

# Museum of Jewish History

Girona



**Core exhibition**

Easy Reading content



**PATRONAT  
CALL DE GIRONA**



This guide shows the route through the core exhibition of the Museum of Jewish History of Girona.

It is adapted for Easy Reading to make it more direct, clearer and easier to understand.

Texts and images: Patronat Call de Girona, 2023

Pictographs: Government of Aragon (Spain)  
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Easy Reading content

## Introduction

The Museum of Jewish History is a public museum.  
It is part of the autonomous body, the Patronat Call de Girona.

The Museum is in the Bonastruc ça Porta Centre,  
a very old historic building.

Inside, there are the remains of various buildings  
from the Medieval Jewish quarter.

In the 15th century, there was a synagogue,  
a Jewish butcher, and houses belonging to Jewish families.

There were even a pair of narrow streets that ran between them.

Part of the building became the Museum in 2000.

The Museum of Jewish History records and tells the history  
of the Jewish quarter and the people who lived there.

# Layout of the building

The Museum occupies the first 3 floors of the building.

On the ground floor there is the reception, toilets, shop and a space for temporary exhibitions.

The core exhibition and archaeological spaces are on the first and second floors.

There is a research space on the third floor, with a library specializing in the history and culture of the Jews.

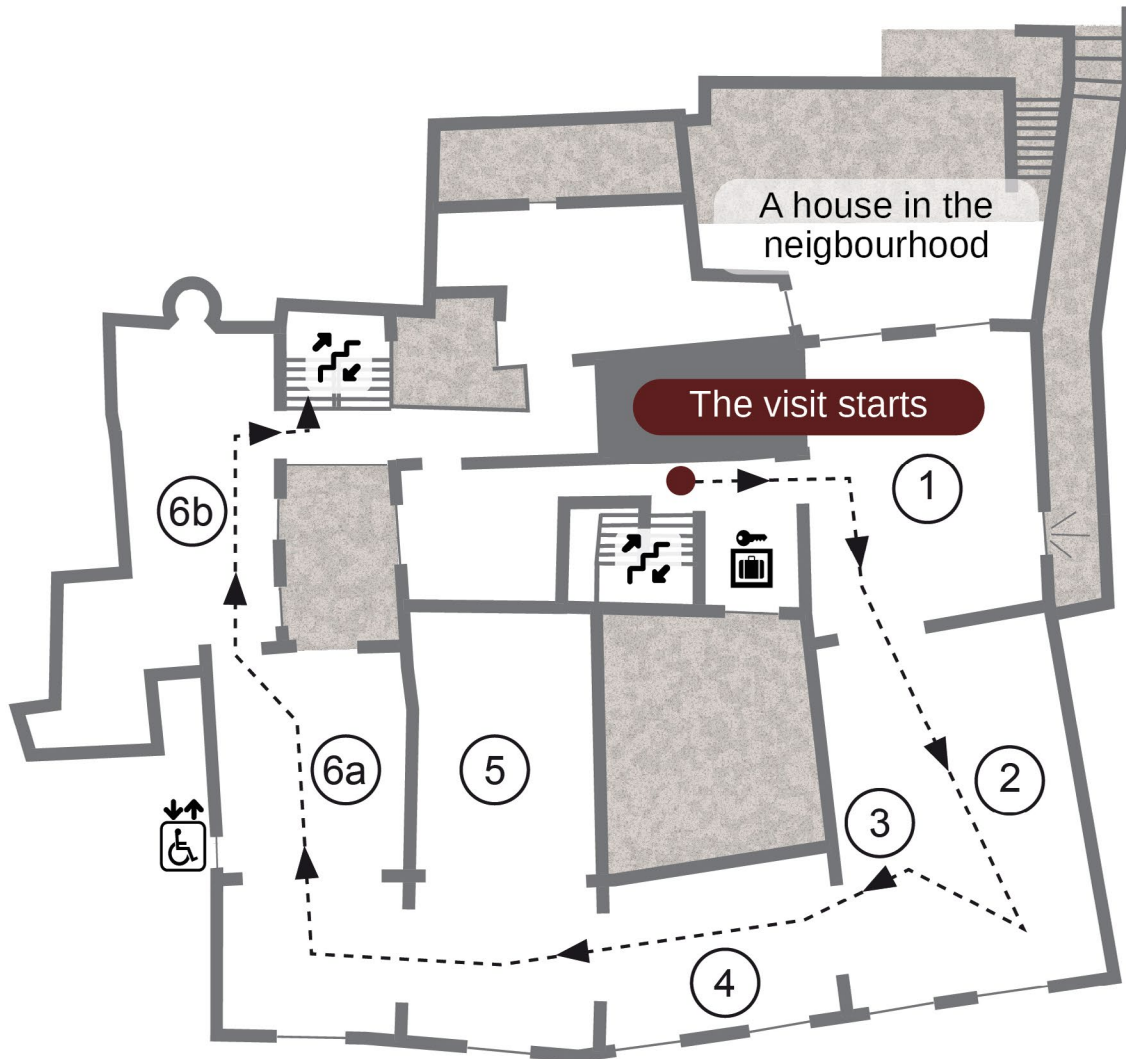
The core exhibition has 11 sections:

