

# SZARVAS



# THE SUMMER CAMP THAT'S CHANGING THE JEWISH WORLD

**+** THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CAMP SZARVAS



*'HAPPY BIRTHDAY' is sung in a DOZEN LANGUAGES!*

*Slam-dunks, tennis balls, and kosher meals ARE SERVED DAILY.*

*A Havdalah service is translated SIX WAYS.*

# Imagine a JEWISH DREAMLAND where...

*Jewish life and daily life are THE SAME THING.*

*3,000 LOAVES of challah are baked every summer.*

*Sunset means starlit strolls, NOT HOMEWORK.*



Your best friends are Hungarian, Israeli, Croatian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, American... **AND ALL JEWISH.**



# שלוש

## DEAR FRIEND,

There is no one way to be a Szarvas camper.

We come from big cities and small towns. Some of us were born in the Jewish community, and we cherish our early memories of JCC preschools and Passover seders at home. Others among us are the great-grandchildren of Holocaust survivors and Jews who lived in the shadows under Communism – the first in our families to embrace our Jewish identities in decades. Some of us celebrate Shabbat with our parents every week, and some of us are learning about Shabbat for the first time. We come from Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Moldova, India, Turkey, the United States, Israel, and beyond.

**“There are more than 25,000 of us, campers and staff and alumni. We have built – and continue to build – the Jewish world we want to live in.”**

All of us have found a home here.

Szarvas is the kind of miracle that should not have worked. Who would have thought that mixing so many languages and cultures and ways of being Jewish would lead to such a strong and supportive community? But we are proof that we are strongest together. Our Jewishness bolsters us. We learn from each other. We push each other. We grow together.

Each summer, we travel hundreds and thousands of miles – by car, bus, train, and plane – to come to this Jewish dreamland in the Hungarian countryside. We swim and sing, dance and daven, learn about the Western Wall and climb rock walls, too. We find ourselves here.

For many of us, Szarvas feels like the one spot in the world where we can show up with our full selves, without any fear.

When we leave each summer, we don't just bring back friendship bracelets and inside jokes. We return to our local Jewish communities inspired and equipped with the leadership and organizing skills needed to create the Jewish communities of our dreams.

There are more than 25,000 of us, campers and staff and alumni. We have gone on to launch local camps, run Jewish community centers and non-profits, and more. We have built – and continue to build – the Jewish world we want to live in.

**Welcome home.** We are so excited to share the magic with you.



# So... What is **SZARVAS** Anyway?



On 17 picturesque acres of rural southeastern Hungarian countryside in Békés County, an area known for its mild springs and stunning sunflower fields, you will find a surprising sight: Camp Szarvas. Founded in 1990, in the shadow of the fallen Soviet Union, it began as a place for young European Jews to rediscover their heritage.

Over the decades, Szarvas has become so much more than a summer camp, or even a hub for Jewish learning. Today, it is the global home for reinvigorated Jewish identity that is fueling communities across Central and Eastern Europe and beyond. Camp Szarvas now hosts 1,600 Jewish campers, aged 6-18, every summer. Its richly diverse community is

Over the decades,  
we've cultivated  
an oasis of revival where,  
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Judaism comes alive.

more than just campers, counselors, and staff – they are the next generation of Jewish leaders.

On these 17 picturesque acres, we have cultivated an oasis of revival where, each summer, Judaism comes alive. There is a special energy, impossible to miss. You can feel it in the air. It is two new friends teaching each other how to say hello, the stars on a quiet evening, a dining hall full of kids screaming blessings at the top of their lungs.

**BUT DON'T TAKE OUR WORD FOR IT...  
SEE IT FOR YOURSELF →**

"Szarvas has changed my life. I have met so many different people from so many different places who practice Judaism so differently from me. It's given me the ability to better understand my religion and my beliefs."

– Orly, USA



**1600**  
**CAMPERS**  
FROM 25+ COUNTRIES  
EACH SUMMER

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <br>ALBANIA        | <br>LATVIA      |
| <br>BELARUS        | <br>LITHUANIA   |
| <br>BOSNIA         | <br>MACEDONIA   |
| <br>BULGARIA       | <br>MOLDOVA     |
| <br>CANADA         | <br>NETHERLANDS |
| <br>CROATIA        | <br>POLAND      |
| <br>CZECH REPUBLIC | <br>ROMANIA     |
| <br>DENMARK        | <br>RUSSIA      |
| <br>ESTONIA      | <br>SERBIA    |
| <br>FRANCE       | <br>SLOVAKIA  |
| <br>GERMANY      | <br>SPAIN     |
| <br>HUNGARY      | <br>TURKEY    |
| <br>INDIA        | <br>UK        |
| <br>ISRAEL       | <br>UKRAINE   |
| <br>KAZAKHSTAN   | <br>USA       |

# A DAY IN THE LIFE

**ROYE**  
9, Romania

**NDA**  
15, Slovakia

**HADAS**  
16, Israel

Each morning, everyone gets out of bed and heads to **MIFKAD**, the morning meeting.

