

# SEPHARDIC SPAIN

Led by Professor Yale Strom

& Elizabeth Schwartz

March 2022

(As of 5/12/21)

*Jewish history in Spain is filled with contradictions. There is tragedy here, but there are also traces of former glories during the 1,000 years before the inquisition – these were large scale Jewish communities that prospered for long periods. We will delve into the past, enjoy unforgettable musical presentations created by Prof. Yale Strom and Elizabeth Schwartz, as well as reach out to the nascent Jewish communities of today to hear their struggles, and their successes. With the Spanish government opening the door to citizenship for Jews with Spanish roots, and the opening of new centers of Jewish culture, there has never been a better time to visit Spain!*



### **Day 1: Sunday, March 27, 2022: DEPARTURE TO SPAIN**

- We depart the United States on our overnight flight to Madrid, Spain.
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### **Day 2: Monday, March 28, 2022: WELCOME TO MADRID!**

- We arrive in **Madrid** and are met by an Ayelet Tours representative who will assist us through customs.
- We begin our journey with a visit to the impressive **Royal Palace**, followed by stops in two of Europe's most impressive squares; **Plaza Mayor**, with arts, crafts and chic boutiques under its arcades, as well as the Spanish version of Times Square, **Puerta del Sol**.
- We continue to the "**Centro**", which was founded in 2006 as a joint effort of the Spanish Government's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the regional Madrid governing body and the Madrid City Council. Its mission is to "deepen the study of the legacy of Sephardic culture as a living part of Spanish culture, as well as foster greater knowledge of Jewish culture within Spanish society." It regularly holds art exhibitions and concerts.
- We complete our first day in Madrid at the **Beth Yaakov Synagogue**, opened in 1968 after the passage of the "Religious Freedom Law".
- This evening, we check into our hotel and refresh before joining together for a delicious **welcome dinner** at a local restaurant.

### **Overnight in Madrid**

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### **Day 3: Tuesday, March 29, 2022: TOLEDO: BIRTHPLACE OF LADINO MUSIC**

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we travel to one of the main highlights of Spain, the **Imperial City of Toledo**, a striking hilltop city, once the center for Jewish Spain with a rich, creative heritage.
- Upon our arrival, we visit the famous 16<sup>th</sup> century **El Greco house/museum** located in the former Jewish quarter.
- Our next stop is at the **Sinagoga de Santa Maria La Blanca**, later converted to a church.
- We continue to the **Sinagoga del Transito**, originally intended as a private house of worship for Samuel Ha Levi in the 14th century, which is now the Sephardic Museum.
- We return to Madrid and spend the remainder of the afternoon touring the impressive **Prado Museum**, considered to be one of the greatest art museums in the world.
- Dinner on own tonight.

### **Overnight in Madrid**

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### **Day 4: Wednesday, March 30, 2022: AVILA & SEGOVIA**

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we set out on a full day excursion. Our first stop is in **Avila** located on the banks of the Adaja River. Our tour includes viewing the imposing city walls and the former Jewish community sites (Juderias).
- In the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Segovia**, we visit the former **main synagogue**, the **Jewish Quarter Visitor's Center**, the **Jewish cemetery** and the **San Andres gate tourist center** that gives us information on the famous Roman fortifications and impressive aqueduct in the center of town.



- Later this afternoon, we return to Madrid for **dinner** together to and to enjoy a **short performance of Ladino music** by Professor Strom and Elizabeth Schwartz.

### Overnight in Madrid

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#### Day 5: Thursday, March 31, 2022: CORDOBA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we board the high speed **AVE train** to **Cordoba**, home of the great Rambam, Moses Maimonides and other Jewish scholars and poets. Once the biggest city in all of Europe, Cordoba thrived and expanded with its unique blend of cultures.
- We begin with a visit to the **ancient synagogue** built in 1315. The only medieval synagogue in Spain, it was restored and reopened as a museum.
- Nearby is **Maimonides Square**, with its bronze sculpture of the Jewish philosopher of the same name. He is best known as a court doctor and Torah scholar and author of the book *The Guide for the Perplexed*.
- Our next stop is at **Casa de Sefarad House of Memories**, a center for learning the history and culture of medieval Jewish Cordoba. Casa de Sefarad hosts a wide variety of performances in its cultural arts space and is home to a repository of books and materials on the medieval Jewish world. Here, we enjoy a **performance by local musicians**.
- Our final stop today is at “**La Mezquita**”, the 8<sup>th</sup> century church turned mosque that now has a cathedral placed in its center.
- We continue to **Seville** and check into our hotel with time to refresh, then set out for a **Jewish flamenco class** taught by an Israeli flamenco artist, with musical accompaniment by Prof. Strom.
- Dinner on own tonight.



