



Interfaith Spain Trip 2025

Interfaith Journey to Andalusia:
Land of Three Religions, One Culture



This unique cultural journey brought together Muslim, Jewish, and Christian participants to explore the rich history of coexistence and dialogue in southern Spain. Through guided visits to historic cities such as Madrid, Toledo, Córdoba, Seville, and Granada, the trip provided a powerful lens into the shared legacy of al-Andalus – a time when culture and art flourished in tandem. Daily learning sessions gave participants the opportunity to engage deeply with one another's traditions and beliefs, fostering empathy, understanding, and meaningful connection.

PARTICIPANTS



14

MUSLIM

8

JEWISH

5

CHRISTIAN

“

“If we go in search of other people, other cultures, other ways of thinking, other religious, we come out of ourselves and begin that beautiful adventure that is called 'dialogue'. Dialogue is very important for one's maturity, because in relation with other people, relations with other culture, also in healthy relations with other religions, one grows; grows, matures.”

-Pope Francis

”

Madrid

The first day of our journey began with a warm welcome in Madrid, setting the tone for a week of exploration, reflection, and connection. After arriving and settling in, participants enjoyed their first group meal together, followed by a guided walking tour through the historic heart of the city. Highlights included a visit to the world-renowned Prado Museum and a panoramic city tour that showcased Madrid's vibrant culture and architecture. We visited the Jewish Federation in Madrid, and the day concluded with a meaningful welcome dinner alongside members of the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim communities, offering an inspiring start to our interfaith experience.



Toledo

The group continued on to Toledo, a city that beautifully embodies the spirit of *three religions, one culture* through its unique interweaving of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian heritage. Walking through historic gates and winding streets, participants visited iconic religious and cultural sites, including synagogues, churches, mosques, and the majestic Toledo Cathedral. Each stop offered deeper insight into the city's legacy of coexistence and dialogue. In the evening, the journey continued to Córdoba, where the day ended with time to rest and reflect in another city shaped by centuries of cultural and spiritual exchange.



Córdoba

In the afternoon, the group engaged in a meaningful dialogue with representatives from the Diocese of Córdoba, gaining valuable insights into the local faith communities and their efforts in fostering interfaith relationships. This exchange deepened participants' understanding of interfaith dynamics in the region. As the day drew to a close, participants traveled to Seville, sharing dinner together and settling in for the next chapter of the journey.



Historical Insight

The Mosque-Cathedral of Córdoba was originally constructed as a mosque in the 8th century and later converted into a cathedral during the Reconquista in the 13th century.

The Córdoba Synagogue is the only preserved synagogue in the Andalusian area of Spain after the expulsion of the Jews in 1492.

Sevilla

The day in Seville offered a rich blend of dialogue, historical discovery, and cultural experience. The group visited two of the city's most iconic landmarks: the Seville Cathedral and the Royal Alcázares. Strolling through the charming streets of the old town and the Jewish Quarter of Santa Cruz, participants later engaged in a meaningful exchange with members of the Jewish Community Beit Rambam. The evening allowed time for personal exploration, and participants enjoyed a traditional flamenco performance before returning to the hotel.



A Glimpse into History

Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Royal Alcázar of Seville (Real Alcázar de Sevilla) is the oldest royal palace in Europe that is still in use today. It dates back to the 11th century, when the Muslim authorities decided to build a fortress in a strategic location to protect the city. It displays a rich blend of architectural styles, including Islamic, Mudéjar, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque.

Granada

In Granada, the group experienced the grandeur of one of Spain's most iconic landmarks—the Alhambra. The morning was spent exploring its intricate palaces, lush gardens, and sweeping views, offering a glimpse into the legacy of Moorish architecture and cultural sophistication. The journey continued through the hillside neighborhoods of Sacromonte and Albayzín, rich with history and charm. The evening concluded with a meaningful Shabbat dinner, bringing everyone together in a spirit of shared tradition.



Granada & Madrid

The final days of the journey were spent in Granada and Madrid. In Granada, the group reflected together over shared scripture readings and explored the city's historic sites, including the Royal Chapel, Cathedral, and old streets lined with tea houses and river views. After concluding Shabbat with a group dinner, the journey continued back to Madrid. There, the group visited iconic sites such as the Royal Palace. The program concluded with a farewell dinner, where participants shared reflections on the trip's meaningful experiences and the connections built across faiths and cultures. The conversation concluded with a set of transformative next steps that the group intends to pursue.



Journey to Andalusia towards an interfaith dialogue of the senses

This interfaith trip to Andalusia explored the rich historical legacy of coexistence, dialogue, and cultural exchange among Muslims, Jews, and Christians during al-Andalus. Through guided visits to significant religious and cultural sites, offering a dialogue of the senses through art and architecture, alongside meaningful conversations and shared experiences, the program fostered mutual understanding, built relationships across differences, and inspired collaboration among participants of diverse backgrounds. This journey provided not only a historical exploration but also a living model for how interfaith and intercultural engagement could contribute to a more just, inclusive, and peaceful society today.



Quotes from Participants

"I would like to thank Peace Islands for the wonderful and meaningful Interfaith trip to Andalusia in Spain. Your work and organizational skills made the trip a resounding success..."

-Msgr. Gregory J. Fairbanks

"I want to thank Peace Islands. You have shown us what hospitality is—a genuine hospitality is all about. Thank you for taking care of all of us in the most gracious, loving, wonderful way imaginable. It just felt so natural, and that comes from the values you represent."

-Rabbi David Straus

IN THE SPANISH MEDIA

Antonio Navarro anfitrión con un grupo interconfesional americano

Una treintena de personas visitó la Mezquita Catedral y el Palacio Episcopal el miércoles 21 de mayo



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El pasado lunes recibimos en nuestra sede a un grupo de unas 30 personas de diferentes confesiones de EEUU que se encuentran en España realizando un viaje de convivencia. Organiza @ArcoForum @PIINJ

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Diálogo interreligioso estadounidense en España (y III): cristianos

8 Sivan 5785 (03/06/2025)

católicos, Cindy Jarvis, Dennis J. Yesalonian, diálogo interreligioso, EE.UU., España

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TODOS – Un grupo interreligioso de EE.UU., compuesto por musulmanes, cristianos y judíos, recorrió Toledo, Sevilla, Granada y Madrid para descubrir cómo la historia y la convivencia pueden inspirar paz y entendimiento mutuo. Este viaje por la España de las Tres Culturas ha sido organizado por Arco Forum, el National Council of Synagogues, Peace Islands Institute Pennsylvania y Peace Islands Institute New York, con apoyo de instituciones judías y el Milstein Center. En esta



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IN THE U.S. MEDIA

From May 19–26, a group of 27 Muslims, Jews, and Christians toured Andalusian Spain together.

Generously sponsored by the Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue at JTS, the group included 14 Muslims from the Peace Islands Institutes of Philadelphia and New York. The Peace Islands groups are followers of the late Turkish Imam Fethullah Guelen. The National Council of Synagogues sent a delegation of eight Jews on the trip; seven were rabbis among whom four are graduates of JTS. The five Christians included three clergy.



The pilgrims visited Madrid, Toledo, Cordoba, Sevilla, and Granada. In Cordoba they saw the famous Mosque/Cathedral.



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One Culture, Three Religions



Interfaith pilgrims from Muslim, Jewish, and Christian backgrounds gather before Córdoba's Mosque-Cathedral during a weeklong journey exploring Andalusia's shared religious heritage. (Photo: Msgr. Fairbanks)



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Thank you
to the **Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue**
for their generous support of this meaningful journey.

Co-hosted by



National Council
of Synagogues

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