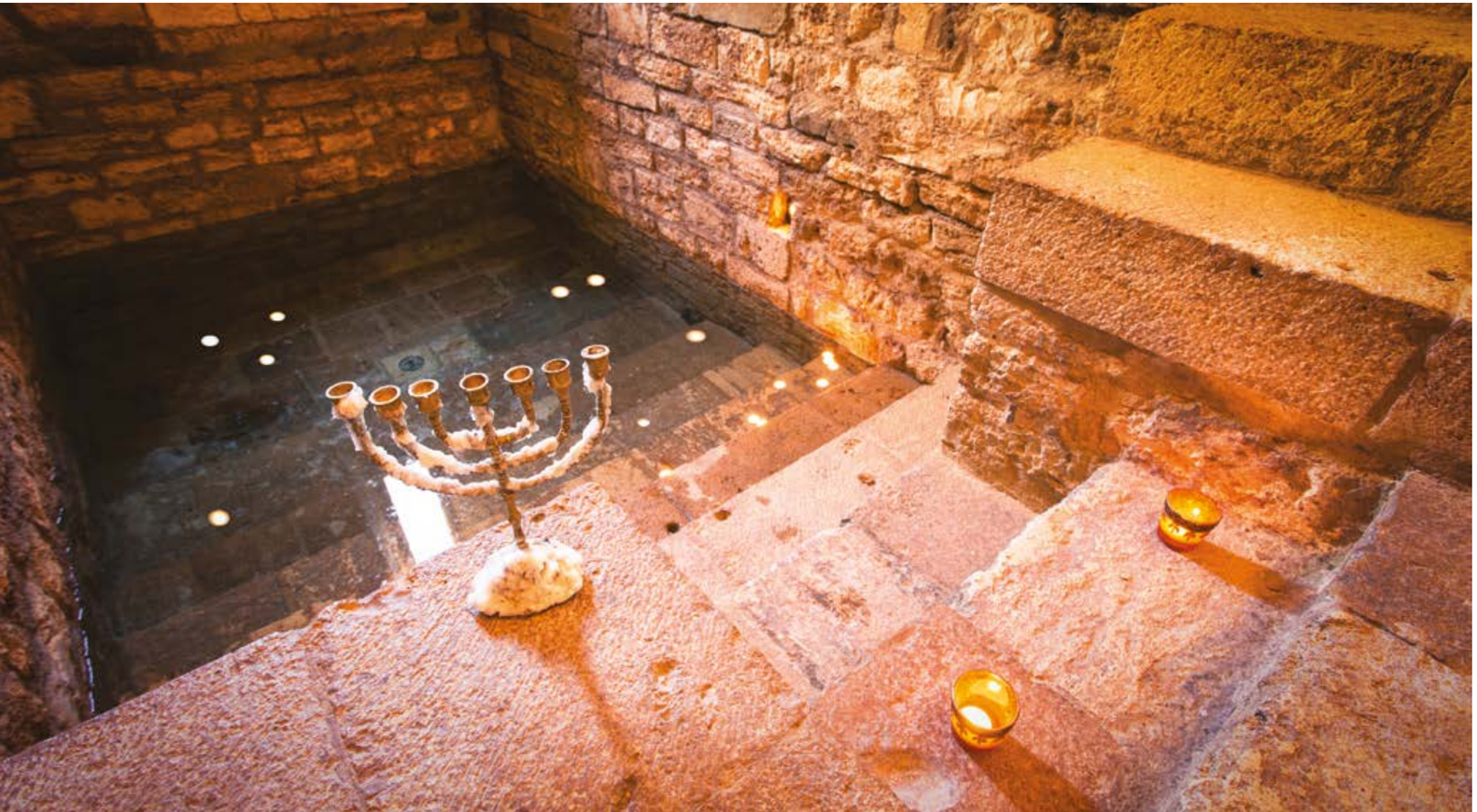
The Jewish heritage in Catalonia





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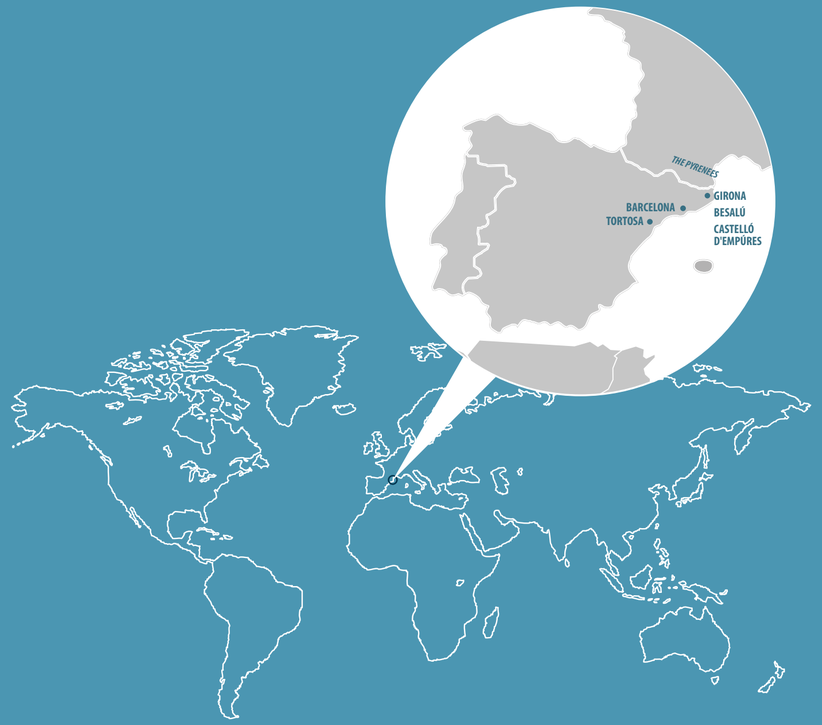
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I

The Catalan *Calls*

GIRONA
BESALÚ
CASTELLÓ D'EMPÚRIES
BARCELONA
TORTOSA



Girona

The Call, or Jewish quarter, of Girona is situated in the very centre of the medieval town. The first record of Jewish presence in the city dates back to 890, even though it is quite possible that they had settled in the area before then. The "callis judaicus" is mentioned for the first time in a document dating from 1160, and it had been inhabited from the 12th century to the end of the 14th century. The main artery was the current Força Street, which crosses the quarter from North to South. The Call had its moment of splendour in the 13th and 14th century, during which time the Jewish population was increasing and becoming an organized community, with all the necessary buildings to comply with the precepts and traditions of Jewish religion: synagogues to pray, gather and study in; a slaughterhouse to provide kosher meat; ritual baths (mikveh), etc.

From the 12th to the 15th century, the main part of the Jewish society of Girona was composed of craftsmen, though there were also a few well-to-do families who held the positions of political and economic power within the aljama. In spite of an enforced absence of more than five hundred years, the memory of the Jewish presence in Girona is still alive in the Call. Currently, the Patronat Call de Girona is in charge of the preservation, promotion and diffusion of this heritage, which is a fundamental part of our history.

