THE EUROPEAN ROUTE OF JEWISH HERITAGE

JOINING THE JOURNEY – A GUIDE
Introduction

Jewish heritage is an integral part of European history and culture. Much of it is rooted in Europe, with a story of migrations, persecutions and precariousness; but also of exchanges, humanity and a profusion of mutual enrichment. It is an extraordinary story, and there has been growing recognition of its importance reflected in the dramatic increase in Jewish educational and cultural programmes, university-based Jewish Studies, Jewish archives and museums, and in the preservation of Jewish heritage sites right across the continent.

The pioneering organisation in the field of European cultural cooperation has been the Council of Europe, representing 47 member states with 820 million citizens. In 1987 the Council launched a unique programme to protect and promote European cultural heritage entitled Cultural Routes. Its objective was to demonstrate, by means of a journey through space and time, how the different European countries and cultures contribute to a shared heritage.

A key aspect of the programme has been the recognition of European cultural diversity linked to encouraging intercultural dialogue which is why, from its very inception, there was interest in a specific Jewish Heritage Routes initiative, a challenge taken up by the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage (AEPJ) which had an established track record of success with the European Days of Jewish Culture.

AEPJ is a coalition of Jewish organisations including B'nai B'rith Europe, the Red de Juderías de España, the Fonds Social Juif Unifié, the Rede de Judarias de Portugal and the Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane, committed to promoting greater awareness of, and engagement with, Jewish heritage in Europe. AEPJ is recognised by the Council of Europe as the official Convenor of the European Route of Jewish Heritage programme and several Routes have now been established under its aegis.

AEPJ is keen to expand the Jewish Heritage Routes across Europe and, to achieve this, it understands the need to provide greater advice and support to potential Route Providers. It was in this spirit that the Guide was created, seeking not only to explain the requirements to becoming a Jewish Heritage Route, but also in the hope that the Guide will encourage others to step forward and embrace the Routes ideal.

Definition

The key goals of the European Route of Jewish Heritage are to preserve, promote and keep alive Jewish heritage, to develop tourism around these sites, and to broaden awareness of the cultural richness brought by the Jewish people to Europe. The locations involved in such routes include archaeological sites, synagogues and cemeteries, ritual baths, Jewish quarters, monuments and memorials, archives, libraries and specialist museums, and a route itself can vary in scale from neighbourhood, to city, region, country and indeed trans-national.

In the context of these goals, there are a number of core criteria that need to be fulfilled in order to be recognised as a Jewish Heritage Route, and these are:
• The Route must have a ‘home’ – a person, company or institution that takes responsibility for maintaining the Route and addressing enquiries.

• The Route should be expressed as an overarching Jewish heritage-related theme which provides its identity, and this could be broadly or narrowly expressed as befits the Route. The theme will provide a context for each tour site and help clarify which elements should, and should not, be included in the Route.

• The Route should consist of a series of sites with recognised Jewish heritage associations which are accessible to visitors and attractive from a touristic perspective. We want to ensure that participants feel the Route has delivered on expectations, providing information and a pleasurable, engaging experience.

• The Route is self-funding and financially viable. There is confidence that any funding required to maintain the Route can be secured from public and/or private sources, at least to enable its initial operation.

• The Route is recognised, and listed, by the area’s tourist body. This gives the Route a wider profile and status, while helping to attract participants.

• The Route is actively promoted via a range of marketing tools which includes physical literature and a dedicated, or shared, website. Some form of marketing plan will be crucial to the Route’s success.