1. The origins
2. The *call* (Jewish quarter)
3. The *aljama*
4. Families
5. The synagogue
6. The cemetery
7. Jewish culture
8. Earning a living
9. A difficult relationship
10. Converts and the Inquisition
11. The material heritage



To start the visit,  
climb the stairs to the first floor.

## First floor



Cupboards



Lift



Stairs

① The origins

④ Families

② The *call* (Jewish quarter)

⑤ The synagogue

③ The *aljama*

⑥ The cemetery

# 1. The origins

## 600 years of history

We discover the origins of the Jewish community in Girona.

The Jewish people were persecuted under the Roman Empire and spread all across the Mediterranean.

The Jews continued to move around from that time, but never abandoned Judaism, their religion.

This dispersion is known as the diaspora.

The first Jewish families settled in Girona at the end of the 9th century.

Most of the city's residents were Christians and had different customs and celebrations.

## Highlights



## Arch of Titus

Detail of the inside panel of the Arch of Titus.

1st century AD, Forum of Rome (Italy). This is a copy.

The Roman armies destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

The image shows the destruction that took place.

The Arch of Titus is the symbol of the Jewish diaspora around the world.

## 2. The *call* (Jewish quarter)

### The district of Israel

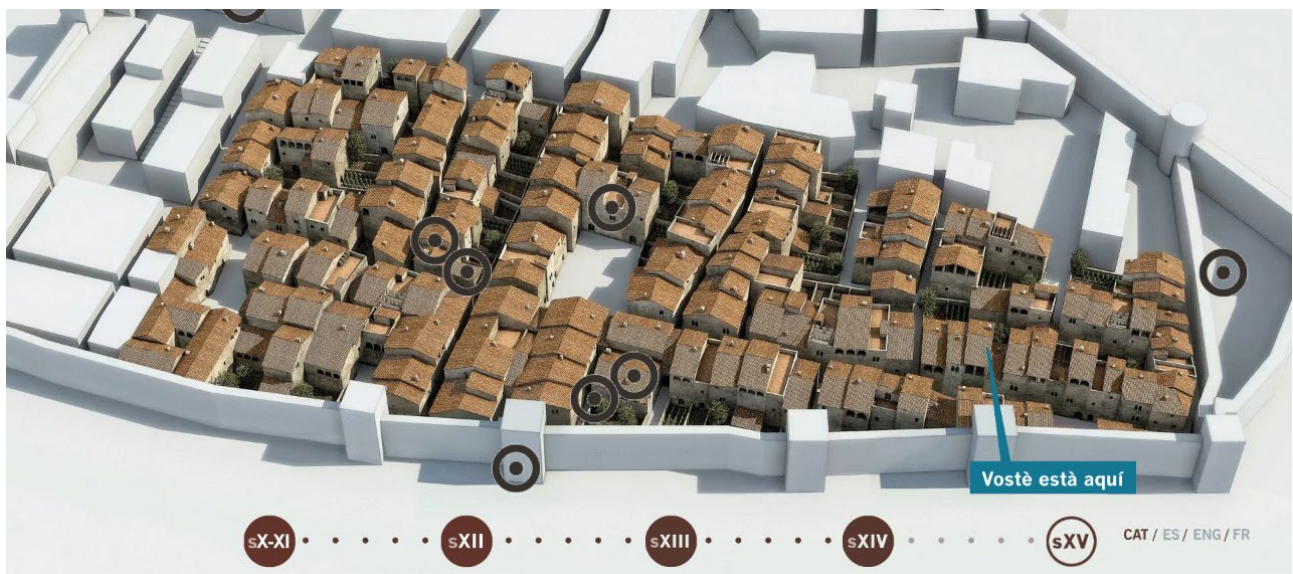
Between the 12th and 15th centuries, Girona's Jewish community lived in a district known as the *call*.

