



# Route by Jaen's Jewish Quarter

"Onde los sefaradím moravan"

*This “Jewish Quarter Route” offers the traveler a cultural and touristic journey that starts the approach to the Jewish and Converts history and its particularities. We suggest a tour along the medieval Jewish Quarter and several related areas in the city that are connected to this significant community.*

*If arriving in Jaen by car, we recommend parking at Constitution Square, from where you can walk to the nearby Plaza de Santa María, the starting point for our route.*

## INTRODUCTION

*The Jewish presence in Jaen dates back to 612 CE. Although it seems to be back to a much earlier date, there is no document attesting that. During many centuries Jews peacefully dwelled these lands under Arian, Catholic and Muslim control until the severe persecutions of 1391, when the Jewish quarter became neighborhood of Converts and was renamed “Santa Cruz” for the last third of the fifteenth century.*

*Despite these unfortunate events, a large population of Converts (“judeoconversos”), yet pretending to be Christians, will secretly keep their ancient traditions alive and observing Mosaic Law. This strong presence of Judaizers will turn the main argument in favor of the establishment of the Jaen’s Holy Inquisition Court by 1483.*

*Later on and until the late 18th century, the inquisitorial process will involve several prominent figures of Jaen that kept their Jewish religion in secrecy, and a significant number of Sephardic immigrants coming from several places in Portugal that have special predilection*

*for settling in Jaen perhaps because they are descendants of the banished Jews in the previous centuries.*

*Twelve centuries of Jewish presence in the city have left its marks as it happened with the Jewish Quarter, the remarkable stories, the legends and the Jewish traditions present nowadays. It was in Jaen that Hasday ibn Shaprut, the first prominent Hispanic-Jewish in the Iberian Peninsula, was born. Being a noticeable figure in the court of Alhakan II and Abderraman III, caliphs of Cordoba, this Jew of Jaen will represent the beginning of the so-called “Golden Age of the Spanish Jewish” and set the cornerstone for the most splendid and mythical “Spain of The Three Cultures”.*

*The Jewish imprint of Jaen and the intention to recover their history and legacy supported by social, cultural and political actions resulted in 2005 in the inclusion of the city as member of the Spanish Jewish Quarters Network “Caminos de Sefarad”. This public non-profit making association aims to protect the urbanistic, architectural, historical, artistic and cultural Sephardic heritage in Spain. ([www.redjuderias.org](http://www.redjuderias.org))*

*Since 2011, Jaen hosts the Casa Sefarad-Israel’s deputation for Andalusia, an institution that serves the objectives of furthering the study of Sephardic culture’s legacy, fostering a better understanding of Jewish culture and promoting the goodwill and cooperation between the Spanish and Israeli society. ([www.casasefarad-israel.es](http://www.casasefarad-israel.es))*

*Jaen is also a member of the international association “Friends of Hebrew Culture Tarbut Sefarad”, a network of organizations and people working in favor of the Jewish culture dissemination, being its local office managed by IUVENTA, a socio-cultural volunteering association in Jaen. ([www.tarbutjaen.com](http://www.tarbutjaen.com), [www.iuventa.org](http://www.iuventa.org))*



## ITINERARY

The route for the Jewish history in Jaen begins in the popular Santa María Square, ancient heart of the city where the Cathedral of Jaen stands magnificently, built accordingly to Andrés de Vandelvira's design. Considered one



*Famous "mona" on the Cathedral's gothic frieze.*



*A view of Jaen's Cathedral.*

of the finest examples of Spanish Renaissance architecture, it has been proposed as a World Heritage Site.

The Cathedral, the most important Catholic Church of the Diocese of Jaen, is closely related to persecution the Jaen's Jewish people were subject of at some point in history. One of its chapels was the place where the “sambenitos” of the condemned Jews were publicly shown in exposition by the Spanish Inquisition.



*Interior View of the Cathedral.*

It was during a meeting of the Cathedral's Chapter House where the *Statutes of Purity of Blood* were initially conceived, being then generalized to the realms of the Spanish Empire by Cardinal Siliceo's approval of the infamous Statutes of Toledo Cathedral in 1547. The germ of the Statutes of Purity of Blood of Jaen's Cathedral, where many converted Jewish served in managerial duties, was approved by the Church Council with the intention of hindering access to their offices and ranks to those unable to prove their "Old

Christians” condition, meaning they had neither Jewish nor Muslim origin.

The statutes were written based on the ordinances of the brotherhoods established at that moment in Jaen, where admission had been denied to “New Christians” for some time.

