



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SEPHARDI JEWRY

A study tour of Jewish medieval Spain



The Jewish Museum of Australia is pleased to announce that it will be hosting a very special educational tour of Jewish medieval Spain from 3-18 May, 2011. This tour will be led by Paul Forgasz. Paul is a lecturer in the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University where he teaches about Jewish-Christian-Muslim relations in the Middle Ages. He is well known to the Jewish Museum community, both as a teacher in the museum's community education program and as regular lecturer to the Museum guides.

What is special about this tour?

As with any tour, you will visit various cities, towns and sites of both Jewish and general historical interest and your local guide will be on hand to explain the features of these sites. However, under Paul's expert guidance, you will actively engage and interact with these sites through the reading and analysis of texts, group discussions, role plays and simulations. In other words, you will step back into history, into the world of the Jews of medieval Spain. As you visit particular sites you will re-live significant historical moments; step into the shoes of the great medieval Spanish Jewish poets, statesmen, scientists, philosophers and mystics; and enter the vast cultural and intellectual storehouse of this once thriving centre of Jewish civilisation. The itinerary has been designed in a way which will enable you to experience the story of the Jews of Spain as an unfolding chronological narrative.

Tour operator

The local travel agent is Voyager Travel Corporation. The managing director of Voyager, Nathan Feld, has devoted his personal attention to the organisational and logistical aspects of this tour. At the Spanish end, all arrangements will be handled by IBEROservice.

Spanish land package

The price per person on a **twin share** basis will be 4500€uros. The cost of a **single supplement** is 935€. Note that \$AUD payments will be tied to the Euro exchange rate.

The following are included in the land package:

- ❖ Four star hotel accommodation (15 nights) and buffet breakfasts
- ❖ 3 evening meals
- ❖ 3 lunches
- ❖ Full time bilingual tour escort
- ❖ Workshop on Sephardi culture and music at the Casa de Sefarad, Cordoba
- ❖ Flamenco show at the Casa de la Memoria Al Andalus, Seville
- ❖ Entrance fees to sites as per itinerary
- ❖ Experienced English speaking local guides
- ❖ Study materials
- ❖ Deluxe motor coach travel as per itinerary
- ❖ Tips for guides and bus drivers
- ❖ High speed train (tourist class) from Madrid-Córdoba, Seville-Madrid and Madrid-Barcelona

Not included in the price:

- ❖ Airfare and airport taxes
- ❖ Travel insurance
- ❖ Hotel transfers to and from the airport
- ❖ Tips for hotel staff (at your discretion)
- ❖ Hotel portorage
- ❖ Hotel extras such as mini bar, room service
- ❖ Meals other than breakfast, three lunches and three dinners

Note: If you wish to make your own independent pre and post tour and flight arrangements, Narelle Needham of Voyager Travel, would be more than happy to assist. She can be contacted on 9658 6295 or via email: NarelleN@voyagertravel.com.au

The next step...

Attached to the email which accompanied this information brochure, you will find a welcome letter from Voyager Travel. Included in the letter are three forms which you will need to print, complete and return **together with payment of the first instalment** to Voyager Travel. Please mark the envelope or fax clearly to the **attention of Narelle Needham**. As email security cannot be guaranteed, if you are paying by credit card, please do not return your forms by email. **When you return the forms and payment to Voyager Travel, send an email to Paul Forgasz letting him know that you have registered for the tour.**

In order for this tour is to proceed on the basis of the above price, we will need **firm commitments** from a minimum of 24 people. However, in order to allow for a more interactive learning experience, the size of the group will not exceed 30.

Places on the tour will be filled in order of receipt of registration forms, and successful applicants will be notified once the tour group is filled. If you miss out on a place, you will be contacted to see if you wish to be placed on a waiting list.

If you have any enquiries about the tour, contact Paul Forgasz on 9572 1464 or via email: paul.forgasz@monash.edu

Refer to the following page for a detailed tour itinerary (subject to revision)