### Overnight in Seville

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#### Day 6: Friday, April 1, 2022: SIGHTSEEING IN SEVILLE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we enjoy exploring **Seville**, the capital of the Andalusia region, famous for artistry, flamenco dancing and its striking architectural landmarks.
- We head to the **Barrio de Santa Cruz** with its winding narrow streets and small plaza, once a thriving Jewish community. We enjoy a guided tour with our local expert **Moises**.
- We stop at the **Centro de Interpretacion de la Juderia**, a museum that exists to recover and to value Jewish culture.
- Next, we visit the **Cathedral of Seville**, one of the largest in the world. Here rest all the Spanish kings and queens, as well as the impressive sepulchre of **Christopher Columbus**.
- Tonight, we participate in **Shabbat services** and enjoy **Shabbat dinner** with the local Jewish community.

### Overnight in Seville

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### Day 7: Saturday, April 2, 2022: LEISURE IN SEVILLE/TOUR TO LUCENA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- Spend the morning at leisure relaxing or exploring Seville on own or join an optional tour (additional cost) to the nearby Andalusian city of **Lucena**, referred to as “The Pearl of Sefarad” because it was one of the oldest and most important Jewish communities in Sephardic Spain. Among gentiles in the medieval period, it was often called “Jews’ City”. While here, we will visit the **Palace of the Counts of Santa Ana** with its **Jewish museum** and visit shops in former Jewish buildings that house artisans making Jewish crafts and Sephardic pastries.
- We return to **Seville** to check into our hotel, followed by a tapas **dinner** tonight.



#### Overnight in Seville

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### Day 8: Sunday, April 3, 2022: GRANADA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we begin our tour with an early morning drive to Granada.
- We visit to one of the wonders of the world, the Moorish **Alhambra Palace**, where in 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella signed the decree expelling the Jews from Spain.
- Next, we visit the **Realejo**, the Jewish quarter of Granada. Located right in the town center, it was a bustling community at the time of Nasrid rule. The Jewish community was once so important, it was called Garnatha al Yejud, Arabic for Granada of the Jews. While strolling through the Realejo, we will see the beautiful walled gardens and mansions.
- Later this afternoon, we check into our hotel, refresh and then set out to enjoy dinner on own.

#### Overnight in Granada

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### Day 9: Monday, April 4, 2022: BEAUTIFUL BARCELONA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we transfer to the airport and fly to Barcelona, the capital of the Catalonian province, and set out to explore the city’s highlights and Jewish history.
- Our first stop is at Antonio Gaudi’s architectural masterpiece, the **Sagrada Familia Church**.
- We continue on a walking tour through the centuries-old streets and alleys of the **Gothic Quarter**, for an introduction to this former Jewish community. While here, we will visit one of the oldest synagogues in Europe dating back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, located in **El Call**. The synagogue was restored and reopened in 2002 by a private non-profit.



- We stroll down “**La Rambla**”, the famed pedestrian boulevard, to the sea, passing gardens, street musicians, mimes, restaurants and other sites.
- After a chance to refresh at our hotel, set out to discover nightlife in the city and enjoy dinner on own, followed by a **grand concert** by Professor Strom, Elizabeth Schwartz and members of the local Jewish community.

### Overnight in Barcelona

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#### Day 10: Tuesday, April 5, 2022: GERONA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we explore the historic town of **Gerona** in the hills of Catalonia. Gerona stands not only as a charming example of Spain’s quaint early-medieval ambience, but also as a reminder of the days when Jewish traditions bloomed. In fact, Gerona was once a link between the first Kabbalists of Provence and the poets and writers of Cordoba and Toledo. Jewish settlers came here at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, growing and prospering until the Spanish Inquisition in 1492. While here, we will visit the **Archaeological Museum** and the **Jewish Museum** among other sites.
- We return to Barcelona for an evening at leisure and dinner on own.

### Overnight in Barcelona

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#### Day 11: Wednesday, April 6, 2022: LEISURE IN BARCELONA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Spend today at leisure exploring the city on own. Among countless options, you might visit the Gaudi Museum and Park Guell, peruse the Barcelona Museum, the Museum of Picasso or the Museum of Catalanian History.
- We continue our day with a group tour in **Montjuic** (Mountain of the Jews), where you’ll find a millennium-old Jewish cemetery with more than 500 gravestones.
- Next, stop at the **Castell de Montjuic**, a 17<sup>th</sup> century fortification that is now a military museum.
- This evening, we join together for a festive **farewell dinner** and a **Ladino and Klezmer concert** at the Beth Shalom congregation in Spain founded in 1997.

### Overnight in Barcelona

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#### Day 12: Thursday, April 7, 2022: FAREWELL/PORTUGAL EXTENSION

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to the airport for our flight back to the United States, landing later today.



# OR JOIN OUR EXTENSION TO PORTUGAL



- We transfer to the airport for our flight to **Lisbon, Portugal**.
- Upon arrival, we begin our tour with a visit to Lisbon's major synagogue, **Shaare Tikva**, which celebrates its 120th anniversary in 2022, and learn more about the history of Jewish settlement in this city. It is believed that Jewish life began here not long before Lisbon fell to the Moors in the 8th Century.
- We continue to the waterfront area of **Belem**, where we visit the **Monastery of Geronimo**, the largest cloisters in this part of the world, for an inside visit.
- We see the monument to **Vasco da Gamma**. It was from here that he set sail to discover the New World.
- Along the way, we stop for a delicious pastry on our own at a local coffee house.
- We check into our hotel and have time to relax and refresh before joining together for a **traditional Portuguese dinner** this evening, featuring traditional Fado music.

