

Jewish Heritage Tour of Brazil



Brazil Jewish Heritage Tour June 07 - 16, 2026

Day 1 — Sunday, June 07: Departure for Rio de Janeiro

Overnight flight to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Day 2 — Monday, June 08: Arrival in Rio de Janeiro – Panorama — Sugarloaf Mountain

Your overnight flight descends into Rio just after dawn, the first light shimmering across the bay and the city's dramatic granite peaks. Upon arrival, transfer to the Sheraton Grand Rio Hotel, located on Barra da Tijuca beach.

In the afternoon, drive along the world-famous Copacabana and Ipanema beaches before continuing to downtown Rio to see Praça Mauá, the ultramodern Cathedral, and, traffic permitting, the Teatro Municipal. Visit the Sambódromo, Rio's custom-built parade venue for Carnival, then head to Urca for a cable car ride up Sugarloaf Mountain, offering breathtaking views of Guanabara Bay. The remainder of the afternoon is at leisure.

As evening falls, enjoy a quiet dinner at the hotel, a gentle introduction to Rio's vibrant culture and rich history. The city has long been a crossroads of migration, where New Christians and Sephardic families arrived centuries ago after fleeing Iberia's Inquisition, weaving their talents into the fabric of a new world. Beneath the glowing skyline, begin tracing their story.

Overnight at Sheraton Grand Rio Hotel. (D)



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Day 3 — Tuesday, June 09: Corcovado, the Jewish Museum and a Living Synagogue — Public Splendor, Private Stories

Morning light escorts you up Corcovado to stand beneath the outstretched arms of Christ the Redeemer, absorbing a sweeping view that frames Rio's layered identities. From that high vantage, it is easier to sense how the city's visible grandeur has long sheltered more private lives below — including families who arrived as *New Christians* and quietly preserved ancestral practices even while outwardly Catholic.

After the mountain, your private guide takes you to the Jewish Museum of Rio de Janeiro. Housed in a carefully restored historic building, the museum translates archives, artifacts and personal stories into a narrative of arrival, adaptation and contribution — showing how members of the Jewish community



shaped commerce, medicine, the arts and public life in Brazil's modern era. Then you visit an active synagogue where the rhythms of prayer and community life demonstrate continuity: rituals observed today that echo centuries of persistence. These sites together show two sides of memory — the public monuments of faith and the subtler traces of families who negotiated identity and survival across generations.

In the evening, feel the city's pulse at Carioca da Gema in Lapa: dinner, live samba and the sort of conviviality that has always sustained diasporic communities in new lands.

Overnight at the Sheraton Grand Rio Hotel. (B,D)

Day 4 — Wednesday, June 10: Sugarloaf, Flight to Salvador — From Colonial Ports to Hidden Lives

You rise to ride a cable car to Sugarloaf Mountain, where the sweep of Guanabara Bay reminds you that from the earliest days Brazil's coastline was a stage for commerce, empire and migration. After this uplifting panorama, a private transfer takes you to Galeão Airport for the short flight north to Salvador.



Salvador arrives like a storybook of color and sound. As Brazil's first capital, it was one of the earliest colonial ports to receive settlers, administrators, enslaved Africans and *New Christians* — conversos who



had been forced to adopt Christianity in Iberia but who continued, sometimes in secret, to observe elements of Jewish life. In Salvador these hidden histories are embedded in the city's churches, in archival records, and in the shapes of streets that once witnessed Tribunal proceedings and quiet acts of resistance. Tonight, you check into the historic Fera Palace and attend a folkloric

performance that celebrates Bahia's layered, creole culture — a culture shaped by African, Indigenous, and Iberian threads, and quietly stitched with the stories of converso families.

Overnight and dinner at the Fiesta Bahia Hotel (B,D)

Day 5 — Thursday, June 11: Lower City, Bahia Archives and Pelourinho — Reading the City as Archive

Today is an immersive day in Salvador's living archive. You descend to the Lower City to take in the maritime panoramas that made the port region the economic heart of colonial Brazil. At the Bahia Archives, manuscripts and ecclesiastical records reveal traces of *New Christian* lives: baptismal registers, notarial deeds and Inquisition files that sometimes hold the most intimate hints of concealed identities. Scholars point to these documents as vital keys for understanding how converso families navigated marriage, commerce and faith under watchful eyes.

Walking Pelourinho's cobbled squares, the city's baroque churches seem at once ornate and ambiguous — venues where the rituals of empire could mask quieter, inherited observances. Your afternoon unfolds through Mercado Modelo's crafts, then up to Farol da Barra to gaze out across the Atlantic — a view that once welcomed ships carrying people determined to remake their lives.