The Call, or Jewish quarter, of Girona is situated in the very centre of the medieval town.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- Bonastruç ça Porta Centre, housing the Museum of Jewish History and the Nahmanides Institute of Jewish Studies
- Força Street, Sant Llorenç Street, Cúndaro Street, Cathedral, Arab Baths, Gironella Tower and former Sant Domènec Convent (University)



ACTIVITIES

- Museum: permanent collection and temporary exhibitions
- Guided tours
- E. E. Schalit Judaic Library
- Training seminars and programme of lectures at the Institute
- Activities and workshops for families and children
- Musical evenings in the Call
- European Day of Jewish Culture
- Girona Temps de Flors



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Museum of Jewish History and Nahmanides Institute of Jewish Studies

C. Força, 8 – 17004 GIRONA
Tel. +34 972 216 761
www.girona.cat/call
callgirona@ajgirona.cat

Besalú

The oldest record that we have of the Jewish community in Besalú dates back to 1229, although the existence of a Jewish settlement in the 9th century is considered to be proved. From the 13th century on there can be made three chronological divisions of the history of the Jewish community in Besalú:

- From 1300 to 1342: Besalú belonged to the community of Girona
- From 1342 to 1391: The Golden Age of the Jewish community of Besalú. Independence from the collective in Girona. During these years, considerable economic activity took place; relations with important Catalan Jewish communities were maintained.
- From 1391 to 1436: The beginning of the decline of the Jewish community of Besalú. In 1415 the closure of the Jewish quarter was ordered and by 1436 no more Jews remained in Besalú.