There were Jewish quarters in many cities in Medieval Catalonia.

They were areas with narrow streets, with homes, shops and workshops (like bakeries and slaughterhouses) and buildings for worship or rituals (synagogues and baths).

These districts allowed the Jewish families to keep their customs, traditions and way of life.

### Highlights



### Interactive display of the changes in the Jewish quarter

You can see on the touchscreen which houses were part of the Jewish quarter and the changes that took place over the centuries.

The neighbourhood expanded as the population grew, and shrank when the population fell.

There was a terrible epidemic in the 14th century, the Black Death, followed by a violent attack on the Jewish population.

Compare the 14th and the 15th centuries. What changes can you see?

### 3. The *aljama*

#### Community life

The Jewish communities in the Crown of Aragon were grouped in *aljamas*, which relied on the power of the kings.

From a legal point of view, Jewish people were the property of the king or queen of each country.

The *aljamas* had to pay taxes to the monarchs in exchange for protection and privileges.

In this room you can find archaeological remains of objects that the Jews of Girona used every day.

#### Highlights



#### Earrings

Made of silver, from the 13-15th centuries, Montjuïc, (Girona).  
Item loaned from the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia-Girona.

Here are some finely worked silver earrings.

This jewellery tells us something about the private and personal life of the women in the Jewish quarter of Girona.



## 4. Families

### Tradition and ritual

The life of Jewish families is marked by religious rituals and Jewish law.

In this room you can see images and documents about marriages and births, two significant moments in Jewish traditions.

The Jewish community preserves its historic and religious memory through feasts.

You can see objects that are still used in feasts in the Jewish calendar.

### Highlights

#### Hanukkah light

Metal object, 19th century, Morocco.  
Item loaned by a private individual.

In December, the Jewish community celebrates the Feast of Lights, known as Hanukkah.

The celebrations go on for 8 nights, with the use of candelabras or oil lamps like this one.

Every night one oil holder is lit, until, on the last night, 8 flames are burning in the lamp.



## 5. The synagogue

### Community spaces

The synagogue is a meeting place for Jewish people.

It is where they study, pray, meet and celebrate their festivities.

In this section of the Museum there are ritual items for worship, archaeological finds and documents related with the synagogues of Girona.

### Highlights



### Scroll of the Torah

Parchment written with ink, 19th century, Germany.  
Item loaned by the Israeli Community of Barcelona.

The Torah is the most sacred text of Judaism,  
and the most important element of the synagogue.

It is a scroll that contains the first five books of the Bible.

## 6. The cemetery

### Montjuïc

We propose an imaginary walk through the Jewish cemetery of Girona.

We are in the 13th century, to the north of the city, on the mountain of Montjuïc.

The light panel of the room shows the route taken by the funeral processions from the city to the cemetery.

The gravestones you see here have texts that recall the people who used to live in the Jewish quarter.

These stones with names are one of the treasures of the Museum.