## Overnight in Lisbon

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### Day 13: Friday, April 8, 2022: JEWISH LISBON

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, we enjoy a **walking tour with Paolo**, historian and highly respected local Jewish guide. We start in the **Alfama**, Lisbon's oldest quarter, crowned by the 12th century **Castelo (castle) Sao Jorge**. The originally Moorish area exemplifies the true individuality of the city of Lisbon with its overlapping historical pasts and steep slopes.
- We continue to one of the more important **Jewish quarters**, once home to Jewish sages like the Abravanel. During Moorish rule, Jews co-existed with Muslims in the nearby Alfama quarter. From a viewpoint in **Baixa**, we'll discuss how life once was in the Judaria Grande, bustling with the activity from successful merchants positioned near the harbor. Despite devastation, which came in the forced conversion of 1497 and the natural disasters of 1755, this area still contains clues to its Jewish past, and we will discover Jewish customs still present in the community and architecture.
- Next, we explore **Rossio Square**, where the **National Theatre** stands upon the site of the Palace of Estaaos, where during the Inquisition, many Jews were tortured and killed as 'infidels'. The adjacent **Square of Sao Domingo** is the site of the Massacre of 1506, when more than 500 New Christians (Jews who were forced to convert) were tortured and killed. Along the way, we also see the **memorial monument** erected not long ago by Lisbon's Jewish community and the monument erected nearby by the church.



- We note the architecture of the **Rossio train station**, then walk by the famous **Ginja stand** where locals purchase small glasses of cherry liqueur, first brewed in an ancient monastery.
- Our final stop today is at the **Elevador de Santa Justa**, designed by student of Eiffel (of tower fame) and then walk down towards **Praca Comercio** and the **waterfront** to enjoy the beauty of this charming city.
- Tonight, we enjoy **Shabbat services** and **dinner** with the local Jewish community.

## Overnight in Lisbon

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### Day 14: Saturday, April 9, 2022: SINTRA/FAREWELL

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Enjoy Shabbat at leisure in Lisbon or:
- Early this morning, we drive about a half hour outside Lisbon to the UNESCO World Heritage site of **Sintra**. Here, we walk through the **Jewish quarter**, where Jews lived before the forced conversions of 1497.
- We continue with a visit to the breathtaking **Pena Palace**, a notable example of Portuguese architecture in the Romantic period. The palace is surrounded by a forest featuring over 500 different tree species gathered from the four corners of the Earth.
- We complete our day with a stop in **Cabo da Roca** (Cape Roca), the westernmost point of continental Europe, where we overlook the beautiful sea.
- We return to Lisbon for a **farewell dinner**, then transfer to the airport for our overnight flight back to the United States.



### Day 15: Sunday, April 10, 2022: WELCOME HOME!

- We arrive back in the United States this morning. Welcome home!



**ABOUT PROF. STROM:** *Professor Yale Strom is an acclaimed violinist, composer, filmmaker, writer, photographer, playwright and a pioneer among revivalists in conducting extensive field research in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans among the Jewish and Roma communities. Initially, his work focused primarily on the use and performance of klezmer music among these two groups. Gradually, his focus increased to examining all aspects of their culture, from post-World War II to the present. For more than 3 decades and 75 such research expeditions, Strom has become the world's leading ethnographer-artist of klezmer music and history. Strom has lectured extensively throughout the United States and Europe and taught at NYU for 4 years, where he created the course "Artist-Ethnographer Expeditions". At present he is Artist-in-Residence and professor in the Jewish Studies Program at San Diego State University.*





**ABOUT ELIZABETH SCHWARTZ:** *From her many appearances with Yale Strom & Hot Pstromi and as a solo artist, vocalist **Elizabeth Schwartz** has built a loyal following among fans, critics and collaborators. Her first recording of Yiddish, Hebrew and Ladino vocals for the Naxos World label, "Garden of Yidn", debuted on Canada's Mundial Top World Music poll. It was hailed as "a landmark in modern Yiddish song" (Sing Out! Magazine). Her vocals can be heard on the soundtracks for many films including "L'Chayim, Comrade Stalin!", "Rumenye, Rumenye", and many others. In a historic, barrier-breaking concert, Schwartz was the first woman invited to sing in New York City's 125 year-old landmark Eldridge Street Synagogue. She performs regularly across North America and Europe in venues ranging from jazz clubs to concert halls (including Carnegie Hall), as well as synagogues and festivals. Schwartz is the subject of the documentary film, "Searching for Schwartz",*

*by acclaimed Romanian filmmaker Radu Gabrea. As a writer, Schwartz co-created the award-winning audio dramas "The Witches of Lublin" and "Debs in Canton". Her recipes and writings about Jewish food can be found on [www.theweiskitchen.com](http://www.theweiskitchen.com).*

### **THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!!**

*\*Itinerary subject to change*