The history of the Jewish community of Besalú is marked by the existence of many renowned doctors, such as Abraham des Castlar (personal doctor to Peter IV of Aragon, called "the Ceremonious") and Bendit des Logar, both mentioned in the book Eben Boan, by Kalonymos ben Kalonymos of Arles (1323) as two of the ten leading physicians of the period. The discovery of the Mikveh in 1964, and of the remains of the synagogue bear testimony of the importance of the Jewish heritage in Besalú.

The history of the Jewish community of Besalú is marked by the existence of many renowned doctors.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- Mikveh (purifying Jewish baths)
- Remains of the Synagogue
- Visitor Centre of the Jewish quarter
- Cultural Centre Curia Real (former home of the Astruc family)



ACTIVITIES

- Besalú, Jewish town
- Evening theatrical tours (summer)
- European Day of Jewish Culture
- Medieval History Course
- Medieval Besalú
- Guided tours around the Jewish Quarter (Mikveh/Synagogue/Documentary on the rebuilding of the Synagogue)



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Besalú Tourist Office

Plaza de la Libertad,1
17850 Besalú
Tel. +34 972 591 240
turisme@besalu.cat





Castelló d'Empúries

The primitive Jewish quarter started to develop at the beginning of the 13th century in the Puig de l'Eramala area, around the first synagogue. In 1238 the Count of Empúries granted a privilege to the Jewish community, and a new period of prosperity began for them, which was crucial for their expansion and growth towards the area of Puig Mercadal, then the center of commerce and handicrafts of the village, as well as the place of residence of the Counts.

A new synagogue was built there in 1284, which was expanded and restored in 1321. The building, turned into a private home, still exists today.

The community had its own cemetery, situated near Rec del Molí. The nine Hebrew gravestones which are kept at the Museu d'Història Cúria-Presó come from this necropolis.

The first baptisms of Jews are documented at the end of the 14th century, but the largest-scale and most numerous conversions took place in 1417, when almost 200 Jews were baptized.

Despite all that, in 1442 the Jewish community tried to reorganize itself, and recovered the old synagogue of Puig de l'Eramala, since the new one had been sold and turned into a guest house in 1420.

The community had its own cemetery, situated near Rec del Molí.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- Museu d'Història Medieval Cúria-Presó (Museum of Medieval History Court-Prision)
- Basílica de Santa Maria. Museum of the Parish
- Medieval Walls. Gallarda Gate
- Urban framework of the old Jewish quarter.
- Ecomuseu Farinera (museum)
- Aiguamolls de l'Empordà (Natural Park Swamps of the Empordà)



ACTIVITIES

- European Day of Jewish Culture
- Festival Terra de Trobadors (Medieval festival)
- Ruta de l'Art (art exhibition)
- Guided tours in the old Jewish quarter



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Tourist Office of Castelló d'Empúries.

  Tel. +34 972 156 233
  turisme@castello.cat
  www.castelloempuriabrava.com

- Local Archive of Castelló d'Empúries

  llroig@castello.cat

Barcelona

There is documentary evidence of the presence of Jews in Barcelona prior to the existence of a Jewish quarter in the city, although it is uncertain whether a Jewish community had been formed at that time. The earliest record of a Jewish district in Barcelona is from the 11th century and makes mention of a street with the words "solebat ire ad callem judaicum". Call means 'narrow street' or 'alley' and came to refer to the whole network of streets where Jews lived. Meanwhile, the Jewish community was referred to as the Aljama. At its peak, the Jewish population reached 3,500, which at the time represented 10% of the city's entire population. However, the attack on the community in August 1391 greatly reduced the Jewish population in the city to a point from which it never recovered. Its final expulsion was ordered by royal decree in 1492. All that has been preserved of this mediaeval district is the layout of the streets, which have been signposted so that visitors can explore them in quiet contemplation. Some of the buildings have been restored, such as the one in which the Call Interpretation Centre is now housed. Here, information is provided on the history of the district during the period when it was inhabited by the Jewish community.