It is worth visiting the interior of this great temple, which was designed by the architect as a great reliquary for the *Holy Face of Christ*, its most revered relic, but also enshrines other precious treasures. In several carved wood scenes devoted to the New Testament that embellish the choir stalls, images of Jews using the “*rodela*” to identify them as members of the Jewish community in medieval times can be seen. The representation of characters wearing the “*sambenito*” can also be appreciated there. The external facade of the apse (Valparaiso street) preserves a Gothic frieze in which, according to some interpretations, through an iconographic discourse of early 16<sup>th</sup> century Jews are represented as an accursed race that can reach redemption through baptism and the Catholic Faith.



*Choir stalls of the Cathedral of Jaen.*



Other noteworthy buildings in Santa Maria Square are the *CITY HALL* and the *EPISCOPAL PALACE*. In this environment lived Diego de Deza and Alonso Suárez, who both served as General Inquisitors at time of being Bishops of Jaen. Likewise, according to several sources, the *Council of Supreme and General Inquisition*, main body of the Spanish Holy Inquisition, attended its meetings at Bishop's Inn in Jaen by late 1502. It was also in Plaza de Santa Maria where the Court of the Holy Inquisition of Jaen's "*autos de Fe*" (ritual for public penance of condemned) took place. This court was founded in 1483 and it was the third to be formed in Spain after those of Seville and Cordoba, undoubtedly because the number of converted Jewish who lived in the area.

Continuing along Maestra Street (Calle Maestra), just a few steps from the corner and on the right side, we find a beautiful vaulted niche containing a crucifix within it, known as "*Cristo del Amparo*". According to



*Cristo del Amparo.*

tradition, it appeared on that wall when a Jewish gang tried to desecrate a procession to the Cathedral.

Maestra Street has been the main trade axis for the city until few decades ago, where Jews had many of their offices and shops. It is not surprising that there were several legends relating Maestra Street to them.



It is suitable to stroll around the surrounding streets, especially the evocative Calle del Arco del Consuelo, typical medieval walkway and housing nowadays various of the oldest taverns in the city. Resuming the main course, at 16 Maestra St. we find the Municipal Palace of Culture.



*"Arco del Consuelo Street".*

This building was the *D. Miguel Lucas de Iranzo's Palace*, Baron, Count and Constable of Castile in times of Henry IV.



*Interior view of the Constable Iranzo's Palace.*

Several scholars have suspected a possible Jewish origin of Condestable Iranzo, as stated in his famous “Crónica”: he refrained from work on Saturdays as in the Hebrew “Shabbat”. The Constable was murdered in the Cathedral on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1473 by a group of “Old Christians”. After his death, they committed themselves to the robbery and murder of Converts.

In this palace, we cannot elude the remnants of the *Salón Mudéjar*, historical and artistic monument that has a beautiful coffered ceiling and where Miguel Lucas used to meet with his provincial court.

In front of the main gate of the Palace, we find Madre de Dios Street, which takes us directly to the *Arch Of San Lorenzo*.

The Arch of San Lorenzo is the remaining structure of the old church of San Lorenzo, building of Gothic-Mudéjar architecture. This building concentrates a large part of history in a few square meters.

Concerning the subject of our route through the Jewish quarter, we must note that it was at the ancient church of San Lorenzo where the *Señor de la Tarima* was exposed to public devotion during its early days. This popular canvas



*San Lorenzo's Arch.*

alluded to a curious legend that sought to discredit the Jewish community that, as we said, occupied Maestra St. and the surrounding shops.

The Arch of San Lorenzo is a National Monument. Inside, the downstairs chapel stands with beautiful Moorish tiles and plasterworks. In this chapel are buried Juan de Olid, Condestable Iranzo's secretary, and his wife. Today it is the main office for the Cultural Association "Amigos de San Antón".

Returning to Calle Maestra again, we continue direction to the old Jewish quarter following Martínez Molina Street, continuation of Maestra St. We will continue our way as far as *San Andres street* on the right handside.

A few meters down this street, we find *San Andrés Church*, seemingly synagogue, with beautiful pointed horseshoe arches inside, similar to other Spanish synagogues. The sober façade toward San Andres St. seems to evoke the medieval law that forced Jewish synagogues to be more austere than other



*Church of San Andrés.*

churches. The East oriented temple, its quiet courtyard, the side-access doors and the lack of monumental façade over the west wall, altogether support the idea that San Andrés was one of the oldest medieval Sephardic synagogues.



"del Rostro" Street.

