



MALTA & GOZO



**ITINERARY FOR THE WINNERS
OF 'EUROPEAN DESTINATIONS OF EXCELLENCE' AWARDS**



MALTA & GOZO

INTRODUCING A RANGE OF NEW AND CHARMING DESTINATIONS IN MALTA AND GOZO!

The Ministry for Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority have, over the years, been collaborating to promote sustainable tourism by encouraging tourists to visit diverse, attractive and culturally rich destinations within the Maltese Islands.

A 2015 survey of international tourists to Malta showed that over a third of them chose 'culture' as the principal reason for their visit. The destinations we are presenting here are perfect to expand tour itineraries for a discerning market in search of varied and authentic experiences.

Individual destinations from the itinerary can be chosen to complement existing tours, or linked together to build something new and fresh. All the destinations have won the European Commission's 'European Destinations of Excellence' award during the last decade as a result of projects implemented by the Ministry for Tourism and the Malta Tourism Authority. We invite visitors to tour these spots and learn more about their particular attractions.

MELLIEĦA & THE HAMLET OF MANIKATA

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

MELLIEĦA AND THE
HAMLET OF MANIKATA
WON THE EDEN AWARD IN
2009 FOR THE 'TOURISM
AND PROTECTED AREAS'
CATEGORY.

Occupying the entire north-western tip of Malta, the district of Mellieħa boasts sites of cultural, religious and natural history to complement its fine sandy beaches.

The village of Mellieħa is perched on a hill commanding distant views of Comino and Gozo and the straits between them. During Neolithic times and right up to the Middle Ages local caves were inhabited and also used as burial sites. Some of these can be found at San Niklaw, embedded in the sides of Mellieħa Ridge and Ġnien Ingraw, overlooking Ġnien Ingraw Valley.

Mellieħa's prominent location has attracted visitors for centuries, including traders looking to export salt from the salt-pans which now form the Ghadira Bay Nature Reserve and pilgrims heading to the cave which forms the heart of the important Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mellieħa. This was consecrated as early as 409 AD. The wall-painted 15th-century icon here was restored in 2016 and the church is still a place of



pilgrimage and devotion; it is part of the European Marian Network, which connects twenty prominent Marian sanctuaries across Europe.

The Feast Day is 8th September, a national holiday and the same Feast Day as Senglea. An annual charity walk between the two towns takes place on the night before Good Friday, with thousands of walkers covering the 26 kilometres.

Across the pedestrianised piazza from the Sanctuary is a fascinating labyrinth of wartime air-raid shelters, while below is a shrine where fresh spring water flows at the feet of a statue of Our Lady with Baby Jesus in her arms. The grotto is especially popular with women seeking safe delivery of their own baby.

A short drive from Mellieħa town is the 17th century Red Fort, or St. Agatha's Tower, built as the principal northern stronghold of the Knights of St. John. Now maintained by the National Trust of Malta, the Fort is staffed by a

dedicated team of volunteers. Visitors can view the exhibition and climb the spiral staircase to enjoy magnificent views across Mellieħa Bay and towards Gozo from the turrets.

Of much more recent cultural interest is Popeye Village, the set of the 1979 film starring Robin Williams, complete with wonky wooden houses. Great fun, and very popular with families!

Also in Mellieħa is the historic farmstead of Ir-Razzett tal-Qasam at Manikata, where traditional farming methods are showcased by a cooperative of local farmers. Caves used for livestock and the remains of historic buildings can be seen here, ranging from a Knights-era hunting lodge to a well preserved WW2 pill-box, with original fittings still in place. This atmospheric hill site, with its typical dry-stone walls, was used to film scenes from 'Game of Thrones'. Visits here are by arrangement with the Manikata Rural Cooperative (see below).

There are also many beautiful sandy beaches in the locality, ranging from busy and well-equipped resorts such as Golden Bay to quiet, secluded beaches such as Imġiebaħ (Selmun) Bay.