The earliest record of a Jewish district in Barcelona is from the 11th century.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- *Call* Interpretation Centre (Centre d'Interpretació del Call)
- The Domus Romana (Roman house) and the silos of the *Call*
- Plaça Sant Lu (square containing Jewish gravestones with inscriptions)
- City History Museum of Barcelona



ACTIVITIES

- Activities at the *Call* Interpretation Centre
- Permanent Exhibition on Mediaeval Barcelona. MUHBA
- Barcelona Jewish Film Festival
- European Day of Jewish Culture
- Guided tours of the *Call* (Old Jewish Quarter)



FURTHER INFORMATION

- *Call* Interpretation Centre

  Plaza Manel Ribé s/n
  08002 Barcelona.
  Tel. +34 933 042 680
  barcelona@redjuderias.org





Tortosa

Tortosa is the capital of the county of Baix Ebre. It is a strongly walled city with clear traces of a wealthy past, both during the Roman period and in mediaeval times, when the city was under Arab rule. The castle of La Suda is a dominant feature of the city and offers a wonderful panoramic view. Meanwhile, the old quarter contains a series of remains from different periods and cultures. The most noteworthy landmarks include the cathedral of Santa Maria, the Episcopal Palace and the streets of the Jewish quarter. After conquering Muslim Turtuxa, Ramon Berenguer IV donated the former Arab shipyards to the Jewish community, which is how the so-called call vell (old Jewish quarter) came to be created. This is the earliest record of the existence of a quarter exclusively occupied by Jews in Tortosa. However, there is documentary evidence of their presence dating back to the 6th century in the form of the famous trilingual tombstone, which is on display at the permanent exhibition of the cathedral. A new Jewish quarter was built at the turn of the 13th century. Both quarters still preserve the labyrinthine layout of their streets and some place names.

The castle of La Suda is a dominant feature of the city and offers a wonderful panoramic view.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- The Célio tower
- Portal dels Jueus [The Jews' Gate]
- Castle of La Suda
- Museum of Tortosa



ACTIVITIES

- European Day of Jewish Culture
- Guided tours of the *Call* (old Jewish quarter)
- Exhibition dancing by the Jewish giant figures: Caixixa and Bonjuà



FURTHER INFORMATION

- Municipal Institute of Cultural and Tourism Activities

  Rambla Felip Pedrell 3
  43500 Tortosa
  Tel.: 977510144
  tortosa@redjuderias.org



II

Girona, Patronat Call de Girona

A DIFFERENT MUSEUM, WITH A STORY TO TELL

The Museum of Jewish History explains the history of the Jewish communities which were part of our country during more than six centuries. In spite of many years of forced absence, due to the Expulsion in 1492, Girona has held on to the memory of those who, in their wisdom, gave the city the name of "Mother City of Israel". This Museum gathers their heritage, and displays a legacy which is an indispensable part of the history and the memory of the city.

· GROUND FLOOR **Audioguide**



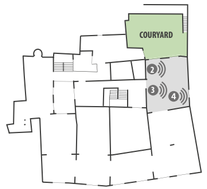




IN THE JEWISH QUARTER

In the heart of the Jewish Quarter of Girona, courtyards have retained the breath of Jewish life of centuries gone by. Its nooks and crannies are brimming with familiar smells, pleasing silence and inner life. Places shared with the Law and the tradition, with ancestors, and with the memory; bright green gardens, full of the smell of wet earth, and of the playful tinkling of water. Spaces of the Jewish Quarter that were built under the shelter of ancestral rites and eternal traditions, areas for a life led within an intimate and safe world; serene little spots, detached from the bustle and noise of the streets of the city.