Tonight, we enjoy dinner at Odojá Restaurant, where contemporary Bahian cuisine celebrates the region's rich culinary heritage. Over plates inspired by local flavors and Atlantic influences reflect on the day's discoveries, from secret histories embedded in archives to the enduring cultural pulse of Salvador.

Overnight at the Fiesta Bahia Hotel (B,D)

Day 6 — Friday, June 12: Cachoeira — Countryside, Conversation and the Recôncavo's Hidden Threads

A scenic drive into the Recôncavo Baiano takes you to Cachoeira, a town where sugar and tobacco fortunes once flowed and where converso merchants and artisans quietly became part of local life. In the 17th and 18th centuries this region offered relative remoteness — a place where some families could sustain ancestral customs in domestic spaces while engaging openly in commerce and civic life.



At Fazenda Santa Cruz you savor a slow Bahian lunch amid shaded trees and

colonial architecture, imagining a time when economic necessity and cultural survival intertwined. Local guides will describe how ritual objects, culinary habits and naming patterns in the Recôncavo sometimes preserve echoes of Jewish practice — elegiac clues to lives lived at the margins of orthodoxy. This day is about listening to stories told by townspeople, to the land that supported generations, and to the echoing resilience of identity. Return to Salvador for a restful evening in anticipation of Shabbat.

Overnight at the Fiesta Bahia Hotel (B,L)

Day 7 — Saturday, June 13: Shabbat in Salvador — Reflection, Choice and Community

This day is given to Shabbat — a deliberate pause for reflection, prayer and the communal rhythms that have sustained Jewish life across centuries. Some guests will choose to attend service at a local synagogue (Sociedade Israelita da Bahia); others will take a quiet walk



through Pelourinho or join a small community for conversation about the region's converso legacy.

Observing Shabbat here is also an act of continuity: in a city where many families once kept faith in private, gathering openly to read, sing and share a meal feels like a meaningful reclamation. As the sun sets, an optional dinner and folkloric show at Coliseu offers a final taste of Bahian ceremony and celebration.

Overnight at the Fiesta Bahia Hotel (B)

Day 8 — Sunday, June 14: Flight to Recife — Where Judaism Reclaimed a Public Voice

This morning you board a flight to Recife, the cradle of publicly practiced Judaism in the Americas. Under brief Dutch rule in the 1630s-1650s, Portuguese and Spanish Jews —



many of whom had arrived as *New Christians* and then returned to open practice — built Kahal Zur Israel, the first synagogue in the New World. The story of Recife is dramatic: a coastal port where tolerance allowed Torah to be read openly for a generation, then a reversal in 1654 forced most Jews to leave with the departing Dutch. The synagogue site today is a museum and an archaeological palimpsest, where excavated mikveh

stones and fragments bring the 17th century into the present.

You arrive in Recife Antigo and feel that history underfoot — in the narrow streets, the bridges that span small islands, and the cultural life that still recalls a bold, if brief, moment of Jewish public culture.

Overnight at the Atlante Plaza (B)



Day 9 — Monday, June 15: Recife Antigo — Kahal Zur Israel and Olinda's Echoes

Spend a full day in Recife Antigo with a historian who narrates the city's layered past: Dutch merchants and Sephardic families; conversos who took advantage of Dutch toleration to re-embrace Jewish ritual; and the later dispersal that helped shape Jewish communities elsewhere in the Americas. The Kahal Zur Israel Museum invites contemplation: the excavated mikveh, fragments of ritual life, and a restored interior all testify to a community that reclaimed its voice in a fleeting window of freedom.



In the afternoon, cross to Olinda — its hilltop churches and winding lanes offer a quieter counterpoint. Olinda's colonial fabric preserves traces of lives that were at once public and private, where names,

customs and houses sometimes bear witness to converso presence. Here you will walk the same cobbles that once carried merchants and families balancing survival with the memory of older loyalties.

As evening falls, celebrate with a generous rodízio dinner — a convivial final supper in Recife that honors the friendships you have formed and the histories you have shared.

Overnight at the Atlante Plaza (B,D)

Day 10 — Tuesday, June 16: Farewells from Recife — Carrying Memory Home

Your last morning in Recife is unhurried: a final stroll to the waterfront or a quiet cup in the hotel before check-out. As you travel to the airport, the landscapes of the northeast — sugar land and seacoast, chapel and synagogue — coalesce into a single memory: of people who crossed oceans, hid prayers in domestic spaces, reclaimed faith in an open synagogue, and left traces that persist in archives, architecture and family names.

As the tour closes, you carry home more than photographs: you leave with a textured understanding of how *New Christians* shaped Brazil's economy, culture and culture of survival — a legacy of resilience, adaptation and, ultimately, renewal.

