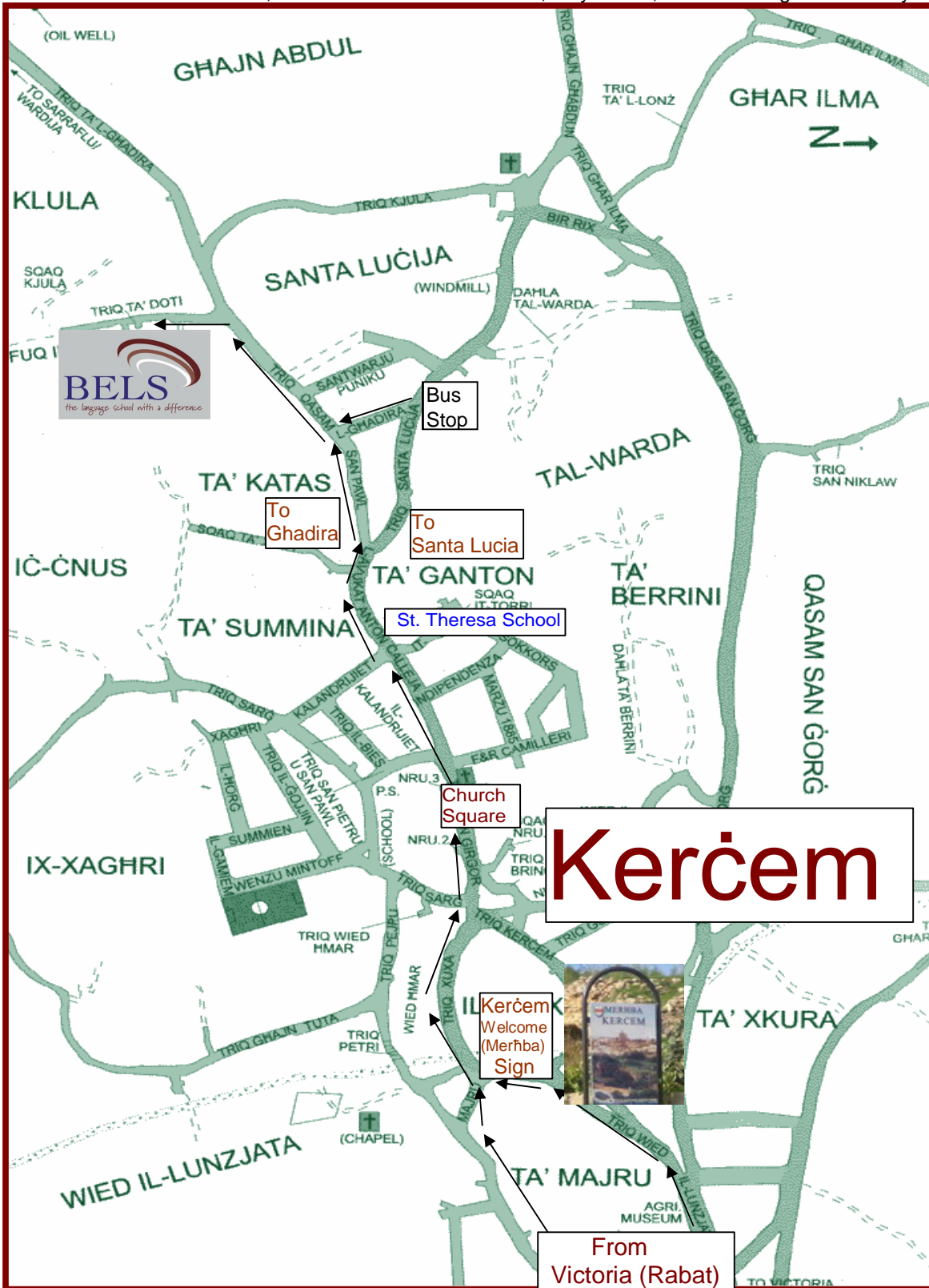


HOW TO FIND BELS

We are situated in a country lane known as Triq Ta' Doti, on the outskirts of the village of Kercem. Enter the village of Kercem, heading for the church. Drive past the church and continue straight along this road, passing houses and St Theresa school. Continue heading for Ghadira/Santa Lucia, and then take the left-hand road heading towards Ghadira). The houses then finish and the road is simply a narrow road between stone walls. Take a left in the intersection, B.E.L.S. is 100 meters ahead, on your left, set behind a gated archway



PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The Bus Terminus in Gozo is in Maingate Street, Victoria. You can find out which bus goes where by asking the Tourist Office at Victoria (Tel: 21561419); at Mġarr Harbour (near landing pier) (Tel: 21553343), or a bus driver. Most routes are circular, starting and finishing in Victoria. For bus times, visit belsmalta.com - links section

AIRPORT SHUTTLE BUS

This is a direct bus service from Malta International Airport (MIA) to Gozo ferry pier (Cirkewwa). For shuttle bus times, visit www.belsmalta.com - links section

TAXIS are generally white. It is advisable to check the fare with your driver before starting out. You can obtain details of approximate fares between various locations from the Tourist Office. BELS offers a taxi service, from anywhere to anywhere on Gozo at 12 Euros.

GOZO FERRY SERVICES TO MALTA

Ferries operate a regular service for cars and foot passengers between Gozo and Malta. The ships leave Mġarr (Gozo) and arrive at Ċirkewwa (Malta), from where buses to Valletta are available. The crossing takes about 25 minutes. Ferries generally depart every 45 minutes, but please confirm the timetable details by calling the Gozo Channel Company on 21243694/5. There is also recorded information on 21556016. Round trip fares are currently €4.60 per adult and €14.00 per driver and car. Fares are subject to change. For ferry times, visit belsmalta.com - links section

SEA PLANE SERVICES TO MALTA

You may have arrived on the island by sea plane service between Valletta harbour and Mġarr harbour. If so, your return journeys will normally be by the same method. For those who arrived by ferry and who wish to try a sea plane flight for their return trip, please ask for details and cost from the school administrator. For sea plane times, visit belsmalta.com links section

CURRENCY

As from January 2008 the Maltese unit of currency will be the Euro. The is divided into 100 cents. Banknotes are issued in seven denominations: 5,10,20,50,100, 200 and 500. Euro cheques, travellers' cheques and major credit cards (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Access) are widely accepted.

BANKS

Bank of Valletta (BoV) tel no 21551113.

Winter Banking Hours: (October 01 to June 14) are Mon 08.30 - 12.45 hrs, Tue/Wed/Thur 08.00 – 13.15 hrs, Fri 08.00 to 15.30 hrs, Sat 08.00 – 11.30.

Summer Banking Hours: (June 15 to September 30) are Mon to Thur 08.00 – 13.15 hrs, Fri 08.00 – 15.30 hrs, Sat 08.15 – 11.30 hrs.

Saturday business hours of bank branch are subject to changes.

HSBC tel no 21556266

Winter Banking Hours: (October 01 to June 14) are Mon. to Fri 08.30 - 12.30 hrs, Tue & Fri also 14.30 – 16.30 hrs, Sat 08.00 – 11.30.

Summer Banking Hours: (June 15 to September 30) are Mon. to Fri 08.30 - 12.30 hrs, Fri also 14.30 – 16.30 hrs, Sat 08.00 – 11.30.

SHOPS AND CHEMISTS

Shops are usually open between 09.00 to 19.00 hrs, although many close between 13.00 and 16.00 hrs. Most shops are closed on Sundays and Public Holidays.

There is an open market in Gozo. It is in Victoria at It-Tokk (Main Square). For local handicrafts try Ta'Dbiegi Crafts Village near Gharb. Gozo Glass is also located in Gharb and is worth a visit. Local knitwear is made in the home and is very cheap compared to prices abroad. Gozo lace is famous and you can buy this almost everywhere. Try shops at Xlendi and Marsalforn. Hagglng is not necessary the market price is what you pay. Major credit cards are accepted in most shops.

Most towns have a chemist open during usual shopping hours. On Sundays and Public Holidays chemists are open on a roster basis and details can be obtained from the local newspaper or from the pharmacies themselves.