· 1st FLOOR



CALLS: THE JEWISH QUARTERS IN CATALONIA

The Jewish quarters of Catalan cities were called "Calls". They contained synagogues, bath-houses, bakeries, slaughterhouses and other places which were necessary for Jewish life. For some time life went on with a fair amount of harmony and tranquillity. In the 15th century however, attacks and anti-Jewish attitudes turned the Calls into marginalized areas and places of compulsory reclusion for the Jewish population.

· 1st FLOOR







THE DIASPORA

In the year 70 of the Christian era, the Roman army, commanded by General Titus stifled a nationalist revolution which had started in the province of *Judea*, in the Middle Eastern Mediterranean. The repression was brutal and the capital, Jerusalem, was destroyed. Few years later, a new attempt of revolution was again stifled by the Romans. This led to the expulsion of the Jewish population living in the area, who were dispersed over other Roman provinces, including *Tarraconense*, in *Hispania*. This phenomenon is known as Diaspora.

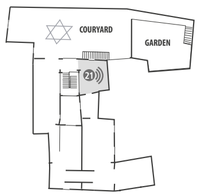
· 1st FLOOR



THE CULTURAL LEGACY

The Catalan Jews were renowned philosophers, poets, writers, astronomers, astrologers, cartographers and physicians. An important part of medieval knowledge comes from distinguished personalities of Catalan Judaism. In Girona, Jewish wisdom had its exponent in the prestigious school of the Kabbalah, which gave the city universal fame.

· 2nd FLOOR



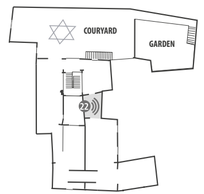




MOSES BEN NAHMAN - THE MASTER FROM GIRONA

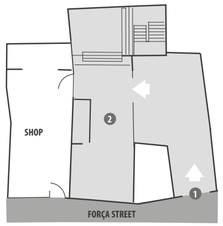
The highest religious and legal authority of his time on the Iberian Peninsula was born in Girona around 1194. This distinguished philosopher, talmudist, cabbalist, poet and physician is also known as Ramban, Nahmanides or Bonastruc ça Porta. Towards the end of his life he went to Israel, from where he wrote letters expressing his longing for Girona. He died in Akko around 1270. His bronze seal has been conserved; it bears a Hebrew inscription: *"mosse barbi nahman gerondi nu'ah nefesh hazaq"* (Moses, son of Rabbi Nahman, from Girona, be brave).

· 2nd FLOOR



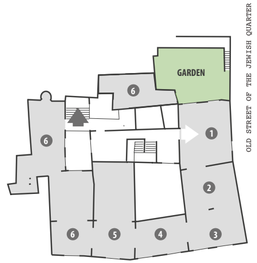
GROUND FLOOR

1. Entrance
2. Reception area



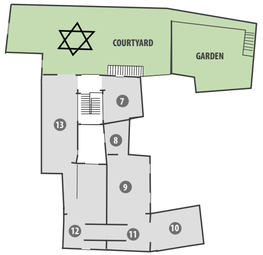
1st FLOOR - MUSEUM

1. In the Jewish quarter
2. The Aljamas
3. Jewish Catalonia: the Jewish Quarters (Calls)
4. The Diaspora
5. The synagogue, the nucleus of the community
6. The Cemetery



2nd FLOOR - MUSEUM

7. The cultural legacy
8. Moses Ben Nahman - the master from Girona
9. Science and knowledge
10. Difficult relationships and violence
11. The Converts and Expulsion
12. Exile
13. Temporary exhibitions



3rd FLOOR - INSTITUTE

1. Conference Room
2. Library







III

Barcelona's city Museum

MEDIEVAL BARCELONA'S JEWISH COMMUNITY

Before the Jewish quarter came to exist, it is on record that there were Jews in Barcelona, although it is not known whether they already formed a community.

