higher educational establishment in town. ¶ Rohatyn sent its representatives to a number of Palestinianophile (proto-Zionist) congresses and conferences, for example, to the Congress of Hevrat Yishuv Eretz Yisrael (Association of Relocating Jews to Palestine) and of Ahavat Zion (Heb.: Love of Zion) in Tarnów in 1894. Shalom Melzer and Avrum Zlatkis represented Rohatyn at the 1898 Zionist congress in Stanisławów (now Ivano-Frankivsk), while Melzer also took part in the 1904 conference of Ha-Mizrachi in Austria, held in Pressburg (now Bratislava) in 1904, the first meeting of the followers the new religious movement bridging Zionism and traditional Judaism, later associated with Rabbis Shmuel Mohilever and Avraam Kook and known today

as the Israeli national-religious camp. ¶ Due to the efforts of Rabbi Nathan Levin, at the turn of the 19th century, a modern Talmud Torah school was established. In 1904, the Zionist-minded Raphael Soferman established a new secular Jewish school in which he served as a teacher and headmaster. In 1912, Soferman left for Palestine, where he continued as an educator. Rohatyn Jewish children also attended Ukrainian and Polish gymnasia (secondary schools) that were established at the beginning of the 20th century.

Time for trains ¶ Due to the industrial growth in Galicia, the economic situation of Rohatyn Jews began to improve in the second half of the 19th century. This happened predominantly due to the construction of the Halych–Ternopil railway line in 1852. The line connected Rohatyn to the national railway system. Train-related services became an important source of employment for local Jews. In addition, the railroad gave boost to Rohatyn wineries, breweries, small factories, several mills, a brickyard, and two print shops, most of them run by Jews. Rohatyn Jews also earned their living through the traditional trade and crafts. In 1913, the Jewish community

of Rohatyn included 590 merchants, 42 craftsmen, 19 farmers, and 44 representatives of liberal professions (lawyers, accountants, etc.). Economic growth also fostered the establishment of the Jewish charities and credit societies. In 1906, the Credit Society was set up to provide free-loan or low-interest loans for the start-up businessmen; by 1908, it had 385 members and granted 346 loans amounting to 71,425 crowns.

Between the wars ¶ After the outbreak of World War I, many Jews from Rohatyn fled to Austria, Bohemia, and Moravia, where they stayed in refugee camps. The occupation of Galicia by Russian troops in September 1914, triggered the outbreak of anti-Jewish violence, Rohatyn was no exception. The Russian soldiers set the Jewish quarter on fire, and the Russian authorities arrested 570 Jews, accused them of espionage (since they were speaking Yiddish which the Russians took for German) and deported them to the interior Russia, as far from the battlefield as it was possible. The deportees included the Fausts, a Jewish family famous for its family orchestra that performed at various ceremonies in Rohatyn.

” There was not a single person in our city who did not know the musicians of our orchestra. And none of the surrounding towns had such a unique group as the father and his four sons – the well-known members of the Faust family. The father died leaving his four sons. David Faust, the eldest, was the fiddler; he also used to call the tune at weddings. The second son, Itsik-Hersh, a small and delicate man, played the flute, and his lips seemed to have been molded to fit his instrument. The third, Yaakov Faust, stout and powerful, was the trumpeter, his cheeks were always puffed up from trumpeting; he was a [quiet] man with an endearing smile. The fourth, Mordechai-Shmuel, a young, bearded, bespectacled man with a cultivated demeanor, could read music and conducted and led the orchestra on his instrument – the clarinet. ¶ Kehilat Rohatin ve-ha-sevivah; ir



Jewish cemetery in Rohatyn, 2018. Photo by Christian Herrmann, www.vanishedworld.blog

After the defeat of the Russian troops, the Austrian authorities re-established themselves in Rohatyn in 1915, and many Jewish refugees returned to their homes. During the Polish-Ukrainian War (1918–1919), Rohatyn’s Jewish community

be-hayeyha u-ve-kilaiona (Hebr.: *The Community of Rohatyn and Environs; The Life and Death of the Town*, trans. Binyamin Weiner), Tel Aviv 1962, retrieved from www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor

appointed the Jewish National Committee, a secular and autonomous version of the *kahal*, to protect its interests before the authorities. In the interwar period, the relations between the three ethnic groups in town – Poles, Ukrainians, and Jews – became particularly tense and hostile. In addition, economically Jews also suffered from the growing competition of the newly urbanized Christian population, whose cooperative institutions provided aid to Poles or Ukrainians of the Christian population only.

Norbert (Nathan) Glanzberg (1910–2001) was a French composer and pianist born in Rohatyn to a Jewish family. Soon after his birth, his parents moved to Würzburg, Germany. From his early age, he showed an amazing musical talent, which he later developed by taking piano and composition lessons at the music university in Würzburg. Glanzberg composed music for German films. When Hitler came to power, Glanzberg was forced to emigrate to France. In 1940, he found himself in Marseille, where he met the singer Édith Piaf, then a rising star aged 25. Glanzberg, for a time Piaf’s lover, wrote some of Piaf’s most famous songs (including the acclaimed *Padam, padam...*). Piaf helped Glanzberg escape persecution by the Nazis by arranging for him to stay hidden for a time at the chateau of Countess Lily Pastré. After World War II, Glanzberg composed film music as well as songs, and his scores were used in two dozen films starring actors such as Brigitte Bardot (*Please, Not Now!*) and Marina Vlady (*The Blonde Witch*), among others.