RECOMMENDED CLOTHING

Visitors will need the lightest possible clothes for Summer (June to September) and warm cloths for winter (December to March). A warm jacket is recommended on Winter evenings.

TELEPHONES

Tele-cards for use in public telephone booths can be bought from many shops.. These card phones are gradually replacing older coin-operated phones. Most public telephone boxes contain instructions in English for making a call. Low-cost international phone calls, with the use of special purpose phone cards may be made from all telephones

POSTAL SERVICES

Postage stamps can be obtained from post offices and from many shops and hotels. The main post office is at 129 Republic Street, Victoria and there is another at St. Anthony Street, Mgarr. The current price for mailing a post card (max 20 grs) throughout Europe is 37c, 52c to the United States & Australia and 63c to China. Mailboxes in Gozo and Malta are red.

TELEVISION & RADIO

Maltese television programs feature a number of British and American productions and daily news bulletins in English. Radio Malta transmits daily on two frequencies: 999 KHz (MW) and 93.7 MHz (VHF/FW). Italian television is received in Malta and there are also some 55 digital cable channels.

ELECTRICITY

The electricity supply is 220 volts, single phase, 50 cycles. The 13-amp, three pin rectangular sockets are used on the Maltese Islands.

RELIGION

The Maltese and the Gozitans alike are Roman Catholics, and are devoutly religious, but the Maltese constitution guarantees freedom of worship.

Places of worship besides local parish churches:

Ta' Pinu Sanctuary, Gharb.

Cathedral of the Assumption, the Citadel, Victoria.

Greek Orthodox Church, South Street, Valletta.

Anglican Church, Independence Square Valletta.

Muslim Mosque, Corradino Hill, Paola, Malta.

CIMEMAS

The Citadel Cinemas (tel 21559955) project two different films every evening. Audience tends to increase considerably on week-ends. Films are British, American and European.

DRIVING IN GOZO & MALTA

Booking a car can be a fairly inexpensive and enjoyable way to see the island and you can also take your hired car to Malta if you wish.

If you have not pre-booked a vehicle, our school administrator will arrange this for you. You will need to produce an International driver's license. Comprehensive insurance, local taxes, collision and theft damage waiver are all included in the price. You will have to pay locally for fuel and any extra driver coverage or additional personal accident Insurance that is required.

Please don't forget that strict laws and high penalties for drinking and driving are enforced. Seatbelts are compulsory (also on the back seats) and must be worn at all times. Carry your drivers' license, insurance, passport and rental documents with you when driving. Many petrol stations are closed on Sundays and only a few stations offer 24 hour self service machines, so ensure that you have fuel for the weekend.

The standard of main roads is good, but rural lanes can be very uneven and it is easy to get lost, even on an island as small as Gozo! Maps are available from the school administrator, newsagents, bookshops and your car rental operator.

Please observe parking regulations in Gozo and Malta. Any vehicles parked illegally will either be clamped, towed away or get ticketed. Tickets have to be paid within 7 days at the local council. Cars will be towed away if parked in any "Tow Away Zone".

Bicycles & Scooters are also a great way to enjoy the island and the school administrator can assist you in securing a safe and well-maintained two-wheeler.

In case of a road accident please contact the local wardens.

SWIMMING

Swimming is free almost everywhere. On Gozo, the best sandy beach is at Ramla Bay. Isolated San Blass Bay is unspoiled. You can also swim at the Inland Sea (Dwerja), Marsalforn, Xlendi Bay, and at Hondoq ir-Rummien, Qala. Water sports are available at several locations

CLIMATE

| Monthly averages over a 30 year period Month | Hours of sunshine | Rainfall in mm. | Temperature Celsius ° | | Sea Temperature Celsius ° |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------|---------------------------------|
| | | | Max. | Min. | |
| January | 5.46 | 90.1 | 15.1 | 9.5 | 14.5 |
| February | 6.36 | 60.8 | 15.3 | 9.3 | 14.5 |
| March | 7.33 | 44.7 | 16.5 | 10.2 | 15.5 |
| April | 8.46 | 24.0 | 18.8 | 11.9 | 16.1 |
| May | 9.99 | 8.9 | 23.1 | 15.1 | 18.4 |
| June | 11.23 | 3.8 | 27.4 | 18.6 | 21.1 |
| July | 12.15 | 0.9 | 30.2 | 21.2 | 24.5 |
| August | 11.36 | 8.8 | 30.6 | 21.8 | 25.6 |
| September | 9.00 | 40.4 | 27.8 | 20.4 | 25.0 |
| October | 7.22 | 123.6 | 23.8 | 17.2 | 22.2 |
| November | 6.5 | 76.8 | 20.0 | 13.9 | 19.5 |
| December | 5.2 | 100.2 | 16.6 | 11.1 | 16.7 |