Towards the year 850, a tradition recalls the existence of a letter from the gaon Amram of Sura, in Babylonia, to the Jews of Barcelona. In 877 the Jew called Judacot acted as the emissary between Charles the Bald and the Barcelonans, delivering ten pounds of silver to Bishop Frodoí for the repair of his church. Jews were among the dead in Al-Mansur's assault on Barcelona (year 985) and the properties of those who had no heirs passed into the hands of the count.

The *Usatges* (Usages) of Barcelona (1053-1071) include some provisions relating to Jews. The first documentary record of a Jewish quarter in Barcelona dates from the 11th century, mentioning a street that *solebat ire* ad *callem judaicum*.

The word *call* means "little street" or "alley". This name came to extend itself to the whole set of streets occupied by the Jews, that is to say, the Jewish quarter, and the community of Jews was called the *aljama*. The municipal authorities had no jurisdiction whatsoever over the Call, which was under the direct authority of the king or the royal bailiff, although already from the 14th century there were enacted ordinances that were restrictive for Jews, relating only to situations or actions outside the Call.



INTERNAL ORGANISATION

The *aljama*'s internal organisation was established by the Jews themselves, whose self-government was confirmed by royal privilege.

The community was ruled by an oligarchic regime, formed by the community's rich and learned members; the leaders were called secretarii or *neemanim*. A council of ten members, based on the model of Barcelona's municipal government, supervised the governance of the *secretarii* and watched over the executive body. Each community had the authority to enact ordinances (*taqqanot*), which were regulations established to rule the religious, economic, social, educational, ethical and community life of its members. Within the Call, the Jews lived according to the Hebrew religious calendar, observing the Sabbaths and the religious festivities according to their laws and customs, studying the classical texts such as the Bible and the Talmud, marrying and divorcing according to Jewish law, appearing before the rabbinic court (*bet din*) when there were suits between them, and maintaining their own social, religious and educational institutions. They also unfolded their own culture there and created masterpieces that would come to form part of universal Jewish literature. The ordinances enacted by the *aljama* were often confirmed by the monarchs. In the religious sphere, the administrators of the community had to maintain the public worship, provide kosher food and organise burials. A court with expert judges who acted according to Jewish law and with the monarch's consent, had the right to pass sentence between Jews in civil and criminal suits. The Jews, called "the king's purse and treasure", were required to pay taxes: each year the king obliged them to pay a set amount. This financial contribution was distributed by the secretaries of the *aljama* among the heads of families. To simplify the collection of this tax, collects (groups of Calls) were created, which also had to pay right of purveyance and special taxes when the king needed money for a war or coronation festivities. The Jews also maintained and cared for the lions and other wild animals owned by the king.



LIFE IN THE CALL

In the year 1079 the Jewish population numbered about seventy families, whereas by the 14th century it comprised some four thousand people. The growth in the number of families and the arrival of Jews who had been expelled from France made it necessary to expand the Jewish quarter, so the Call Menor or Minor Call was created.

The synagogue formed the centre of the community; the scola was the place where the most important feasts were held - circumcision, Bar Mitzvah, the public celebration of the Sabbath, *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year), *Shabuot* (Pentecost), *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles), *Pesach* (Passover), *Hanukah* (Festival of Lights), *Tischa B'Av* (Commemoration of the Temple) and *Purim* (Feast of Queen Esther) - and it was also the place where assemblies and meetings were held, where news was announced, where trials took place, where the laws were applied, etc. With respect to their working life, most of the Jews in the Call were craftsmen and workmen, such as silk veil weavers, book binders, goldsmiths, coral merchants, shoemakers, money-lenders, inn-keepers and merchants. Some of the Jews here also devoted themselves to the cultivation of their land while others stood out as physicians, who were highly esteemed by the Christians. Many held political offices within their community, like that of secretary, or administrative offices, like those of porter or undertaker, while yet others were butchers, slaughtering animals for food, or practised other trades. Likewise, some people held religious offices, such as rabbis and the teachers of the Talmudic school.

Because of their knowledge, the foremost members of the Jewish community formed part of the royal court and held such general public offices as bailiff, tax collector or ambassador. Lastly, it should be noted that numerous Jews made a name for themselves in the cultural world as philosophers, men of letters, scientists and translators, many of whose works have passed down to our days.