DETAILED TOUR ITINERARY

- Tuesday 3 May:** Make your own way to the Hotel De Las Letras in Madrid. After settling in, we will gather for a mid afternoon orientation session.
- Wednesday 4 May:** Depart early AM by fast train for **Cordoba** where we will visit Medina Azahara, the magnificent city-palace (now largely an archaeological ruin) built by Abd ar-Rahman III for his favourite concubine, az-Zahra (the Flower). In 929, he established Cordoba as an independent caliphate which was an island of interfaith tolerance during the 10th and 11th centuries, and this is where our story begins. In the evening, we will discuss the question of why this period came to be known as the “golden age” of Spanish Jewry and learn about the extraordinary career of Hasdai ibn Shaprut, the Jewish physician and diplomat who served in the court of Abd ar-Rahman III. Overnight in the Hotel Hesperia which overlooks the Guadalquivir River and is only minutes away from the heart of the old city.
- Thursday 5 May:** This very full day of sightseeing and cultural activity in **Cordoba**, the cradle of Spanish Jewry’s “Golden Age”, will begin with a visit to the Museum of Three Cultures. We will wander through the splendid Mezquita or Grand Mosque, which set the pattern for Islamic art in Spain and also served as a source of inspiration and imitation for synagogue architecture. We will explore the narrow medieval streets of the old Jewish quarter, including the synagogue which bears the name of Judaism’s greatest philosopher, Maimonides. His impressive statue stands just down the street, in front of the house where he is said to have been born. We will visit the Casa Sefarad, a beautifully designed museum dedicated to the life of Sephardi Jews, where we will be treated to an exclusive workshop on Sephardi music and culture. In the evening, accompanied by a glass or two of wine, we will meet some of the great Hebrew poets of medieval Spain when we learn about the intricacies of the *majlis*, a highly stylised wine party held in luxurious gardens, where poets of the day would recite their work. Overnight in Cordoba at the Hotel Hesperia.
- Friday 6 May:** We will commence the day with a study session focusing on the contrasting pathways to God as reflected in the thought of Maimonides and Judah ha-Levi, two giants of the Sephardic intellectual tradition. The afternoon will be at your leisure and in the evening you will be treated to a festive Shabbat dinner. Overnight at the Hotel Hesperia.
- Saturday 7 May:** We will return in the morning to the Casa Sefarad for a Shabbat study session introducing the next stage of our journey. The afternoon will be at your leisure in Cordoba. Overnight at the Hotel Hesperia.
- Sunday 8 May:** We depart very early today for **Granada**, where the Muslim phase of our unfolding narrative comes to an end. The highlight of our visit will be the spectacular Alhambra, the final bastion of Moorish presence in Spain. The Christians reconquered most of Spain by 1250, but Granada remained the last great vestige of Muslim presence. Moreover, it was known in Moorish times as *Granat-al-Yahud* (Granada of the Jews). In fact, it was here that one of the most important Jews of medieval Spain,

Samuel ibn Nagrela, rose to great prominence under Muslim rule. However, shortly after the city's conquest by the Christians in 1492, the Edict of Expulsion was signed in the Ambassadors Hall which we will visit as part of our tour of the Alhambra. In the afternoon we will walk through the old quarter of Granada, including the colorful Moorish bazaar. Our walking tour will end up at the statue of Yehudah ibn Tibbon who translated into Hebrew works written in Arabic by some of the great Jewish scholars of the time. From Granada we will travel by coach to Seville where we will stay overnight in the Hotel Becquer.

Monday 9 May:

We will begin the day with a study session which will introduce you to the Christian phase of our narrative and frame the remainder of our tour. Then, under the expert guidance of Moises Hassan, a local Jewish tour guide, we will take a walking tour of the Santa Cruz, the old Jewish quarter of **Seville**. Along the way we will stop at *Calle Susona* (Street of Susona) and hear about the tragic story of "Beautiful Susanna", the daughter of Don Diego Suson, a marrano. In our walk through the Jewish quarter, we will also see the Church of Santa Maria La Blanca which was built on the site of a synagogue. We will visit the enormous cathedral of Seville with its imposing Moorish tower which houses the key to the Jewish quarter that the Jews of Seville handed to King Fernando III as a sign of their submission. In the evening we will be treated to a flamenco show in Casa de la Memoria, set in the courtyard of an 18th century palace. Overnight in Seville at the Hotel Becquer.

Tuesday 10 May:

We depart early in the morning by high speed train for **Madrid**. On arrival, we will take a guided tour of the Prado Museum which is counted amongst the leading art galleries in the world. In preparation for tomorrow's excursion to Avila, an evening study session will focus on the development in Spain of the Kabbala and Jewish mysticism. Overnight in Madrid at the Hotel de las Letras.

Wednesday 11 May:

A very full day of sightseeing, cultural activity and study in Avila and Segovia. **Avila** is best known for its impressive medieval walls, the oldest and best preserved in Spain. It was a major centre of medieval Christian and Jewish mysticism and also the later home of Moses de Leon, author of the Zohar, the foundational classic work of the Kabbala. At the Moses de Leon Gardens we will take step back into de Leon's world. We will visit the Mysticism Interpretation Centre which is dedicated to the history of Christian, Muslim and Jewish mysticism. Here, a diverse group of artists have lent their inspiration and mastery to the creation of a unique and timeless space in which the visitor can experience the mystical journey through the interplay of architecture, painting, sculpture, design, music, light, darkness, sounds, materials, words and poetry.

Segovia is famous for its ancient Roman aqueduct. Walking through the old Jewish quarter, we will visit the Church of Corpus Christi which was the Sinagoga Mayor up until the early fifteenth century. Today it is the only one of medieval Segovia's five synagogues that remains standing. We will also visit one of the most important buildings of the Jewish quarter, the palace-house of Abraham Seneor. He was the court appointed chief rabbi of Spanish Jewry, administered the taxes of the

kingdom of Castille and served as treasurer-general of a military organisation that was normally closed to Jews. However, he and his family embraced Christianity in the wake of the 1492 edict of Jewish expulsion. Seneor's house contains a beautifully designed Jewish education centre and museum which we will also visit. In the tranquil courtyard we will briefly review the remarkable career of Abraham Seneor. Overnight in Madrid at the Hotel de las Letras.

