

THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!



Jewish Heritage Tour to
**ROME and
SOUTHERN ITALY**



Led by Robyn Helzner
featuring Rabbi Barbara Aiello
October 11-22, 2026



Optional Post-Tour to SICILY
October 22-26, 2026



Journey through Rome and Southern Italy on an immersive exploration of Jewish history, resilience, and renewal. From the ancient Jewish Quarter of Rome to the hidden communities of Calabria and the sunlit landscapes of Puglia, this thoughtfully curated journey reveals stories rarely told and deeply felt. Led by renowned musician Robyn Helzner and Rabbi Barbara Aiello, Italy's pioneering woman rabbi, the experience weaves scholarship, music, and meaningful encounters into every day. This is travel that resonates—intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally.

DAY 1

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2026
DEPARTURE

- We depart the United States on our overnight flights to **Italy**.

DAY 2

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2026
WELCOME TO ITALY!

- **Benvenuti in Italia!** We arrive at **Leonardo da Vinci–Fiumicino Airport** and transfer to Rome.
- We check into our hotel.
- Enjoy our **welcome dinner**, as we prepare for our upcoming journey.

Overnight in Rome (D)

DAY 3

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2026
EXPLORING JEWISH ROME

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- **We enjoy a tour of Jewish Rome**, including:
 - » the **Great Synagogue**, with its striking architecture;
 - » the **Jewish Museum**, which tells the story of Jews in Rome from ancient times through emancipation;
 - » the **Jewish Quarter**, historically the **Ghetto** neighborhood near the Tiber River;
 - » the complex of the **Portico d'Ottavia**, a majestic structure of ancient Rome;
 - » the **Arch of Titus**, where the spoils of Jerusalem's Second Temple are carved in stone, a painful reminder of Jewish exile;
 - » the **Pietre d'Inciampo** (Stumbling Stones), commemorating victims of Nazi-Fascist persecution.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Rome (B)



DAY 4

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026
ROME'S SPLENDORS

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We continue our tour of Rome at the **Vatican Museums**, home to centuries of artistic treasures.
- We stand in awe before Michelangelo's ceiling in the **Sistine Chapel**, then enter **St. Peter's Basilica**, the spiritual heart of Catholicism.
- Next, we step back into antiquity with a tour of **ancient Rome**. Stops include:
 - » the **Colosseum**, the monumental amphitheater of the Flavians;
 - » the **Roman Forum**, the commercial, religious, and political heart of ancient Rome for over a millennium;
 - » the iconic **Trevi Fountain**;
 - » the **Pantheon**, one of the best-preserved and most architecturally influential monuments of ancient Rome and a national mausoleum for several major historical figures;
 - » the **Spanish Steps**, a vibrant gathering place of 135 travertine steps that connect the Piazza di Spagna at the base with the Trinità dei Monti church at the top.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Rome (B)



DAY 5

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2026
ON THE ROAD TO CALABRIA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We board the **train** for our journey from Rome to **Calabria**, home to Italians whose families were forced into Christian conversion centuries ago.
- We transfer from **Lamezia Terme** train station and check into our hotel.
- At a welcome **aperitivo**, Rabbi Barbara introduces us to the **B'nei Anusim**, the Crypto-Jews, of Calabria who secretly maintained Jewish traditions for centuries after forced conversion during the Spanish Inquisition.
- We enjoy dinner together.

Overnight in Calabria (B, D)



DAY 6

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2026
JEWISH SERRASTRETTA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we travel by bus to the village of **Serrastretta**.
- We visit **Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud**, founded by Rabbi Barbara as the first active synagogue in Calabria in over 500 years. Rabbi Barbara discusses her role as a central figure in uncovering and revitalizing the heritage of B'nei Anusim.
- Our **lunch** at **Il Vecchio Castagno** in Serrastretta features a traditional Calabria Jewish menu.
- Time permitting, we visit a guitar school for a chance to hear traditional melodies and learn about Italian musical teaching.
- We **welcome Shabbat** together with Rabbi Barbara, Robyn, and members of Sinagoga Ner Tamid del Sud, celebrating our unique Jewish journeys to this place and time.
- Afterwards, we enjoy a **festive Shabbat dinner**, followed by singing.
- We return by bus to our hotel in Calabria.