THE QUARTERS OF THE CALL

The fact that the Call was an enclosed place did not necessarily mean that the Jews lived in isolation. On Montjuïc, or Mount of Jews, in addition to the cemetery the Jews possessed crop lands and some houses. On the plain of Barcelona they had many plots, mainly of vineyards, vegetable gardens, cultivated fields and fruit trees; some of these plots must have been their own while others formed securities. The areas on the plain where they had the most properties were, among others, Magòria, Bederrida, Les Corts, the foot of Collserola, the area round the Count's Channel (today known as Rec Comtal), etc. They also had houses and workshops at Plaça de Sant Jaume and stalls at the market of Plaça del Blat. Around El Miracle (the place where Carrer del Paradís now stands, where the Roman temple had been located), in the 11th century there lived the Jewish money-changers Bonhom, Enees and David, in a setting that recalls a residential area and that would later be left outside the precinct of the Major Call.

In the medieval Barcelona there were two Jewish quarters: the Call Major or Major Call, and the Call Menor or Minor Call, also called the Call d'En Sanahuja or Call de N'Àngela. They were not connected to one another but it is believed that when the urban development began of Carrer dels Banys Nous, Carrer de la Boqueria and Carrer d'Avinyó, that is to say, when these streets cut through the old Roman wall, the connection was much more direct. Between the two Calls was the Castell Nou or New Castle. The building called the Banys Nous or New Baths, which were public and unrestricted by reason of religion, race or gender, may also be considered to stand adjacent to the two Calls.



THE MAJOR CALL

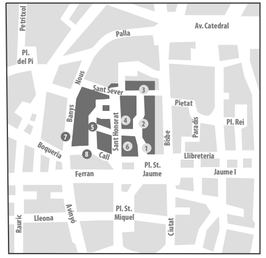
The Call Major or Major Call occupied the north-east sector of the Roman city. From the Roman urban development of Barcelona there remain vestiges of the wall inside the houses between Carrer dels Banys Nous and Carrer de l'Arc de Sant Ramon del Call. The Roman streets that have been preserved are those of Sant Domènec

and Sant Honorat, once the *decumani minori*; Carrer de la Volta, the present-day Carrer de Sant Sever and Baixada de Santa Eulàlia; a former *cardo minimus*, and Carrer del Call, the old *cardo maximus* that stretched from the Roman gate and that was diverted at a certain moment in time, adopting the form that it still has today.

There are also traces of another *cardo minimus*, now disappeared, and other medieval alleys.

The limits of the Major Call were Carrer del Call and Castell Nou to the south; Carrer de Sant Honorat (and more precisely the line of houses between Carrer de Sant Honorat and Carrer del Bisbe), to the east; Carrer de Sant Sever and Baixada de Santa Eulàlia as far as the Roman wall, to the north, and a median line between Carrer de l'Arc de Sant Ramon del Call and Carrer dels Banys Nous, to the west; in the middle of the 13th century, however, the king authorized gates and windows to be opened in the Roman

wall and the boundaries were extended with the urban development of Carrer d'Avinyó and Carrer dels Banys Nous.



1. The entrance of the Major Call
2. Carrer de Sant Honorat
3. Carrer de Sant Sever and Baixada de Santa Eulàlia
4. Carrer de Sant Domènec del Call
5. Carrer de l'Arc de Sant Ramon del Call
6. Carrer de Marlet
7. Carrer dels Banys Nous
8. Carrer del Call

THE MINOR CALL

The Call Menor or Minor Call is also known as Call de N'Àngela or Call d'En Sanahuja, the latter names referring to owners of plots there. The neighbourhood is an urban development that was planned in the 13th century and is formed by five blocks, with a synagogue and a square, situated at the foot of the outer part of the New Castle, that is to say, outside the city wall.

The Minor Call was not directly connected to the Major Call. Its limits were Carrer de la Boqueria, Carrer d'en Rauric, Carrer de la Lleona and Carrer d'Avinyó. It had two gates: one at the foot of

the outer part of the New Castle, and the other at Carrer de la Boqueria, adjacent to Carrer d'en Rauric, which may possibly be the gate mentioned in a record from the year 1255.