For more information on visits to the farmstead at Manikata, contact the Manikata Rural Cooperative on verfrrg@maltanet.net


Valletta > Mellieħa
41 42 49


RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT
2 DAYS
(MINIMUM)

SENGLEA

MARITIME MALTA

SENGLEA WON THE EDEN AWARD IN 2010 IN THE 'AQUATIC TOURISM' CATEGORY.

One of the historic 'Three Cities' which lie across the Grand Harbour from Valletta, Senglea is redolent with maritime heritage. Its known history goes back to the Knights of St John. In 1554, Grand Master Claude de la Sengle transformed the narrow promontory to a fortified city and the settlement is named after him. Gradually the slopes of the former hunting ground were cleared and fine houses built for wealthy families. Fortifications from this time are still visible, including the Sheer Bastion - where a device to mount masts on wooden ships originally stood atop the ramparts - and a reconstructed watch-tower, adorned with carved eyes and ears to remind the sentries to be watchful! In the Parish Church of Our

Lady of Victories the titular statue is a former figurehead from a galleon, rescued by Maltese sailors in the 17th century and brought home to watch over this sea-faring community. More important still is the 300-year-old statue of Christ the Redeemer, bent low as He struggles under the weight of the Cross. With particularly fine and emotional carving, the statue is one of the oldest in Malta and is associated with various miracles. On the rare occasions when the statue is taken out for pilgrimage processions it attracts thousands of visitors from all over Malta, and at other times it can be venerated in the Oratory of the church.

The Feast day in Senglea is 8th September, also a national holiday to mark both the end of the Great Siege of 1565, when a Turkish force tried in vain to oust the Knights from their domain, and the Italian surrender during the Second World War, in 1943. A regatta

of colourful local boats is held annually in the harbour to commemorate both events, with an additional regatta on 31 March to commemorate Freedom Day.

By the end of World War II Senglea was a very different place. In 1941 it suffered heavily from a blitz of German bombs aimed at the British warship HMS Illustrious in the neighbouring docks. Many families moved out and, although it was gradually rebuilt to its current fine appearance, it took decades for the social scars to heal. It remained a British naval base after the war and men from the British navy often settled here with local women or took their wives back to Britain. Even after Maltese Independence in 1964 the maritime connection between the two peoples was further cemented by the annual return visit of HMS Illustrious, whose men carried out charitable projects during their stay.

Today, the harbour is a colourful haven for yachts, motorboats and other pleasure craft. There is a pleasant harbourside walk between Senglea and Vittoriosa, home of Malta's principal Maritime Museum, and both places can be reached by a pleasant ferry-ride across the harbour from the port below the Barrakka gardens, in Valletta. A visit to Senglea is ideal for giving context to the history presented in the Maritime Museum.

For guided tours of Senglea and more information on the town, contact the Senglea Historical Society on sengleahistoricalsociety@gmail.com



Valletta > Senglea

1



RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT
3-4 HOURS



**NADUR
GOZO**
EXPLORE A
TYPICAL TOWN

NADUR WON THE EDEN AWARD
IN 2007 IN THE CATEGORY
'BEST EMERGING EUROPEAN
RURAL DESTINATIONS OF
EXCELLENCE'.

The Gozitan people's pride in their villages is clearly illustrated in Gozo's second-largest settlement of Nadur, where the 18th century Basilica of St Peter and St Paul stands proudly on the restored piazza. It is one of the finest examples of Maltese Baroque architecture and decoration on the island. The village is renowned for its Carnival (February) and Feast (June), with parties and celebrations lasting several days.

'Nadur' means 'look-out', and its location on a high plateau amply illustrates how it earned its name. A village walking tour leads up to Ta' Kenuna, a 19th century tower used for communications via semaphore and telegraph during the British era and now fulfilling the same role with modern telecommunications equipment. Around the tower is a botanical garden full of native and endemic plants and not far away is the Belvedere, a pretty promenade along the edge of the escarpment, with fine views over the southern part of Gozo.