FISHING

Depending on the time of year and which fish are currently being caught around the islands, a fishing trip can be arranged for you, through our leisure coordinator, which will provide you with hours of fun, scenery, and maybe even a prize catch or two.

WALKING

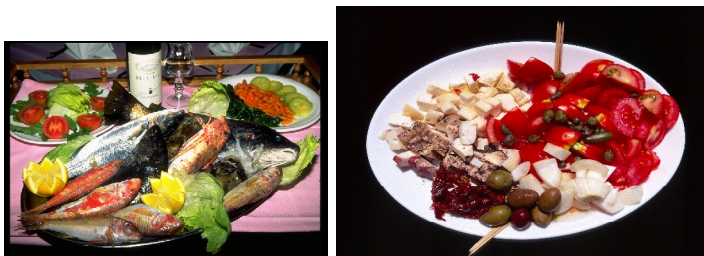
Gozo is hillier than Malta and offers good rural walks. See the map given in your welcome pack for suggested routes.

WATER SPORTS & DIVING

Water sports and activities are offered in specific beaches around Gozo. You can enjoy some excellent snorkelling in the crystal clear waters and you can also hire jet skis or boats from merchants along the coast. Check with the BELS administrator to get more information about any of these activities. The water around Gozo offers some of the best diving in the Mediterranean, combined with excellent underwater scenery and a warm sea temperature. Recommended sites in Gozo are Dwerja Point, Reqqa Point and Mgarr ix-Xini. The water is also clear enough for snorkelling. Equipment can be bought or rented locally. Costs are reasonable and a full range of PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) and BSAC (British Sub-Aqua Club) courses are available from beginner to dive leader standard.

A Medical certificate of fitness is required before you start any diving course. The school administrator can arrange this. Please remember that you must have adequate Insurance cover before diving.

EATING AND DRINKING



Bars, restaurants and cafes are often open from 09.00 hours until after midnight although this obviously varies according to the location, type of establishment and time of the year. Some bars are closed during the afternoon. Gozo offers a wide range of food with many international dishes as well as local specialties.

Food is locally produced and sold by street vendors such as greengrocers and fishmongers. Maltese bread (Hobza) with its crisp crust and soft inside is delicious. Many menus are similar to those in Italy, although British influence is also obvious.

Minestra is a local and thicker version of the Italian minestrone and almost a meal in itself. Fresh tomato and fish soups are also popular. Timpana is a delicious flaky pastry filled with macaroni, minced meat, onion, aubergines, eggs and grated cheese.

Lampuki is the renowned local fish and is served grilled, as a casserole or in a pie. Swordfish, squid, grouper and tuna are also common. Fish served "alla Maltese" will be cooked in a tomato and green pepper sauce.

Bragioli (beef olives) are tasty. They comprise thin steak slices topped with a mixture of bacon, garlic, olives and parsley, and are bound with breadcrumbs and egg. The slices are then rolled and simmered in stock and wine.

Fenek (Rabbit) is the local speciality and it is fried, stewed or made as a casserole. The Maltese have a sweet tooth and you will find plenty of pastries and ice creams in most restaurants and cafes. For a snack, try pastizzi, a flaky pastry with a ricotta or pea and onion filling. Gozo's own cheese Gbejna (made from goats' milk) is available fresh, dried and peppered or pickled.