**MIFKAD**



You always have the option of **morning prayer** before Mifkad. Incredibly, campers are happy to wake up early to join in.

**BREAKFAST**



**SWIMMING**

**DILEMMA CAFE**

Many Jewish questions do not have easy answers. **Dilemma Cafe** is a chance to discuss thorny topics, clarifying your own beliefs and challenging your assumptions.



**CHALLENGE PARK**

**PEULA**

Each day at Szarvas has an educational focus – a topic based on the summer's theme. **Peula** is the daily session when that topic comes to life in informal, fun ways.



**MIFGASH**

A structured opportunity for you to spend time with campers from other countries, finding common ground while celebrating your differences.

**LUNCH**

**BIBLIODRAMA**

Act out classic Jewish and biblical stories with your friends.



**TENNIS**



**ART**

**MADRICH TIME**

Bond with your groupmates over creative activities and games organized by your madrichim (counselors).



**SPORTS CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**DINNER**

**PERFORMANCES**

**EVENING PROGRAMS**

Sometimes each group has their own activity; other times, the whole camp comes together. Either way, you are in for a unique and memorable experience.



**HORA DANCING**



# JEWISH LEARNING, SZARVAS STYLE

**COME AS YOU ARE.**

We know being Jewish is not one-size-fits-all, and that is especially true at Szarvas. From the cultural to the traditional, the religious to the curious, we make sure every camper feels at home at Szarvas and has something to learn.

**BUT HOW?**

The Szarvas curriculum is carefully designed to be accessible, thought-provoking, and fun. Religious traditions are only one part of the story; campers are encouraged to think outside the box – outside the synagogue – and draw inspiration from the full spectrum of Jewish culture and history as they explore what it means to be Jewish now.

Each summer at Szarvas has a guiding theme, a lens through which campers explore Judaism. This theme comes to life in a new way each day. The days build on each others, forming a Jewish story that leads campers naturally towards their own understanding of what Judaism means to them, and how they can apply it in their daily life.

**SUMMER THEMES:  
THE GREATEST HITS**

**1999**

The Jewish World

**2004**

Around the Jewish World in 12 Days

**2007**

To Be Continued...

**2010**

Change - Judaism Reloaded

**2013**

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Judaism

**2017**

Judaism and Time

**JEWISH EDUCATION**

Learning at Szarvas is about fun experiences. Each is designed to be creative and appropriate for campers' age and knowledge.





# THE DINING HALL:

the **HEART** of Camp Szarvas

Not just a place for meals, the dining hall is the central hub of camp life, a communal space for singing, chanting, dancing, and laughing.



# AGAINST ALL ODDS:

## A DARK HISTORY with a BRIGHT FUTURE

When you stop to think about it, it is almost inconceivable that Szarvas even exists – a stone’s throw away from the cities and countries most recognizable to Jews for their Holocaust history.

Most Szarvas campers come from Central and Eastern European communities decimated during World War II. In the following decades, Jewish culture and religious life were all but snuffed out by communist regimes.

But against all odds, a new generation of young Jews from all over flock to Szarvas yearning for connection and eager to discover their own expression of what it means to be Jewish.

### GROWING UP SZARVAS

Many Jews have literally grown up at Szarvas – evolving from campers to madrichim (counselors), unit heads, and program specialists. Our 25,000-plus alumni from more than 30 countries around the world often go on to become the next generation of Jewish leaders in their home communities. For these

young Jews, Szarvas is not just a place; the confident Jewish identity, pluralistic and inclusive worldview, and life lessons that Szarvas provides are central to who they are.

**“Who would have thought that the original vision for Szarvas would be as relevant today as it was in 1990?”**

– Diego Ornique, JDC

### THE SZARVAS EFFECT

It is hard to overstate the impact Szarvas has had on the Jewish world. The fact that Jewish communities across Eastern and Central Europe are thriving is due, in no small part, to the Jews nurtured by Szarvas every summer since 1990.