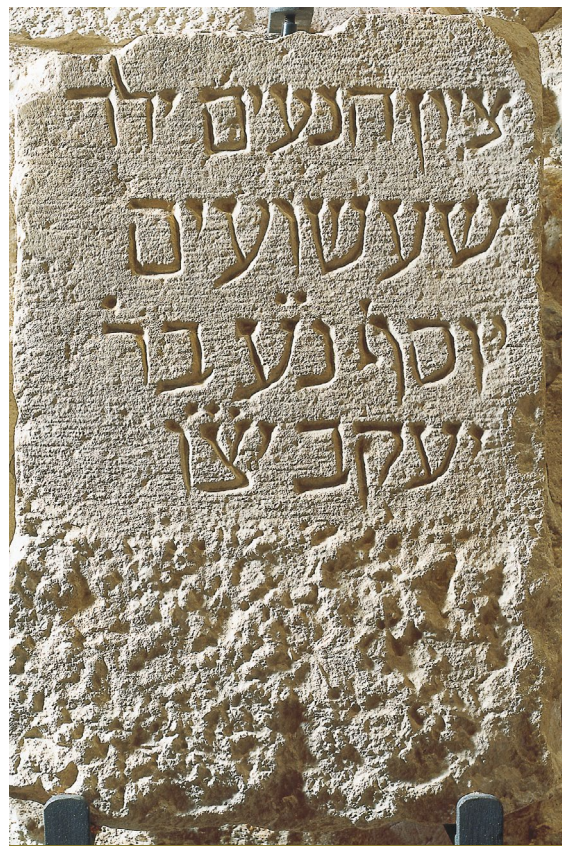
### Highlights

#### Gravestone of Josef, a Jewish child

Stone, from the 14th century, Montjuïc, (Girona).  
Item loaned from the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia-Girona.

This gravestone recalls a dead boy:

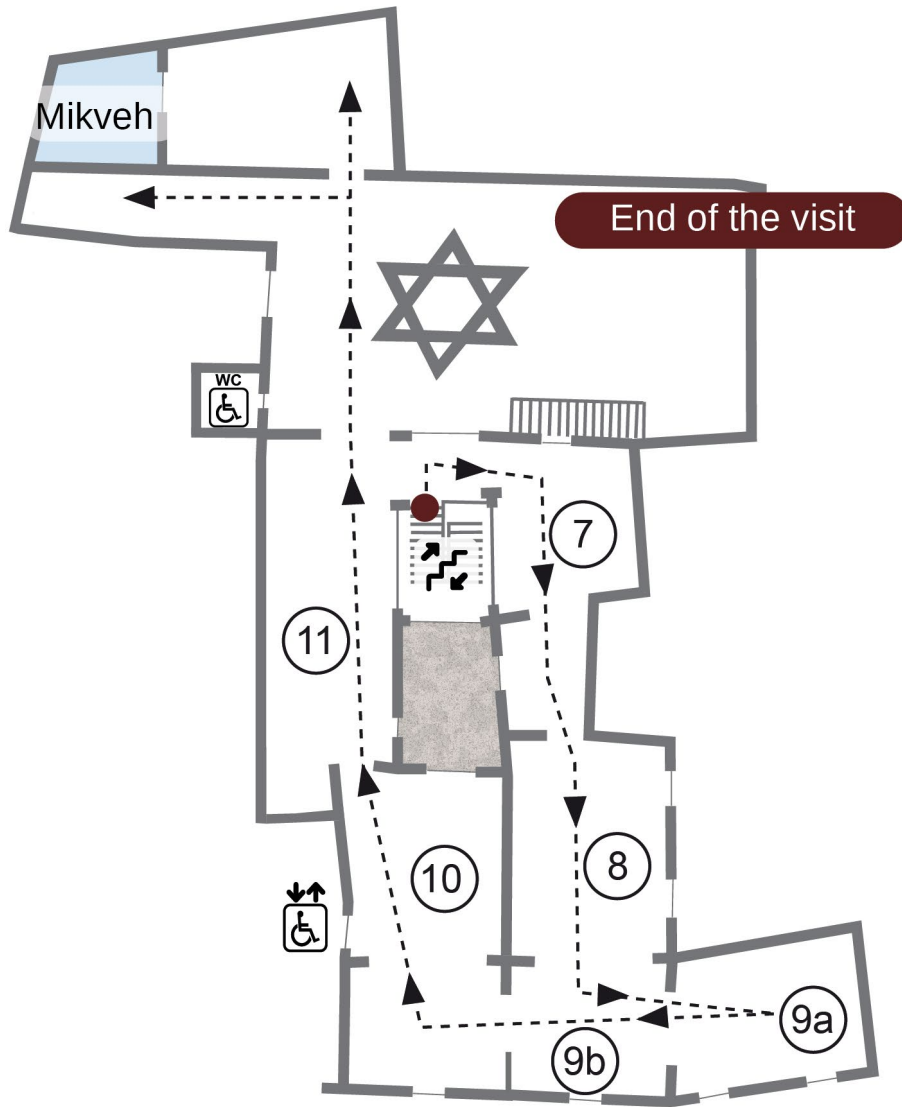
“Gravestone of the charming young man Josef, son of Rabbi Jacob, who is in Glory, guarded by his Rock and his Redeemer”.