Malta and Gozo have some low-priced and palatable red and white wines such as La Vallett, Delicata, Lachryma Vitis, Marsovin Special Reserve and Meridiana. Some local wines have quite a high alcoholic content so be careful, especially in the sun. Gozo's Ggantija wines are sweet and powerful. Malta has its own local beer, brewed by Farsons. They are Hop Leaf pale ale, darker Blue Label and Cisk Lager & Cisk Export. A popular locally produced soft drink is Kinnie and is made from oranges and herbs and is a thirst-quenching alternative to Coca-Cola.

HEALTH

If you need a doctor or medicine urgently, ask the receptionist at your hotel or if you are staying at a host family, ask your host mother. The School Administrator at BELS may also be of assistance.

*The emergency telephone numbers for an Ambulance is 196, Police 191 and Fire Services 199. The international number **112** for emergencies is also in use. Kindly state that the **emergency is in Gozo.***

The Main Hospital in Gozo is the Gozo General Hospital in Victoria. Tel: 21561600.
PLEASE TAKE YOUR PASSPORT WITH YOU. We also recommend that all students travelling from EU countries apply for and bring with them an E111 card; this will allow them to benefit from medical attention free of charge on the Maltese islands.



TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is recommendable to take out such an insurance policy before your departure to Malta. If you are unfortunate enough to lose any item of value during your holiday, you will almost certainly be unable to make an insurance claim on your return if you have failed to report the matter to the local authorities. Therefore, it is essential that such loss is immediately reported to the police and a report requested for use by you or your insurers, in case of future claims. Please check the conditions of your Insurance coverage.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM GOZO

Due to recent security checks at most European airports, it is advisable to be at the airport two hours prior to the flight departure time.

Drugs are illegal on the Maltese Islands.

Alcohol & Tobacco is not permitted for personas under the age of 16.

Smoking is NOT acceptable indoors and a fine can be implemented.

FESTAS & PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

As in most Mediterranean countries, festas (which are celebrated every year) are considered very special events. The Maltese people consider these feasts to be an important part of the island's culture and its people.

In every town and village, the parish church is dedicated to a patron saint. Every year the patron saint is honoured with festivities that last up to five days. These religious events are celebrated with church services and religious processions whereby the statue of the patron saint is carried through the village streets. There are also outdoor festivities normally including loud firework displays and band marches. The parish churches are decorated with damask and silverware.

| | |
|---|--|
| 10 th February Public Holiday | FEAST OF ST. PAUL'S SHIPWRECK This feast commemorates the shipwreck of St. Paul in Malta in 60AD, an event registered in The Acts of the Apostles. |
| 19 th March Public Holiday | FEAST OF ST. JOSEPH This feast is celebrated in Rabat. |
| 31 st March National Holiday | FREEDOM DAY A commemorative ceremony held at the War Memorial at Floriana. During the afternoon, traditional regatta boat races are held in the Grand Harbour, Malta. |
| | Good Friday & Easter Sunday. |
| 1 st May Public Holiday | ST. JOSEPH THE WORKER |
| 7 th June National Holiday | SETTE GIUGNO Commemorative Ceremony at Palace Square. Valletta, in remembrance of the incidents of the 7 th June 1919. |
| 29 th June National Holiday | MNARJA – FEAST OF ST. PETER & ST. PAUL is a traditional folkloristic event. The musical programme at Buskett Gardens (Malta) continues until the early hours. Band marches and horse racing at Saqqajja Hill, Rabat form part of the Feast. |
| 15 th August Public Holiday | FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION Celebrations are held in Victoria, Gozo and in Mqabba, Qrendi, Gudja, Attard and Mosta – Malta. |
| 8 th September National Holiday | OUR LADY OF VICTORIES Commemorative ceremony in Valletta, celebrating the lifting of the 1565 siege against the Turks, the capitulation of the French in 1800 and the siege of the Axis powers in 1943. This feast is celebrated in Xaghra, Gozo. A regatta is normally held at the Grand Harbour. |
| 21 st September. National Holiday | INDEPENDENCE DAY A programme of activities in various parts of the island celebrating Malta's independence since 1964. |
| 8 th December Public Holiday | THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION This feast is held In Victoria, Gozo and Cospicua, Malta. |
| 13 th December National Holiday | Republic Day In 1974 Malta became a Republic and this is celebrated with horse racing at Marsa, Malta as well as other events. |
| 25 th December Public Holiday | Christmas Day. |

GOZO or **Ghawdex** (pronounced “au-desch”) is the Maltese name for the beautiful island of Gozo, with quite a different personality from Malta. Greener and more fertile, and reflecting more of a way of life based on agriculture and fishing. Life on Gozo is slower and more relaxed than that on Malta. Despite increasing tourism, the island retains an atmosphere that has enchanted many visitors one of whom was Ulysses, who was supposedly enticed to stay for seven years by the nymph, Calypso. The people are friendly; with a fairly laid-back attitude to life that readily appeals to most visitors.