In addition to this beautiful church with surprising synagogal appearance, we find a number of other buildings attached, which belong to the *Inmaculada Concepción de Nuestra Señora Confraternity*, also known as *Santa Capilla*, dated long after the construction of the temple. In the interior of this church, the unique *Reja* that closes the Holy Chapel, designed by Maestro Bartolomé is found.

To understand the urban design of the city's Jewish quarter, it is only necessary to cross the nearby *Callejón del gato* and get closer to a maze of narrow streets with only three exits, fully in accordance with the description that Torres Balbás made about the Jewish quarters in the Hispano-Muslim cities. However, it should be noted that this area is under restoration and currently damaged, precisely because of the urban planning that set it as a single block and separate it from the rest of the city. This type of urban settings was a privilege that Jewish communities had in protection against potential enemy hostilities.



"Santa Cruz" Street.

The streets of *Rostro* and *Santa Cruz*, and *Callejón del gato*, and the nearby streets *De Los Huérfanos*, *Remojadero del Pescado*, and *Real*, are all part of the neighborhood environment in the Jewish quarter of Jaen. At 4 Rostro St. we find the building *Sabetay Djaen*, home office of the *Universidad Popular Municipal*. Sabetay Djaen was a famous Sephardic rabbi, prominent poet and dramatist of Judeo-Spanish language, who proudly used the original city of his ancestors as his family name. In the entrance hall of the building, the visitor will find a showcase with a possible "yad" replica from the 14th century, found during archaeological



A replica of a possible Jewish pointer (yad).

excavations in that place. It is a Jewish ivory pointer for reading the Torah, the scrolls of Jewish Law.

At Rostro St., behind the stone walls delimiting the popular *Huerto del Poli*, there is a window from which archaeological ruins of a large medieval house could be seen through. That house had access only from inside the parapet walk of the original Jewish quarter.

During the Jewish quarter tour the visitor could notice small bronze plaques with the profile of the Iberian Peninsula onto streets' pavement. These figures, composed with the Hebrew letters from the word "Sepharad", name of the Jewish Spain, are the emblem for a quarter recognized by the Jewish Quarters Network in Spain "Camino de Sefarad".

Jaen's Jewish quarter had about 1.500 inhabitants during the 14th century, as evidenced by an old chronicle saying that King Pedro I, in exchange for support in his cause, allowed the captivity of 300 heads of families from Jewish community in the city by the Muslim kingdom of Granada during the fratricidal struggles with Enrique de Trastámara. This was a tough period for the Jewish people of Jaen.

After the severe persecutions of 1391 against the Spanish Jews, likewise many other Jewries, the Jewish quarter of Jaen became a Converts' neighborhood. One of their synagogues became the church of Santa Cruz, where worship was held every three months, a clear sign of Church's lack of interest in the people living in the area. It was located in the vicinity of the current Santa Cruz Square.

From this temple remains, it is said, a stone wall protruding from the perimeter of the Royal

Monastery of Santa Clara. This convent, founded by Fernando III, according to most authors was moved here from an area outside the walls in the 15th century. In the following centuries the structure appropriated the spaces of the early church (synagogue before) and part of the formerly Jewish quarter. From Santa Clara St. it is possible to visit its first courtyard, from which through a vestibule, you can access the Convent church.

In this environment, the *Great Menorah* (Jewish candelabra of seven arms) of the *Plaza de los Huérfanos* (now Dr. Blanco Najera Square), monument to the Sephardic Jews of the Diaspora, is a must see.

Close to the candelabrum, the archaeological remains of the *Puerta de Baeza*, one of the ancient entrances to the inner wall city



*Menorah. De los Huérfanos Square.*

and over which a bridge has been built now, marks the path taken by medieval Jews to leave or enter the city.

In the outside area of the medieval city, the *Muladar de los Judíos* and the *Puente de los Judíos* were located. Another Jewish community related toponym can be found on the outskirts of the modern city, in the *Cortijo Marrache*. According to the British-Sephardic “Marrache” family tradition, it was owned by this lineage during the Middle Ages. The so-called Arroyo del Judío crosses this country house.





*De los Huérfanos Square.*

Returning along San Andrés St. up to Martínez Molina St., we will continue our way to Santa Luisa de Marillac Square, also known as “Pila del Pato” (or Duck Square), because of the swan adorning the fountain situated here. In this evocative square stands the former Palace of *DON FERNANDO TORRES DE PORTUGAL*, Viceroy of Peru and Count of Villadompardo. It is remarkable its Renaissance style and the fact that it has been built over an ancient Arab baths from the 11<sup>th</sup>-century.



*Villadompardo's Palace. Arab baths.*

We recommend visiting its interior. It houses the interesting Museum of Popular Art and Customs, the Naif International Art Museum and the old

Arab baths whose recovery awarded the “Europa Nostra Restoration Prize” in 1984.