A visit to Nadur would not be complete without seeing one of the village's traditional bakeries, where Gozo-style pizzas – known as ftira – are baked in vast wood-fired ovens over a century old. This part of the tour should of course include sampling the products!

The village gives good access down to beautiful Ramla Bay, a curving beach of red-gold sand, and to the smaller and rockier Daħlet Qorrot beach, with sparkling clear water.

 Valletta > Ċirkewwa **41** 25 minutes ferry to Gozo
Mġarr > Victoria **301 323** Victoria > Nadur **302**

L RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT
3-4 HOURS

KERĊEM - HAMLET OF SANTA LUĊIJA GOZO

STORIES BENEATH
THE SURFACE

THE HAMLET OF SANTA LUĊIJA
WON THE EDEN AWARD IN
2008 IN THE CATEGORY
'TOURISM AND LOCAL
INTANGIBLE HERITAGE'.

One of the best aspects of travelling is learning about the stories and traditions that create that essential 'sense of place' which is so hard to define, yet key to understanding and enjoying a new country. In the district of Kerċem (western Gozo) is the small village of Santa Luċija, redolent with history and culture. The 'European Destination of Excellence' award here was won for its intangible heritage, so it's even more important here than in most places to connect with a local guide who can introduce visitors to past and present life in the hamlet.

Guides from the Ta' Klula Foundation can accompany small groups of visitors to see how local women continue the

tradition of lace-making, working their threads and bobbins at lightening speed. Other local crafts such as parchment-work and brightly-coloured thread-work can be seen here too, while behind the bamboo screens keeping the heat and dust from doorways and windows are the ancient stone walls of centuries-old houses. The small bar-café next to the pretty little church of St Lucy is a good example of these.

'Luċija' comes from the Latin word for 'light'. This is why St Lucy is the patron saint of the blind, and the church is popular with pilgrims suffering from poor sight. In keeping with this theme a 'Festival of Light' is held here every autumn, with the hills around the village lit by lanterns and a candlelit procession through the village, ending in the piazza in front of the church.

A short distance from the village is the water-source of Għar-ilma. In 1841 water from here was channelled via an aqueduct to supply Gozo's main city of Victoria. Although no longer in use, the stone engineering works have been sensitively preserved and there's an atmospheric dark cave from where the pure spring water emerges. Archaeological remains indicate that the locality of Kerċem was inhabited some 7000 years ago. The villages of Kerċem and Santa Luċija are surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside in Gozo, extending to the pond of St Raphael and the Xlendi cliffs.

For guided tours or more information about Santa Luċija, contact the Fondazzjoni Ta' Klula on info@santalucija.com



Valletta > Ċirkewwa 41 25 minutes ferry to Gozo

Mgarr > Victoria 301 323 Victoria > Kerċem/Santa Luċija 313



RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT

3-4 HOURS

GĦARB GOZO

PILGRIMAGE AND PEACE

GĦARB WON THE EDEN AWARD IN 2011 FOR THE 'TOURISM AND REGENERATION OF PHYSICAL SITES' CATEGORY.

Most visitors to Għarb come to visit the National Shrine of the Blessed Virgin of Ta' Pinu, a huge church built after a local woman - Karmni Grima - had mystical visions of Our Lady in the 1880s. The church was started in 1922 and constructed in the neo-romantic style from local honey-coloured limestone, with beautiful carved pillars supporting a soaring vaulted ceiling. Several miracles

are associated with the shrine and a side room contains devotional offerings and moving letters as testament to healing and other miracles. It is also possible to visit the humble farmhouse home of Karmni Grima, and (by arrangement) view the collection of silver artefacts and other sacred objects in the museum next to the parish church of the Visitation of Our Lady to St Elizabeth.

The Feast Day is July 3rd. During the celebrations the statue of the Visitation is taken in procession around the village and an infiorata - an intricate carpet of flower petals - is laid out in front of the



parish church for the procession to pass across.