**Climb the stairs to the second floor.  
Turn right to see the rest of the exhibition.**

## Second floor



Adapted  
toilets



Lift



Stairs

7

Jewish culture

10

Converts and the Inquisition

8

Earning a living

11

The material heritage

9

A difficult relationship

## 7. Jewish culture

### Girona, Mother City of Israel

“Mother City of Israel” is a title given to the cities which are important in the history of Judaism, like Girona.

In the Middle Ages, many Catalan Jews were outstanding in science, literature and philosophy.

The panel that dominates this room remembers their names.

The most important was Mossé ben Nahman or Nachmanides, the Rabbi of Girona, also known by the Catalan name of Bonastruc ça Porta.

Nació en Girona y murió en Tierra Santa o Tierra de Israel.

### Highlights

#### Seal of Mossé ben Nahman

Bronze object, 13th century, Catalonia.

This is a copy.

The original is kept in the Israel Museum.

This seal was found in excavations near Acre, in Israel, in 1970.

The seal has an inscription in Hebrew: “Mossé, son of Rabbi Nahman, of Girona, be strong!”.



## 8. Earning a living

### Business

Some medieval documents have images that tell us what the main activities of the Jews of Girona would have been: crafts, trade and money lending.

Their religion required that boys learn to read and write. This meant that many studied and became doctors, map makers and astronomers.

### Highlights



### The Barcelona Haggadah

Manuscript book, 14-15th centuries, Catalonia.

This is a copy.

The original is in the British Library, in London.

The Haggadah tells how the Jews were freed from captivity in Egypt.

Since ancient times it has been read on the night of Passover.

Manuscripts were copied and decorated with great artistry in Catalonia.

There are several books of the Haggadah in Europe that were made in Catalan workshops.

This copy is known as the Barcelona Haggadah because we believe it was copied in that city.

# 9. A difficult relationship

## From co-existence to exclusion

Political and social changes, crises and intolerance put an end to the peaceful co-existence between people of different religions.

The situation became increasingly violent after the 14th century. The Jewish communities were attacked, excluded and accused of crimes.

At the end of the 15th century, the king forced the Jews to convert to Christianity or leave. This pushed many families into exile.

## Highlights

### Decree of expulsion

Ink on paper, 1492.

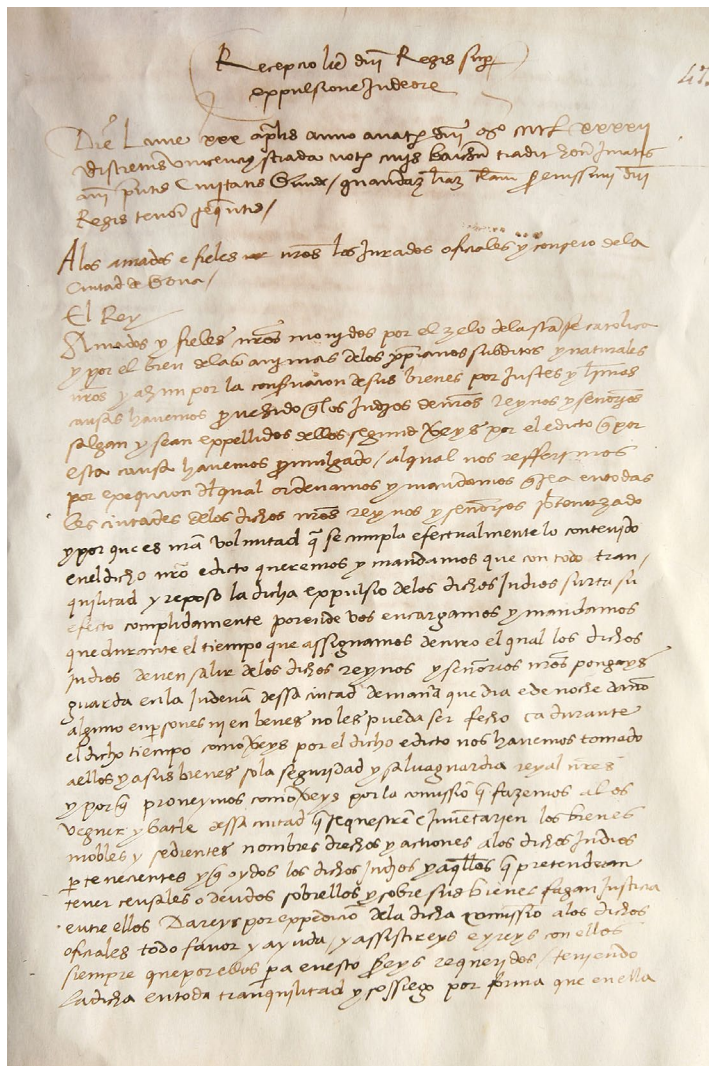
This is a copy.