The Arab bath or Muslim *hammam*, was of public attendance, and had several “shifts” for men and women, but also for the different beliefs living in the Hispano-Muslim cities when Castilian ruled. In particular, it seems to be that Jewish population used them on Fridays.

There are records of another Arab bath in Jaen, from the same era as that of Villardompardo, whose owner was Jewish. This is known based on the name of the bath, “Hammam ibn Ishaq”, or in other words “Bath of the son of Isaac”. The archaeological ruins of this bath appear to be the ones found during recent excavations in the Jewish quarter, near the present-day San Andrés’ church, a possible medieval synagogue, as we know.

Continuing along Calle Santo Domingo, on its right-hand side we find the old Santo Domingo’s Convent, where it was located the outbuildings of the Court of the Holy Inquisition. It can be visited only on weekday mornings, but it is worth getting inside and seeing the extraordinary cloister, listed



*Private garden of a Jewry.*

as the best of its kind in Jaen due to its proportions and baroque decoration. Today, this building houses the Provincial Historical Archive. Those interested in expanding the study of the Jewry of Jaen will find many seminal documents here.



*Courtyard of the Magdalena.*

Further along Santo Domingo St., about a hundred meters, we find the *Plaza de la Magdalena*.



*Tower of Magdalena Church.*

The church of Santa María Magdalena holds the remains of an ancient “shan” or ablution courtyard, as it previously was the Great Mosque of the ancient Muslim city of Yayyan. In this square, there is a building with arcades, which is considered the remains of the ancient House of Muslim CADÍ.

Just in front of this house, the house of the Ibn Shaprut family, one of the most important Jewish families from medieval Spain. The current house

has its façade with a *Magen David* or “Star of David” of uncertain origin.



*Star of David. Magdalena Square.*

According to the tradition, this place was the residence of Hasday ibn Shaprut during his early years. Hasday, as mentioned, held various important positions in the government of Al-Andalu such as a Diplomat, Head of Customs House, Secretary of Latin letters and Prince of the Jewish Communities of Al-Andalus. Among other outstanding accomplishments, he was the doctor of Cordoba’s Caliphs, rediscovered the formula of the medicine known as “triacá” and translated Dioscorides Medical Treaty.

Hasday’s father, Isaac, was a wealthy and influential Jew in Jaen that financed the construction of a synagogue in the city. His secretary was Menahem ben Saruq, a prolific Spanish-Hebrew poet native of Tortosa, who surely walked along these streets during their residence in Jaen.

To the left of the house, facing the front of the church, is the stream of M A G D A L E N A , ancient water source where the legendary “Lagarto de la Magdalena” dwelled. According to the urban legend, this enormous Serpent or Dragon had frightened



*Lizard of the Magdalena.*

the people for a long time until a courageous shepherd with a clever ruse succeeded in making the Dragon eat an explosive substance that caused a big explosion that still remains in the memory of Jaen. From this event the expression of “blowing up like the Magdalena Lizard” comes when angry with someone.



*View of Santa Catalina Castle.*

From this square, living example of the Spain of the Three Cultures, we invite the visitor to move to Santa Catalina’s Castle, located on top of the homonymous mountain. Inside the castle, a fun and illustrative *Touristic Interpretation Centre*, a beautiful *Parador Nacional* and wonderful landscape views from *Mirador de la Cruz*.

If you have enough time, do not hesitate to visit other monuments and places in the city, especially the Museum of Jaen. It stores some of the finest collections of the Iberian Spanish sculpture. Precisely at the Museum of Jaen, in the Spanish-Muslim art room, you will find a showcase displaying the possible “yad”, the original piece, which replica we have seen at “Sabetay Djaen” in the Jewish quarter. Also interesting, the Kabbalistic jewelry, probably dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Donotforgetthe beautiful natural surroundings of the city or the nearby natural parks of *Cazorla*, *Segura* and *Las Villas*, of *Despeñaperros*, and of *Sierra Sur* or *Sierra Magina*.



*Kabbalistic amulet.*

Whatever your choice, always remember during your visit to Jaen that Jews were here: in the streets, harvesting olive trees and always observing, at the top, the magnificent character of the Castle. Jaen was one of the places “onde los sefaradim moravan” and therefore we still find Sephardic families with tradition of living in this city, like the Marrache or Djaen families. They now return to the land of their ancestors where they are welcome as native Jaen people, which in their innermost selves never ceased to be.



*Detail photo of the memorial plaque located on de los Huérfanos Square .*







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