Gozo is approximately 14.5 kilometres long and approximately 7.5 kilometres wide, with a shore line of 43 kilometres and a population of around 28,000. Every little town and village has a parish church and not a day goes by without the sound of church bells ringing out across the rolling hills and terraced fields. The main port is Mgarr where regular ferry crossings are made to Malta. There is also a Heliport in Xewkija. All the roads are linked to the capital, Victoria, and both buses and private cars, find themselves going in and out of town on most journeys.

The official languages are English and Maltese. Almost all the locals speak English. Maltese is a Semitic language written with Roman script combining elements of Italian, French and English.

The following is a brief history of Gozo. It goes back to 5000 BC, when a group from Sicily succeeded in crossing over on some form of sea-craft. These people who first colonised Gozo in the **Neolithic Period** (5000 - 4100 BC) lived in caves around il-Mixta on Ghajn Abdul. This suggests that Gozo might have been inhabited earlier than Malta. The **Temple Period** (4100 – 2500 BC) represents an important turning point in the cultural evolution of prehistoric man. The greatest undertaking of the pre-Phoenician Gozitans are undoubtedly Ġgantija Temples (3600 – 3000 BC). These temples are documented to be the oldest free-standing temples in the world. After the disappearance of the temple people, the island was repopulated by an entire different race. **The Bronze Age** (2500 – 700 BC). Unlike their predecessors, these people were war-like people who used copper and bronze tools and weapons. Among the interesting remains, there are three dolmens on the Ta' Ċenċ Plateau. **The Phoenicians and Carthaginians** (700 – 218 BC) the Phoenicians attracted by local harbours, establish a colony in Malta and Gozo. Around 550 BC the Phoenicians of Carthage took over and the Carthaginians, as they were better known, remained masters until 218 BC. At the beginning of the second Punic War in 218 BC, the Carthaginians were ousted by **the Romans** (218 – AD 535). In Gozo they created a municipium, autonomous of that of Malta with a republican sort of Government that minted its own coins too. **The Byzantines** (535 – 870 AD) under the dominion of the East Roman Empire took over the islands. Very little is known of the Byzantine times in Gozo. In 870 – 1127 **the Arabs** became sole masters of the Maltese Archipelago. The Arab's stay is evidenced by many place names and family names and especially by the name they gave to the island of Gozo – Ghawdex, that survives to this day. **The European Domination** (1127 – 1530) led by Count Roger the Norman freed the islands from the Arabs. In 1127 the Norman's took formal possession of the islands and hence shared the same fate of Sicily passing under the rule of Swabia (1194), Angou (1266) and Aragon (1282). Around 1397, the Gozitans created the Universitas Gaudisii – a corporation to defend local interests. From then onwards, the Gozitans fought hard to maintain their ancient privileges and freedom. **Knights of St. John** (1530 – 1798). During this era the islands passed under the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, a chivalrous religious order officially founded in Jerusalem in 1133. The island suffered the worst siege in history. The citadel was besieged by the Turks of Sinan Oasha. The entire population of about 5000 was taken as slaves. It was to be another 150 years before the knights contemplated the reality of an undefended Gozo. As a result, it is said a reluctance to communicate information creped irremediably into the Gozitan character. **The French** (1798 -1800) On June 10th 1798, the French under the General Napoleon Bonaparte, ousted the Knights from Malta. Their rule in Gozo was short-lived. In September the people rose against the French, who, on the 18th October 1799 surrendered to the Gozitans. Gozo enjoyed a short period of autonomy until 5th September 1800 when the British took the Maltese Islands, under their protection. **The British** (1800 – 1964) slowly transformed the islands into a fortress colony. Its resistance to the Axis bombardments during the Second World War is legendary. Malta & Gozo became a sovereign independent state within the Commonwealth on the 21st September 1964. On 13th December 1974 Malta became a Republic. On the 1st May 2004 the Maltese Islands became part of the European Union.

