



European Convention Event Details 2013

Just One Shabbat – New Year’s 2013 event took place in Barcelona on December 28, 2012-January 1, 2013 with approximately 450 European attendees. ECJS reserved the entire Fira Congress Hotel to host the international Shabbat. During the course of the event, attendees visited the Call of Barcelona including the Sinagoga Mayor, believed to date back to Roman times. They also toured Gaudy’s and other famous architects’ works featured in Park Guell and throughout the city. A complete panorama of Barcelona was viewed from the Montjuic, or Jewish Mountain, which is named for the ancient Jewish cemetery once buried there. The mayor of Girona, Carles Puigdemont, addressed ECJS in the breathtaking red velvet and gilded municipal theatre. He welcomed ECJS on behalf of the city and encouraged the group to explore the Jewish heritage of Girona where the Ramban, Nachmanides, once resided.

Beyond sightseeing, participants experienced a literal taste of Spain during their Sangria workshop when they created their own fruity wine drink and learned the traditional Spanish toast among newly-made friends. The countdown to New Year’s on Monday Night was quite memorable as participants enjoyed the live music from a local Spanish band.

Shabbat was ushered in with beautiful songs and prayers and concluded with an inspiring havdalah. Rabbi Menachem Sebbag, a full Colonel in the Dutch army, addressed the attendees during the program. His topics included Mayan vs. Jewish end of time, vegetarianism in Judaism, and Biblical relationship insights.

Purim on the Rocks took place in Amsterdam on 22-25 February. The event began on Friday with a visit to Dam Square and a boat ride along the canals. Dozens of young Dutch joined the international group for Shabbat. Two local Rabbis lectured during Shabbat: Rabbi Menachem Sebbag, a Dutch colonel and army chaplain, and Rabbi Zeew van Dijk, who wove a colorful tapestry of incredible stories about Dutch Jewry.

Saturday night, the Purim celebration began in earnest with a lively Megillah reading followed by a huge costumed Purim party with over 700 attendees!

Sunday started with a Jewish Heritage tour including the JHM, holocaust memorials and surrounding sites. It was brought to a conclusion at the Portuguese Synagogue where Chief Rabbi Haham Toledano wearing a top hat – the traditional hat of the Portuguese Jewish community before the Holocaust - read the megillah in the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam. Over 1000 candles lit up the impressive synagogue in honor of ECJS.

Monday the event concluded with a taste of authentic Holland at Zaanse Schans and Edam with their quaint windmills, homes and craftsman shops, including cheese making and wooden shoe making demonstrations.



Summer Is Here event took place in Berlin on July 25-28 with approximately 250 European and additional local attendees. The event offered a collage of major events in recent history: WWII and the holocaust, communism and the Iron Curtain and the State of Israel. The Jewish tour guides offering fascinating ideas discussing these topics at sites like Topography of Terror, museums, Track 17, memorials, the East Side Gallery, and Checkpoint Charlie. ECJS made special arrangements with the IDF to send two Lieutenants from the Israeli army to spend the weekend with ECJS. They addressed the group and were available for questions and discussions for the duration of the event. The resident Rabbi for the event recently began working with college students in Germany and lectures at the Touro College Berlin. The event concluded with a day trip to Postdam visiting the summer residence of Prussian Kings and German Emperors.

Party Like a Jew annual Brussels weekend took place on November 15-17 with approximately 200 in hotel, 100 more for the inauguration ceremony and about 700 in total at the UEJB party. It began with an insider tour of the Parliament and European Quarter. A walking tour on Shabbat afternoon covered all the major tourist sites. A lively debate focused on the topic of the use and misuse of social media. Guest speaker, Daniel Schwammenthal - Director of the AJC's Transatlantic Institute, discussed iran's nuclear threat followed by a heated discussion. Sara Ives offered a psychological lectuer on the duality of man through insights on the weekly Torah portion. An entertaining and educational group game included acting, drawing, sculpting and general knowledge. Saturday night, participants partied at the annual UEJB party and each person was given a free chanukiah kit by ECJS as they departed.

Sunday, the event concluded with the highlight of the event: the Inauguration of the European Travel Sefer Torah. It was an emotionally charged occasion as people came from various countries, some just for the day, as they had dedicated sections in memory or in honor of loved ones. Dozens of individuals were honored with assisting the scribe in writing the final letters. Then, accompanied by live music, the joyous dancing went on for hours.