Overnight in Calabria (B, L, D)

DAY 7

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2026
SHABBAT SHALOM

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning is at leisure.
- In the afternoon, we embark on a walking tour of **Timpone**, the Old Jewish Quarter of Nicastro.
- Robyn and Rabbi Barbara lead us in **Havdalah** at our hotel.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Calabria (B)

DAY 8

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2026
FERRAMONTI DI TARSIA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- This morning, we visit **Ferramonti di Tarsia**, the largest internment camp established by Benito Mussolini's Fascist regime during World War II. Located in a swampy area in the municipality of Tarsia, near Cosenza in Calabria, it operated from June 1940 until its liberation in September 1943.
- Prior to our tour of the **museum**, we meet with **Dr. Mario Rende**, author of *Ferramonti di Tarsia: Voci da un campo di concentramento fascista, 1940-1945*, a collection of testimonies, documents, and the personal diary of the camp's director to document life in the camp, or with **Dr. Yehudit Yitzchak**, a physiotherapist who was born in the Naples prison hospital in 1940 before being transferred with her family to the Ferramonti di Tarsia internment camp.
- Our visit concludes with a special **Holocaust memorial ceremony**, led by Robyn.
- A buffet lunch is included today.
- We continue by bus to **Puglia** (in the "heel" of the boot).
- Along the way, **Rabbi Barbara lectures** on the ancient Jewish history of Puglia and Kabbalistic influence.
- We check into our hotel.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Lecce (B, L)



DAY 9

MONDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2026
EXPLORING JEWISH LECCE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- A docent leads us through the **Lecce Jewish Museum**, which showcases the traditions and the history of the Jewish community that inhabited Lecce in the late Middle Ages.
- Afterwards, we set out on a **walking tour of the Jewish Quarter and Lecce**, exploring historical streets and sites that connect past to present.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Lecce (B)

DAY 10

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2026
IN HONOR AND HARMONY

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We visit the **Museum of Memory and Hospitality: The Red House Museum in Santa Maria del Bagno**, which commemorates the vital role this seaside town played as a major transit hub for Jewish Holocaust survivors from 1943-1947.
- Afterwards, we tour Alberobello's **Trulli houses**—unique limestone dwellings with conical roofs built using mortarless construction—while Rabbi Barbara enriches the visit with insights into the area's Jewish history dating back to Roman times.
- Dinner features a **hands-on cooking experience** with a gourmet chef. (If group size requires, the experience will be divided, with half the group participating while the others dine independently.)

Overnight in Lecce (B, D)

DAY 11

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2026
MATERA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- In **Matera**, we marvel at the ancient **Sassi dwellings** carved into limestone cliffs and delve into the little-known chapters of the Jewish presence in this extraordinary cityscape.
- We continue by bus to **Bari**, where we explore the **Jewish Quarter** and step inside the **13th-century synagogue**, a rare survivor bearing witness to centuries of Jewish life.
- We check into our hotel.
- At our **farewell dinner** in a local restaurant, we reflect on our experiences together in Rome and Southern Italy.

Overnight in Bari (B, D)

DAY 12

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2026
ARRIVEDERCI!

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to Bari Karol Wojtyła Airport for our flights home.

(B)

OR JOIN US ON
THE OPTIONAL
POST-TOUR TO
SICILY!



DAY 12

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2026
SICILY

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to **Bari Karol Wojtyła Airport** for our flight to Sicily.
- We transfer to **Palermo** and check into our hotel.
- Dinner is on our own.

Overnight in Palermo (B)

DAY 13

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2026
MONREALE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We travel to **Monreale**, where the breathtaking **Norman Cathedral**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, awaits.
- We also visit **Steri Palace**, the inquisitional prison where Crypto-Jews were once held.
- This afternoon, we venture to the hilltop town of Erice, a jewel of medieval Sicily, once home to Jewish thinkers and mystics.
- We return to Palermo for a **festive Shabbat dinner**, savoring traditional Jewish-inspired Sicilian specialties such as sfincione (Sicilian-style pizza) and arancini, all paired with exquisite local wines and a taste of the region's unique culinary heritage.

Overnight in Palermo (B, D)



DAY 14

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2026
SHABBAT SHALOM

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- We step back in time as we explore Palermo's historic **Jewish Quarter**, uncovering the rich narrative of a once-flourishing Sephardic community through its medieval synagogues and hidden courtyards.
- We visit the **Palermo Jewish Museum** for a deeper understanding of the cultural, spiritual, and economic contributions of Sicily's Jews.
- Following **Havdalah**, we enjoy dinner on our own.

Overnight in Palermo (B)



DAY 15

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2026
JEWISH CATANIA

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We enjoy a scenic drive across Sicily's stunning landscape en route to **Syracuse**.
- Upon arrival, we uncover **Catania's Jewish past**, exploring the historic center and the remnants of an ancient synagogue that once served as a community anchor.
- We explore the **Jewish Quarter of Ortygia**, including a visit to one of Europe's oldest mikva'ot (ritual baths), revealing the spiritual depth of Jewish life in this ancient city.
- We check into our hotel.
- Our **farewell dinner** introduces us to authentic Sicilian delicacies such as caponata and cannoli, layered with flavor and history.