Some places of interest in Gozo

VICTORIA (RABAT)



This is a view from our terrace.

Gozo's pleasant capital was renamed Victoria by the British in honour of the Queen's diamond jubilee in 1887, but Gozitans still use the Arabic name of Rabat. The 'hub' of activity on most mornings is the market square, It-Tokk (Meeting Place). Although the goods will not be of great interest to tourists, the tiny alleys and the little houses of the old town, immediately behind the square, are well worth a visit. The baroque St. George's Church (1678) in the square of the same name is particularly elaborate, featuring an impressive painting of St. George slaying a dragon.

The Citadel or 'Gran Castello' houses the cathedral with its very ornate interior and impressive "trompe d'oeil" ceiling painting by Antonio Manuele. This provides an amazing impression of how the dome would have looked if lack of funds had not prevented its completion. Behind the cathedral is a museum containing paintings and church ornaments. Climb up the rampart steps in the cathedral courtyard for spectacular views across the whole island. The present bastions date back to the times of Grandmaster Wignacourt (1600). The dome boasts a diameter of some 80 feet and is one of the largest in the world and comparable to that in the more noted church of Mosta in Malta. The Venetian-style church was constructed mainly through voluntary labour around the old parish church, which was only removed upon completion of the new building.

XLENDI



With a tiny sandy and pebbly beach, tucked away in the south under towering cliffs, this is a pleasant fishing village with a charm of its own. It is an ideal spot for a meal along the small seafront promenade. There is also some excellent rock bathing if you climb the stairs and follow the path cut into the steep rocky promontory on the right-hand side of the bay. Xlendi is a great place for enjoying a cappuccino at one of the many cafes, while the waves roll in at your feet just a few meters away.

TA' PINU

This massive Neo-Romanesque building on the road between Gharb and Ghammar is a destination of pilgrimage for the whole of Malta. Life-size statues representing the Way of the Cross surround the church. It was built in the 1920's to replace the earlier Chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption, which was cared for by Pilippono Gauci (nicknamed Pinu). The church's claim to fame is its apparently miraculous power. In 1833, a local woman, Carmela Grima heard the voice of the Virgin urging her to pray for a friend's dying mother. The women miraculously recovered and other miracles followed.



ĠGANTIJA PREHISTORIC TEMPLES



Near the road from Victoria to Xaghra are the two ancient Ggantija Temples dating from around 2800BC. Excavated in 1972, the site comprises a main and minor temple and a perimeter wall consisting of huge stones. One may note the ingenuity displayed by the primitives who built the temples, that may claim were constructed by "giants" – hence the name. You can obtain an information booklet in various languages about the site for a small fee on your visit.

XAGHRA

In the sprawling village of Xaghra, and worth a short visit, are Xerri's Grotto and Ninu's Grotto. These two prehistoric caves feature stalagmite and stalactite formations. Nearby is Ramla Bay, an ideal spot for swimming with the best sandy beach on Gozo. Calypso's Cave offers a marvellous panoramic view over Ramla Bay's red sandy beach.



DWERJA

Not far from the village of San Lawrenz you will find Dwerja Bay. This is a spectacular area of natural beauty with some stunning views. At the entrance is Fungus Rock, so named because of its mushroom-like shape. Apparently a rare pungent herb that was wrongly thought to cure dysentery thrived on its top. Nearby is the Inland Sea, or Il-Qawra. It is an eroded limestone hollow that has created an inland harbour joined to the sea by a tunnel through the rocks. Pictured below is the Azure window, one of the island's most remarkable landmarks, also at this bay. The area arguably offers Gozo's finest swimming in clear blue waters. One may enjoy some excellent walks on the cliff tops as well.