Carrer de la Boqueria was the street that led to the quarter. Diverse alleys led off from it to Plaça de la Trinitat (which disappeared on building Carrer de Ferran). This street was occupied later by the converted Jews who established themselves there with their businesses: goldsmiths, veil weavers, tailors, shoemakers, etc.

Carrer de la Volta del Remei, on entering from Carrer de la Boqueria, may be seen still to preserve a medieval tower-house from the 13th century. The street had been called Carrer de l'Arc d'en Sanahuja in former times. Looking up the street from Carrer de Ferran, one sees the rear part of the tower-house, which has been reformed much less than the front part.





IV

Portbou and Walter Benjamin

Portbou and Walter Benjamin

Walter Benjamin's time in the town of Portbou, on the northern tip of the Costa Brava, on the border between Catalonia and France, amounted to little more than 12 hours. His memory, however, endures to this day.

The German Jewish thinker (Berlin, 1892-Portbou, 1940) crossed the French-Spanish border on 25th September in an attempt to escape from the Nazis. He planned to make his way to Portugal and board a ship for America. One day later, he committed suicide when the Spanish police informed him that he would be repatriated. He died in this small, beautiful town on the Catalan coast. Although the facts of his death were suppressed by the Franco regime for decades, following the restoration of democracy the truth has been recovered and dignified.

'There is no document of civilisation that is not at the same time a document of barbarism'.

"It is more difficult to honour the memory of the anonymous than that of the renowned. Historical construction is devoted to the memory of the anonymous". Walter Benjamin, 1840



PLACES OF INTEREST

- "Passages" Memorial to Walter Benjamin, by Dani Karavan.
- Portbou cemetery.
- Portbou international railway station.
- MUME. Exile Memorial Museum, La Jonquera.



ACTIVITIES

- Benjamin route. Cross-border route for GPS devices.
- "PASSATGES". Border Film Festival.
- International Symposium on Walter Benjamin.
- Graphic Design Fest.



FURTHER INFORMATION

info@walterbenjaminportbou.cat

- Portbou Town Council

Tel. + 34 972 390 284
portbou@portbou.cat
www.walterbenjaminportbou.cat





V

The Catalan Pyrenees



The Catalan Pyrenees

The Pyrenees is the vast mountain range that separates northern Spain from the rest of Europe, and is fascinating for its stunning natural landscapes. Stretching 450 km from the Bay of Biscay to the Mediterranean, the range forms a natural frontier where water, forests and valleys dominate the landscape, and where many an exciting sensation awaits you, because the Pyrenees is synonymous with thrills and adventure. Are you ready to discover it?

PIRINEUS is a tourism brand representing the full range of tourism activities on offer within the eleven regions located in the Catalan Pyrenees. The main goal of the Pirineus brand is to promote and consolidate the extensive tourism offering that exists in the Catalan Pyrenees and to boost its own, special identity as a unique area and landscape.

All sorts of attractive outdoor activities and sports are available in the area, such as skiing, trekking, mountain biking, water sports, hiking or cycling, all in the spectacular setting of nine natural parks and the Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park, the only national park in Catalonia. With over 300 km of ski slopes, 10 alpine and 6 Nordic ski resorts, and many other activities to enjoy in the snow, this is a paradise for snow sports enthusiasts. The most rugged trails are ideal for mountain biking and the MTB centres in the area offer plenty of options for exploring the countryside and reaching the most hidden spots.

The area's unique cultural heritage can be seen in its museums, traditional local festivals, religious murals and Romanesque architecture, giving us an idea of how it might have been to live there in the Middle Ages. Particularly worthy of mention are the nine Romanesque churches in the Boí Valley, which received UNESCO World Heritage designation in 2000.

Unique cuisine and a wide variety of accommodation, with over 600 hotels, 100 hundred campsites and 500 rural houses, make the Catalan Pyrenees an authentic treasure just waiting to be discovered.

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FURTHER INFORMARTION

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