Overnight in Catania (B, D)

DAY 16

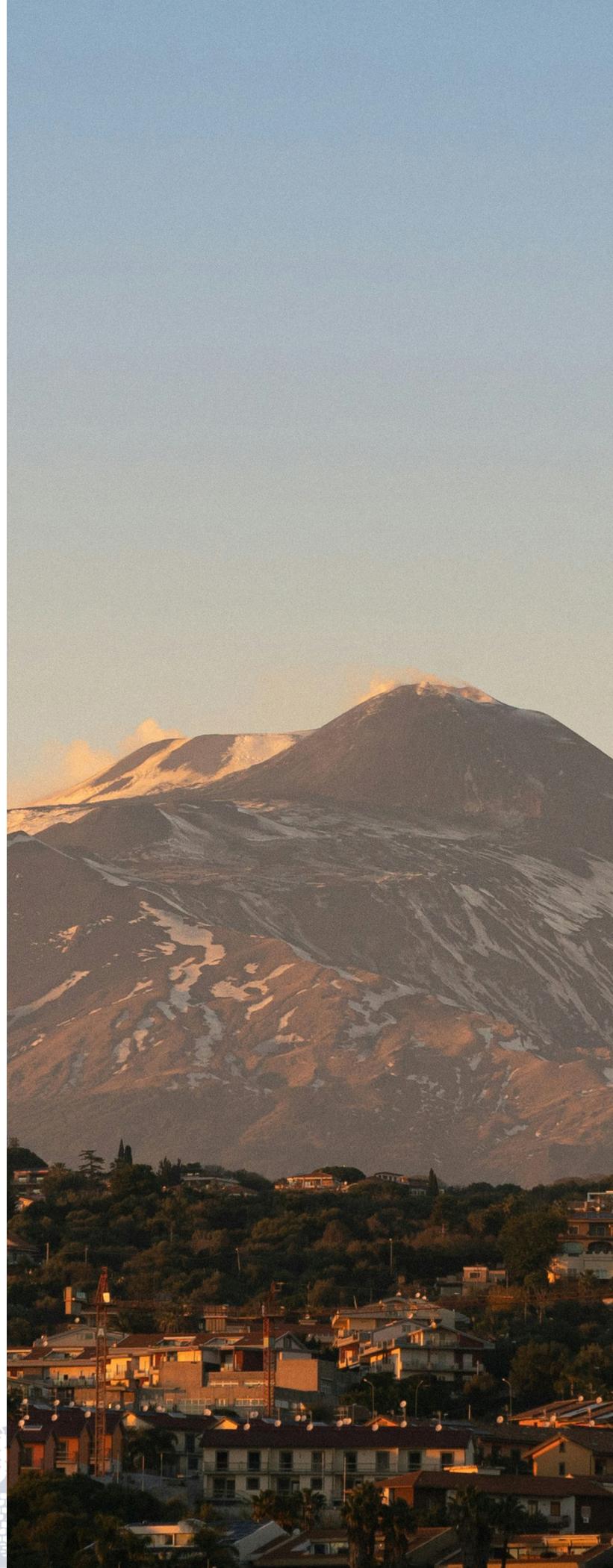
MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2026
ARRIVEDERCI!

- Breakfast and check out of our hotel.
- We transfer to Catania International Airport for our flights home.

(B)

THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!

**Itinerary subject to change*



MEET YOUR TOUR EXPERTS:

Robyn Helzner

Robyn Helzner is a renowned performer of **World Jewish Music**. For over a decade, Robyn has led Jewish Heritage Tours to China, Morocco, Greece, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal and Spain. Robyn's Jewish tour to Albania takes off in May 2026! Robyn creates rich cultural experiences for travelers and shares the unique Jewish musical traditions of each destination community. A sought-after prayer leader, Robyn served as the cantor for the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong and officiated at the first Bar Mitzvah celebrated in Beijing. Her concerts, cantorial work, and recordings have been acclaimed by listeners worldwide.



Rabbi Barbara Aiello

Rabbi Barbara Aiello is Italy's first woman rabbi and the country's first modern pluralistic rabbi. A native of Pittsburgh, she is the founding rabbi of **Ner Tamid del Sud (The Eternal Light of the South)** in Serrastretta, Calabria—the first active synagogue in the region in over 500 years and the first recognized Reconstructionist synagogue in Italy.

Rabbi Aiello is internationally recognized for her work with **B'nei Anusim** (descendants of Jews forced into Christian conversion), helping individuals and families rediscover and reconnect with their Jewish heritage. Fluent in Italian, she has lived and worked in southern Italy for more than two decades and is widely regarded as a leading voice in the revitalization of Jewish life in the region.

She holds a master's degree from The George Washington University and received rabbinic ordination (*sm'icha*) from The Rabbinical Seminary International and the Rabbinical Academy in New York. Her honors also include Washingtonian of the Year and the Surgeon General's Medallion for Excellence in Public Health from Dr. C. Everett Koop.



Rabbi Aiello is a co-founder of the **International Federation of Rabbis**, vice president of **Kulanu**, and a frequent speaker at universities, synagogues, and international forums, including the United Nations and the National Press Club. She is a longtime contributor to *The Times of Israel* and other Jewish publications and was the host of the internationally streamed **Radio Rabbi** program for 17 years.



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