The original is kept in the Municipal Archive of Girona.

On 20th April 1492, the governors of Girona were notified of an order from the king.

This order said that the Jews had to convert to Christianity or leave Girona before 31st July of that same year.

The order was copied into the city's register, bringing over 6 centuries of co-existence to an end.



## 10. Converts and the Inquisition

The Catholic Kings set up the Spanish Inquisition in 1478. The Inquisition was a tribunal to defend the Christian faith and persecute heresy, which means ideas and beliefs that deviate from the rules of the Church.

The Inquisition suspected that converts who were baptised as adults practiced their former religion in secret and passed it on to their children.

They watched over and prosecuted many cases.

This room contains a display of the horrors suffered by people who were persecuted and tortured. You can also hear dialogues based on the statements of some of the victims of the Inquisition.

### Highlights



### Emblem of the Inquisition

Stone, 18th century, Girona.  
Item loaned from the Archaeology  
Museum of Catalonia-Girona.

The offices of the Inquisition  
had a coat of arms on the façade.

The emblem had a cross,  
the symbol of Christianity,  
a sword, a symbol  
for the persecution of heretics,  
and an olive branch,  
a symbol of the reconciliation  
that follows repentance.

This could be the crest  
of the convent of Saint Dominic,  
the office of the Inquisition tribunal  
in Girona.





**Now exit into the courtyard.**



## Courtyard of the star

This is the courtyard of the Centre Bonastruc ça Porta, home of the Museum of Jewish History in Girona.

The six-pointed star is a symbol of the Jewish people.

This was designed by Josep Tarrés and Pia Crozet, a pioneering couple in the recovery of Girona's Jewish past in the 20th century.

# 11. The material heritage

## The archaeological remains

This Museum occupies several buildings from the ancient Jewish quarter of Girona.

One of them is the last synagogue to be built in the city and which was open from 1435 to 1492.

Since then, the synagogue and buildings next to it became private property.

The buildings began to be restored around 1980.

## Highlights



## Remains of the Mikveh

Archaeological site, 15th century.

The remains of the Mikveh or ritual bath were discovered in 2014 during an excavation.

You can find it by crossing the courtyard, to the place where there was a cistern at a later date.

The Mikveh is a small space where the rainwater was collected. The Jewish women used this bath after giving birth or after menstruation.

It was open between 1435 and 1492.



**The visit to the Museum ends here.  
To exit, go down the stairs to reception.**



**We hope you have enjoyed your visit.  
Please leave your opinion to help us improve.**

# Practical information

## Museum of Jewish History

Carrer de la Força, 8

17004 - Girona

Telephone: 972 216 761

[www.girona.cat/call](http://www.girona.cat/call)

We are on Facebook and Instagram:

 [facebook.com/callgirona](https://facebook.com/callgirona)

 [instagram.com/callgirona](https://instagram.com/callgirona)

## General information

Rental of spaces and permission for filming and interviews:

[callgirona@ajgirona.cat](mailto:callgirona@ajgirona.cat)

## Group bookings

Visits to the Museum, activity booking:

[reserves.callgirona@ajgirona.cat](mailto:reserves.callgirona@ajgirona.cat)

## Nahmanides Institute for Jewish Studies

Specialist information about Jewish history and culture:

[consultes.callgirona@ajgirona.cat](mailto:consultes.callgirona@ajgirona.cat)

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