Thursday 12 May:

Today's excursion takes us to **Toledo**. As early as the 13th Century, the School of Translators of Toledo had brought classical and Arabic culture to the western world and Toledo was the capital offering the most favourable convivial atmosphere for the blending of the Arabic, Jewish and Christian cultures. When you see Toledo, you will understand why its Jewish residents called it the "Jerusalem of the West." Ten of Toledo's synagogues are reported to have been destroyed in the infamous anti-Jewish riots of 1391, but two survived. We will visit the 14th century Transito Synagogue and its Sephardic Museum which displays hundreds of years of Jewish culture in Spain, as well as the "Great Synagogue" which was consecrated in the fifteenth century as the Church of Santa Maria la Blanca. Continuing the theme of the previous day, we will meet Abraham Kron and hear him tell the story of his conversion to Christianity. A Jew, born in France, today he is known as Father Abraham de la Cruz, founder of a fraternity which devotes itself to the fostering of Jewish-Christian relations. Overnight in Madrid at Hotel de las Letras.

Friday 13 May:

We depart by fast train for Barcelona. After checking into the hotel we will embark on a half day panoramic tour of **Barcelona** which will include a visit to Montjuic, the "Jews' Mountain." In the evening we will come together for a festive Shabbat meal, followed by a study session focusing on the halachic status of the many Spanish Jews who became "conversos." Overnight at the Hotel Barcelona Center.

Saturday 14 May:

In the morning we will come together for a Shabbat study session to continue our discussion from the previous evening. The rest of the day will be spent at your leisure in **Barcelona**. Overnight at the Hotel Barcelona Center.

Sunday 15 May:

In the morning we will explore the amazing work of Gaudi, a native son of Barcelona and one of the world's architectural geniuses. The rest of the day will be at your leisure. In the early evening we will have a study session focusing on the final chapter of the Spanish Jewish story. Overnight at the Hotel Barcelona Center.

Monday 16 May:

A full day excursion to **Girona** which was the birthplace and home of Nachmanides or RaMBaN, the famous biblical commentator, halachic scholar and mystic. We will explore the old Jewish quarter of Girona. We will also spend some time in the Bonastruc ca Porta Centre which bears RaMBaN's Spanish name and houses a wonderful Jewish museum and the Nachmanides Research Institute. We will be taken on a tour of the museum and meet with Dr Silvia Planas, director of the Research Institute, who will tell us about her work on Jewish women of medieval Girona. In our study session we will relive the infamous disputation of

1263 between Nachmanides and Pablo Christiani. Overnight at the Hotel Barcelona Center.

Tuesday 17 May:

We will meet with Dominique Tomasov, a Jewish heritage expert, under whose expert guidance we will explore the fascinating medieval Jewish quarter of Barcelona. We will visit the Placa del Rei where the Inquisition in Barcelona held its first auto da fe. The adjacent Palau Reial Major was the scene in 1263 of the theological debate between Nachmanides, the great Jewish rabbi and thinker, and Pablo Christiani, a Jewish apostate who converted to Christianity. We will also visit the synagogue where the famous medieval Jewish scholar, the RaSHBa (Rabbi Shlomo ben Adret), served as rabbi for more than fifty years. He was also the author of numerous responsa (Jewish legal opinions). Our study session in the heart of the old Jewish quarter will focus on theme of “disputation and dialogue in Jewish-Christian relations.” We will then stroll along the length of the Rambla, ending up at the port of Barcelona where, after lunch, we will re-enact the dilemmas which Spanish Jews confronted in having to decide how to react to the 1492 edict of expulsion – whether to leave or to convert to Christianity. In the evening we will have an opportunity to meet some members of the local Jewish community in Barcelona for a final celebratory meal. We will be entertained by “Mashala”, a very talented Sephardi music ensemble. Overnight at the Hotel Barcelona Center.

Wednesday 18 May:

Farewell!

SEE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR LINKS TO HOTEL INFORMATION

Hotel information

Madrid – Hotel de las Letras

<http://www.hoteldelasletras.com/movies/inicio.htm>

Cordoba – Hotel Hesperia

<http://www.hesperia.com/hesperia/en/hotels/spain/cordoba/hesperia-cordoba.html>

Seville – Hotel Becquer

<http://en.hotelbecquer.com/>

Barcelona – Hotel Barcelona Center

http://www.hotelcenterbarcelona.com/Hotel_Barcelona_Center_Home.html

The above hotels may be subject to revision depending on room availability at the time of making reservations. However, if bookings will need to be made for alternative hotels, they will be of a similar standard to the above.

Disclaimer: The information provided above is general in nature and has been supplied to Voyager Travel Corporation by IBEROservice (Spain) and by Paul Forgasz. The Jewish Museum of Australia makes no representations and takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the above information. The final costs and itinerary will be provided by Voyager Travel.

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