• The Route website will include at minimum the following:
  - be written in the local language and at least also in English (if English isn’t the local language)
  - general information on the past, and if applicable current, Jewish presence in the area
  - a map of the Route that can be downloaded and which marks the sites of interest, has photographs of each site, and a description
  - information on any organised group tours of the Route
  - a listing of accredited Tour Guides, with contact details, who offer private escorted tours linked to the Route
  - advice on the area’s kosher/vegetarian/Jewish-style eating
  - advice on accommodation at accredited hotels that ‘support’ the Route i.e. are familiar with the trail and are able to offer general assistance
  - a listing of publications that relate to the Route and its theme
  - contact details for enquiries
  - links to the area’s tourist information, to the area’s main Jewish organisations if applicable, and to the AEPJ itself
The Commitments

In joining the European Route of Jewish Heritage, the Route Provider enters into an understanding with AEPJ based on commitments from both sides – a partnership arrangement to ensure that the Route is meaningful and successful.

**In terms of the Route Provider:**

- The Provider understands and supports the rationale behind the European Route of Jewish Heritage proposition, has a credible background and credible plan for the Route.

- The Provider ensures the information on the Route is maintained and up to date, especially in relation to the website.

- The Provider will establish a system for the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, and this will include receiving feedback from participants.

- The Provider will supply AEPJ with an annual report on performance highlighting achievements and challenges, and will allow AEPJ to conduct its own evaluation.

- The Provider will work collaboratively with AEPJ and will respond positively to all reasonable requests (a) for information and (b) to participate in AEPJ initiatives.

- The Provider is willing to work collaboratively with other appropriate heritage-related programmes in the area and other Jewish heritage programmes in and beyond the area. This will include promoting the wider European Route of Jewish Heritage, and sharing the Provider’s experiences with other Routes.

- The Provider will acknowledge that the Route is part of the European Route of Jewish Heritage under the auspices of AEPJ, and carry AEPJ and Council of Europe logos in all its materials including the website.

- The Provider will pay a fee to AEPJ as part of becoming an accredited member of the European Route of Jewish Heritage.

**In terms of AEPJ:**

- AEPJ will provide initial guidance to help establish the proposed Route.

- AEPJ will review the Route proposition and, assuming the criteria are met, will grant formal accreditation to the Route as an AEPJ-designated European Route of Jewish Heritage under the Council of Europe - a status which can be exploited in all publicity.

- AEPJ, as the ‘central address’ for the European Route of Jewish Heritage, will provide each Route with guidance and access to experts who can give advice on content and best practice.

- The Route will be promoted by AEPJ through being featured as AEPJ approved in all AEPJ-related materials, including its website.

- AEPJ will provide access to a network of Jewish Route Providers, and this will include a web-forum for exchanges.

- AEPJ will represent, and promote, the European Route of Jewish Heritage within the Council of Europe and more generally within the international arena.

- AEPJ will provide AEPJ and Council of Europe logos for the Route to make use of in its materials.

- AEPJ will conduct an annual evaluation of the Route.

- AEPJ reserves the right to withdraw recognition of the Route if the requisite standards are not maintained.
Growing Impact

AEPJ recognises that each Route will exist in a particular context and will have different possibilities in terms of how it might expand its offering. This is precisely where AEPJ can help, giving advice on how to develop each Route, sharing examples from other Routes and facilitating a dialogue among Route Providers.

The types of activity that could enhance the Jewish Heritage Routes include promoting – and organising – Jewish cultural events, tours with special themes, linking with tourist holiday packages, offering discount schemes, linking with schools and curriculum projects.

There are also the new technologies and new media that offer a range of innovative communication opportunities.

AEPJ will work with Route Providers to help them develop their programme appropriate to their resources, and their potential.
Join Us

The Jewish people have been an integral part of European civilization making a unique and lasting contribution to its development across millennia until today, and the Cultural Routes programme is an innovative and exciting way of bringing this remarkable story to wider attention.

AEPJ recognises the significance of the Routes programme – and its potential – hence the production of this Guide which at its heart is an invitation. AEPJ is looking for partners who identify with this initiative to join the growing family of Jewish Heritage Routes.

For further information on becoming part of the European Route of Jewish Heritage please get in touch with the AEPJ office via our contact details below.

We hope you will ‘join the journey’ and look forward to hearing from you!

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