

Cruising Cape Verde

A Jewish Perspective

by Tony Lewis

Towards the end of November last year, I embarked on a week's cruise around the islands of Cape Verde, an archipelago of ten islands, all but one inhabited, in the Atlantic Ocean, about 400-500 miles off the West African coast.

The islands were uninhabited until the 15th century when Portuguese explorers arrived and they remained a Portuguese colony until independence in 1975. The Portuguese name, Cabo Verde, means 'Green Cape', even though the archipelago has suffered from bouts of drought throughout its history. It is a fact that more Cape Verdeans live abroad than in the country itself whose population is just under 600,000.

Flying from Heathrow via Lisbon, I arrived at the island of Sal where the main



airport is located. After spending a day in a lovely hotel in Sal, I was collected and taken to our mega yacht, the Harmony V, which was to be my home for the following seven days. The yacht had 25 cabins, all ensuite, with accommodation for 48 guests. On my trip, there were just 28 passengers, including six from the UK, a couple from the USA and the rest from Switzerland, France, Sweden, Poland and other European countries.



After I booked the trip, I came across a website entitled 'Cape Verde Jewish Heritage Project', based in Washington DC. I discovered that during the 19th century, when the islands were a Portuguese colony, groups of young single Sephardic Jews from Gibraltar and Morocco went to the islands to trade, many subsequently settling there and, eventually over time, assimilating with the local Catholic population. Although there is no organised Jewish community there nowadays, many islanders are extremely proud of their Jewish heritage.

I decided to get in touch with the President of the Cape Verde Jewish Heritage, Carol Castiel, who was de-

about to set sail for Santo Antão from the neighbouring island of São Vicente a violent storm erupted and we were obliged to return at once to Sal. To make matters worse, our yacht developed engine trouble and eventually reached Sal four hours later than anticipated. Consequently, I never saw any of Cape Verde's Jewish sites, but Carol Castiel has sent me photos of what there is to see. Therefore, anyone visiting the islands should head for the islands' Jewish sites to see what, unfortunately, I could not. Good Luck!

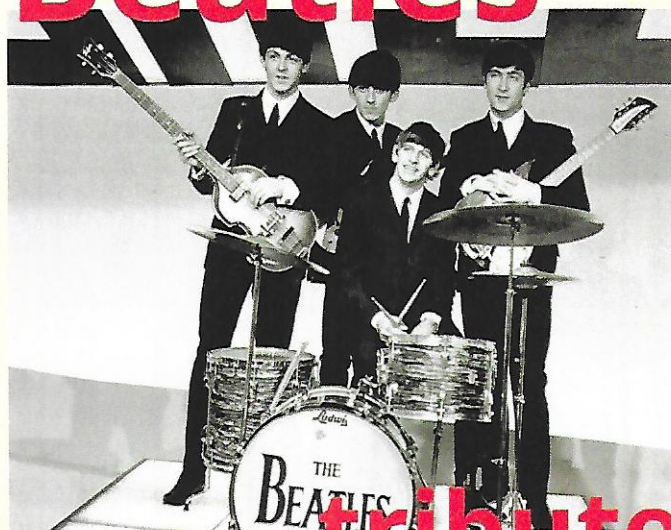
Visit the website:

www.capeverdejewishheritage.org

or get in touch directly with Carol at:

Capeverdejewishheritageproject@gmail.com

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