



US Southeast Civil Rights Journey: Memory & Movements

Dates

June 19 - June 25, 2025

Overview

For the past 12 years, Spark Church and Congregation Etz Chayim have shared a roof together and joined together in our pursuit of justice and love of neighbor. Our tour to the American South continues this work of listening, learning and loving. We will learn from Jewish and Christian civil rights leaders, hearing their stories, visiting holy ground and holding holy space together. Join us for what is sure to be a life changing, hope-filled experience, empowering us to continue the work and honor those who have paved the way before us. This family-friendly tour is curated specifically for our two congregations, with an expert guide from MEJDI tours and co-leaders Rabbi Chaim Koritzinsky and Pastor Danielle Parish.

From Atlanta, through Alabama, concluding Memphis, this MEJDI Civil Rights Journey presents the key sites, leaders, and legacy of a movement. Recall pivotal moments that defined this region and the nation, and connect past struggles with those of today.

Itinerary below.



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Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival & Introductions - Thursday, June 19

Arrive to Atlanta by this evening (self-transfer from the airport, instructions provided for using different modes of transportation).

If you arrive by early evening, gather for dinner together with your guide.

Activity recommendations provided for those arriving earlier in the day i.e. Centennial Olympic Park, National Center for Civil and Human Rights, Georgia Aquarium, Children's Museum of Atlanta, etc.

Overnight: Hyatt House Atlanta Downtown [no meals included]

Day 2: Atlanta, Sweet Auburn - Friday, June 20

Start the day with group introductions and welcome. Visit The Temple, to hear the story of Atlanta's oldest Jewish congregation.

Journey through the life & legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. Explore the King Center area and "Sweet Auburn" neighborhood, then enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. See the Ebenezer Baptist Church, considering its role in the neighborhood during King's time and its impact as an active congregation today.

Transfer to Montgomery, AL and check into your accommodations. Experience Shabbat evening services at Temple Beth Or and enjoy a group dinner.

*Overnight: SpringHill Suites, Montgomery
[breakfast, lunch and dinner included]*



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Day 3: Montgomery: Cradle & Capital - Saturday, June 21

Travel through downtown Montgomery, studying this historic landscape of change. Tour the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum to learn about the history of the slave trade and racial discrimination, then continue to the Rosa Parks Museum for its showcase on the famous civil rights catalyst.

Enjoy a group lunch with a local educator or civil society leader, then spend the afternoon at the EJI National Memorial for Peace & Justice and the Southern Poverty Law Center's Civil Rights Memorial Center. Discuss how the struggle for racial justice has evolved both on the ground and in public discourse.

Gather for dialogue and reflections with group leaders and guides. Spend the evening at leisure.

*Overnight: SpringHill Suites, Montgomery
[breakfast and lunch included]*

Day 4: Bridge to Selma - Sunday, June 22

Travel to the EJI Freedom Monument with a short river boat along the Gun Island Chute. Depart for Lowndes County and stop at the Viola Liuzzo Memorial before joining a local church congregation for services and lunch.

Continue to Selma for a visit to Brown Chapel AME (outside only) and follow the route of a famous march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Drive to Birmingham in the late afternoon and check into your accommodations. Those interested may join a neighborhood walking tour highlighting black-owned culinary innovation in the city.

Spend the evening at leisure.

*Overnight: SpringHill Suites, Birmingham
[breakfast and lunch included]*



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Day 5: Birmingham Stories - Monday, June 23

Start the day recounting MLK's famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail, then reflect on the sculptures of Kelly Ingram Park. Hear the story of the 16th St. Baptist Church and AG Gaston Motel around the corner.

Have a conversation with a veteran of the Civil Rights Foot Soldiers association over lunch and continue to the Historic Bethel Baptist Church, once a hub for civil rights organizing. End the day at the Temple Beth El Civil Rights Experience, for another perspective on the civil rights struggle.

Gather for dialogue and reflections with group leaders and guides. Spend the evening at leisure.

*Overnight: SpringHill Suites, Birmingham
[breakfast and lunch included]*

Day 6: Road to Graceland - Tuesday, June 24

Check out and depart for the town of Tupelo, home to the Elvis Presley Birthplace & Museum, for an exploration of the singer's complex relationship to Gospel.

Find lunch on your own upon arrival in Memphis, then enjoy the Memphis Riverboat cruise along the Mississippi River, with historical commentary. Finish the day with a group dinner, where you will be joined by an accomplished local musician/performing artist.

*Overnight: Hu Hotel, Memphis
[breakfast and dinner included]*



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Day 7: Memphis in Focus - Wednesday, June 25

Start your morning with reflections and wrap up with your group leaders.
Take an alternative tour of Memphis highlighting:

- First Baptist Church
- Beale Street tour and conversation
- National Civil Rights Museum - Lorraine Motel
- City neighborhoods and urban development trends

Spend the afternoon on your own, or with a visit to Graceland (admission and early afternoon reservation not included).

Luggage may be stored at the hotel. At the conclusion of the tour, travelers will be dropped off back at the hotel or at Graceland. Self-transfer to the airport.

Overnight: N/A [breakfast included]



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