World War II and the Holocaust

¶ In September 1939, the Soviet army occupied Rohatyn. The Soviet authorities banned all political parties and religious organisations except the communist and began screening of all the “suspicious” individuals. The Soviets arrested and deported to the Ural, Kazakhstan and

Siberia dozens of Poles and Ukrainians who did not fit in the class-based vision of the socialist society imposed by the new regime. The Jews, mostly impoverished, were co-opted by the Soviets as the representatives of the oppressed classes. Then in less than two years, on July 2, 1941, the German troops entered

Rohatyn. In late July, the Nazis ordered the establishment of a Judenrat, and in late August, they established a ghetto, in which they kept Jews from Rohatyn, Burshtyn, Bukachivtsi, and nearby villages until the summer of 1943. The Rohatyn ghetto took up about one-fourth of the town area (from the town centre to its western outskirts). It was circumscribed by barbed wire and guarded by policemen. Every day, 40 to 50 people died in the ghetto of malnutrition, typhus, and dysentery. ¶ It is estimated that that number of Rohatyn Holocaust victims amounted to some 12–15,000 Jews: 9,800 were killed in town, 2,100 were transported to the Bełżec death camp. March 20, 1942, remained in the Jewish memory as the “black Friday”: on that day about 1,800 Jews from Rohatyn, mainly young people and children, were shot dead at the local railway station.

The cemetery ¶ The old Jewish cemetery in Rohatyn is located in the south-eastern part of the town, at the intersection of Stepana Bandery St. and Bohdana Lepkoho St., opposite Saint Nicholas’ Church. The exact date of its establishment is unknown, but the privilege granted in 1633 by King Władysław IV Vasa to the Jews of Rohatyn alludes to the existence of an operating cemetery in first half of the 17th century. ¶ The boundaries of the cemetery remain unchanged since 1939, but fewer than 20 matzevot (tombstones) have survived to the present day, none of them in their original place. The oldest ones date back to the 19th century. The cemetery was destroyed during World War II, when 75 percent of the *matzevot* were uprooted, removed, and used for construction and

paving. Today, there are two monuments at the old Jewish cemetery in Rohatyn. One of them, of black granite, bears an inscription in Hebrew; the other, which has the form of a square-shaped tablet, has inscriptions in English, Ukrainian, and Hebrew that state that this was the site of the Jewish cemetery destroyed by the Nazis during World War II. In recent years, a memorial plaque has been placed there and an *ohel* has been erected. ¶ The new cemetery was established in the 20th century. The last known burial took place in 1940. Currently, works are in progress to gather the fragments of Jewish tombstones found in town and to place them back at the old Jewish cemetery. Special survey (with scanning) has also been underway to determine the site of the Holocaust-era mass graves.

Memorials ¶ Nowadays, in the northern part of the town, opposite the municipal park, there are two memorials. One of them, established by the communist authorities, bears an inscription “To the victims of fascism.” The other, established in the post-communist Ukraine and unveiled in 1998, bears an epitaph in Ukrainian, English, and Hebrew. Its English inscription reads: “Here lie thousands of Jews, citizens of Rohatyn and its surrounding areas, who were brutally killed by the German Nazis during the years of 1942–1944. God rest their souls.”

Heritage ¶ For many years, Mykhailo Vorobets’, a local retired teacher, worked tirelessly to preserve the memory about Rohatyn Jews. In 2011, Marla Raucher Osborn, whose ancestors came from Rohatyn, with the help of the

Association of Rohatyn Jews and their descendants, launched the “**Rohatyn Jewish Heritage**” project (www.rohatyn-jewishheritage.org). The project on preservation of Rohatyn Jewish heritage has been carried out in close cooperation with local authorities and activists. Thanks to the project, more matzevot

were discovered in town and returned to the cemetery. Plans are underway to establish a new memorial. The organisation of the descendants of Rohatyn Jews has been in cooperation with the town’s authorities on several educational projects to preserve the town Jewish heritage.

Worth seeing

Jewish cemeteries (17th c.), Bandery St., (19th c)Turianskoho St. **✚ Holy Spirit Orthodox Church** (16th c., wooden), included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, 10 Roksolany St. **✚ Church of St. Nicholas** (16th c.), Shevchenka St. **✚ Greek Catholic Church of the Holy Mother of God Nativity** (17th c.), 18 Halytska St. **✚ Rohatyn Museum of Art and Local History** in the renovated building of Mykola Uhryn-Bezhrishnyi’s manor house, 11 Uhryna-Bezhrishnoho St. **✚ “Opilla” Museum** in the building of the Volodymyr the Great Middle School, 1 Shevchenka St.

Surrounding area

Chortova Hora (Devil’s Mount) (3 km): a natural reserve park. **✚ Burshtyn** (18 km): a Jewish cemetery (several thousand 19th- and 20th-c. matzevot); Holy Trinity Church (18th c.); an Orthodox church (1802); a former manorial estate park. **✚ Berezhany** (32 km): the Sieniawski Castle (16th c.); the Greek Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity (17th c.); the Armenian church (18th c.); the Catholic church (17th c.); former Bernardine Monastery (17th c.); the town hall (1803); ruins of the synagogue (1718); a Jewish cemetery (approx. 200 matzevot). **✚ Bibrka** (40 km): ruins of the synagogue (1821); a Jewish cemetery with approx. 20 matzevot.