Campers leave Szarvas equipped with a powerful connection to their Jewish heritage and the leadership, communication, and organizing skills to build the Jewish communities of their dreams. Thanks to alumni, Jewish community centers, kindergartens, and local camps have sprung up all over Europe, including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltics. Each year’s Szarvas curriculum – a 60+ page booklet rich in Jewish thought and challenging questions – travels around the world, fostering vibrant Jewish life by looking toward the future while drawing from the past.



*Just 100 miles away, some 20,000 Jews were killed along the banks of the Danube River.*

# SZARVAS

The **EPICENTER OF RENEWAL THAT HAS CHANGED THE JEWISH WORLD**



## MEET THE CAMPERS WHO HAVE **TRANSFORMED** THEIR LOCAL JEWISH COMMUNITIES

Szarvas stays with campers long after the summer ends, and its impact extends far past the camp's borders. If you look across Europe, and across the world, it is awe-inspiring to consider what Szarvas campers have built.

Jutka Lübeck is the **Coordinator for Camp Szarvas**, and an active leader in the Hungarian Jewish community. Before becoming Coordinator, she was both a camper and counselor at Szarvas.



"Szarvas is a pillar that I know I can lean on for the rest of my life and I hope that my children will be able to share this magical experience"



Agata Rakowiecka is the **Director of the Jewish Community Center in Warsaw, Poland**, the city's first institution of its kind since the Holocaust. She creates Jewish programming for children from 20+ countries, and holds a Jewish educator's degree from Hebrew University.

"Szarvas inspired my decision to dedicate my career to renewing Jewish life in Poland."

"Szarvas is particularly important to me today given my grandmother's experience as a Holocaust survivor... I simply didn't know I was Jewish. But when I came to Szarvas, I was able to truly explore and take ownership of that identity."

Maxim Delchev is the **Director of Jewish Education at the Sofia Jewish Community Center in Bulgaria**. He recently completed a one-year fellowship studying at Pardes in Israel.



"Camp is not just a place for kids to swim and play games, it's a place for the next generation of Jewish community to grow up together."



Mina Pasajlic is the **co-creator of Haver Serbia**, an organization dedicated to fighting anti-Semitism and intolerance by educating people about Jews and Judaism. She is the **Program Director for Szarvas** and is currently studying at Pardes in Israel.



"Szarvas smuggled into our everyday lives an unshakable Jewish identity, based on real values, knowledge and a unique sense of affinity to our heroes, books and miracles."

– Andras Buchler

*President, Sopron Jewish Community of Hungary*

Szarvas has been more successful than anyone could have imagined. We have given tens of thousands of kids the Jewish experience of a lifetime and the Szarvas ripple effect has transformed Europe for the better. We are proud of what we have accomplished and want to foster Szarvas for decades to come, ensuring it continues to be a place that alumni rave about and those who have not attended cannot wait to experience.

## SO WHAT'S NEXT FOR SZARVAS?

Today's campers are more sophisticated and engaged than ever before, coming from communities that have already benefited from decades of Szarvas and other Jewish community programs. They are excited to see what comes next, and it is up to us to give them a world-class Jewish summer camp experience.

To keep the magic of Szarvas alive – and to expand the scope of communities it touches – we need to invest in the future. That means updated, contemporary facilities, a rich offering of activities, and increased capacity so we can serve more campers than ever.

We know that each new camper is more than just a bright-eyed kid – the Jewish passion and purpose they discover at Szarvas is a spark. That spark ignites a renewed fire of Jewish culture and tradition that touches thousands. By investing in Szarvas, we are not just giving kids a life-changing experience; we are changing the Jewish world.

## SZARVAS HAS CREATED THE SPARK .

## LET'S SUSTAIN IT.

Szarvas has already rekindled the flame of Judaism across Europe and beyond. It is vital that we transition Szarvas into its next phase with intention. Your support allows us to continue looking toward the future, drawing on the momentum we have built over the last 30 years to create a sustainable institution which will amplify our progress for decades to come.

#SUN

110% Fun

#Szarvas

# WELCOME TO THE JEWISH ADVENTURE THAT LASTS A LIFETIME



For more information, please visit

[JDC.org/szarvas](https://www.jdc.org/szarvas)



The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is the world's leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization. JDC works in more than 70 countries and in Israel to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief and long-term development support for victims of natural and man-made disasters. For more information, please visit [www.jdc.org](http://www.jdc.org).

SZARVAS