Close to the church on the main piazza is the fascinating Folklore Museum, an 18th century house filled with items illustrating Gozo's traditional trades, crafts, clothing and pastimes. Visitors may like to arrange for a guide to show them round since the purpose of some of the artefacts will be mysterious to many. For those who enjoy walking, a short trek leads up to the Gordan Lighthouse, inaugurated in 1853 and still in operation today.

From Għarb it is possible to tour the Mielah valley (Wied il-Mielah) to view the typical garrigue countryside

and small farms, along with beautiful views of the sea. The well-constructed road along the valley forms part of an excellent cycle route.

Not far from the village of Għarb is the Ta' Dbiegi Craft Village, where Gozitan crafts from lace and silver filigree jewellery to pottery, glassware and food are made and sold. There are also refreshment outlets here. The site was formerly a military barracks and through its current role is a fine illustration of how 'swords can be turned into ploughshares and spears to pruning-hooks'.



Valletta > Ċirkewwa 41 25 minutes ferry to Gozo

Mġarr > Victoria 301 323 Victoria > Għarb 311



RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT

1 DAY

XAGĦRA GOZO

SIX THOUSAND YEARS OF HISTORY

XAGĦRA WON THE EDEN
AWARD IN 2015 IN THE
'TOURISM AND LOCAL
GASTRONOMY' CATEGORY.

Xagħra is already on the itinerary of many tour groups because of the Ġgantija temples, part of the 'Megalithic Temples of Malta' World Heritage Site. The well-managed site here includes the oldest free-standing building in the world, constructed five and a half thousand years ago. The informative visitors' centre explains the temple's significance and displays some of the beautiful stone artefacts found here and at the nearby hypogeum; some are in an excellent state of preservation. Their quality is all the more remarkable since, like the temple, they were crafted before metal tools were invented.

A short walk from the temple is the Ta' Kola windmill, which was built in 1725 and functioned until well into the 20th century, including a vital role in feeding local people during both world wars. It is now being restored to full working capacity, including the traditional wood and canvas sails.

Pop into the Basilica of Our Lady of Victories (also known as Maria Bambina) to see magnificent decorations and over a dozen life-sized statues of saints and the Holy Family which are taken out and paraded around the village during

the annual Feast. Especially charming is Joseph cradling Jesus as a sleeping toddler. The principal Feast day is 8 September (also a national public holiday).

Look closely at the two clocks on the church towers: the left-hand one appears to have stopped. In fact, it is painted on! This is common with rural churches in Malta and Gozo, with the time of the painted face always showing a few minutes before midnight. According to local belief this is to confuse the devil, since midnight is when he roams the Earth looking for souls to collect.

For a beautiful view, follow the signs to Calypso's Cave, where legend tells us is where Ulysses was detained for 7 years during his travels around the Mediterranean. The cave itself has collapsed but there is a spectacular view of the coast, especially the golden sands of Ramla Bay. Another Xagħra attraction

is Xerri's Grotto, where a narrow spiral staircase winds down beneath an ordinary house in an unassuming street to an astonishing labyrinth of narrow passages between and stalactites, stalagmites and other exotic rock formations formed over millennia. This grotto and the nearby Ninu's Cave – also replete with stalactites and stalagmites – were discovered over 100 years ago by residents seeking to dig wells beneath their homes.

Xagħra holds an annual two-day Fig Festival to celebrate the cultivation and use of figs, during which Market stalls and restaurants showcase different foods made with figs, and there are associated celebrations such as open-air community dining in the piazza, open to all.



Valletta > Ċirkewwa **41** 25 minutes ferry to Gozo
Mġarr > Victoria **301 323** Victoria > Xagħra **307**

L RECOMMENDED
TIME FOR VISIT
1 DAY



MINISTRY FOR TOURISM

*For more info about travel routes, kindly visit www.publictransport.com.mt or call +356 2122 2000.

For more info about Gozo ferry schedule please visit:
<http://www.gozochannel.com/en/schedules.htm>