XEWKIJA



This is a small agricultural town named after the thistle that grows wild in the surrounding countryside. Xewkija is most famous for its imposing new church which was ingeniously built around the old parish church of St. John the Baptist and which dwarfs all other buildings in the area. Its impressive dome is one of the largest in Europe and stands 6 meters taller than that of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

Ghajnsielem & Mgarr

Ghajnsielem lies just above Mgarr harbour, the one real port of the island, at which the Gozo-Malta ferry boat calls. The village began in fact developing when Mgarr became the principal and the best guarded port of Gozo. Yet the village has been important since prehistoric times with a Megalithic Temple and an important Stone Circle, together with many other sites of interest of past and present times.



COMINO



Comino is the smallest island within the Maltese archipelago and is one of the only places left in the Mediterranean with no cars. It has an area of 1.5 sq. kms. and there are about eight residents living on the Island. Traffic is inexistent and noise is the exception rather than the rule.

An idyllic place, that provides a sanctuary for wildlife and is covered with wild flowers. Botanists and lovers of nature will enjoy it's natural beauty and peacefulness. Comino takes its name from the cummin herb, which is widely found together with many other fragrant plants. Although hardly any part of Comino is out of reach for the strong walker, some caution is recommended if paths are taken near the cliff edges due to overhanging rocks.

The island enjoys a true, 'get away from it all' atmosphere and is a haven for snorkellers and scuba divers. The Blue Lagoon is particularly popular with visitors. Boat trips from Mġarr to Comino operate throughout the year although accommodation on the island is only available from April to October.



Malta

here are some suggestions....

VALLETTA



Jean de la Vallette, French Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, built Valletta, the capital, after the Great Siege of 1565 where the might of the Turkish Empire suffered its worst defeat in trying to eradicate the Order. The baroque-style building, many of which survived the blitz of the Second World War, fully reflect Malta's rich heritage of archaeology, history, architecture, art and culture.

The walled-in city stands high above sea level on a peninsula which is flanked by the famous Grand Harbour on the south side and Marsamxett Harbour to the north. Its streets are set in a grid-like pattern which makes it relatively easy to find your way about, but do take a good street map to help you get your bearings. Be sure to visit Valletta during the day, for it tends to close down in the evenings. Cafes are mostly Italian in style. Try Café Cordina, Eddies and Café Premier, all located in Republic Square and ideal for watching the world go by. Restaurants tend to be expensive and many do not open at night.

OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST IN VALLETTA



The National Museum of Archaeology – The most important collection covering Maltese archaeology is housed in the Auberge de Provence, Valletta. Collections of prehistoric pottery, sculpture, statuettes, stone implements and personal ornaments recovered from the Maltese Megalithic temples and other prehistoric sites are exhibited. *Admission is charged.*

The National Museum of Fine Arts – This 18th century palace houses paintings, sculptures, furniture and other exhibits connected with the Order of St. John. Works by Caravaggio, Tintoretto and Stromeo are permanently displayed and Maltese artists specially reserve a section for their works. Occasionally concerts and lectures are also held here. *Admission is charged.*

St. John's Co-Cathedral and Museum – St. John's Co-Cathedral is historically and artistically one of the most important monuments on the island. Its impressive façade dominates St. John's Square. It was built between 1573 and 1577 to the design of Gerolamo Cassar (1520-1586). "The Beheading of St. John", Caravaggio's masterpiece, hangs in the Oratory. The Museum houses a unique collection of Flemish tapestries, silver objects and Church vestments. *Admission is charged for the museum only.*

Palace of the Grand Masters – This grand and beautiful Magisterial Palace was completed in 1574 and is a treasure-trove of antiques, including portraits of the Grand Masters of the Order and European monarchs. It includes interesting furniture and other works of art. The main hall is decorated with frescoes depicting episodes from the Great Siege. *Admission is charged for the State Rooms.*

The Armoury – The Armoury of the Knights is in two halls in the palace. Arms and armour of various periods and descriptions are displayed. *Admission is charged.*

The Wartime Experience – This is a spectacular 45 min visual, light and sound experience that includes original still and movie material illustrating how the people of Malta and the Islands' defenders wrote one of the most glorious chapters in world history. The Wartime Experience is at Palace Square, Valletta. Shows are on the hour from 10.00am to 3.00pm. *Admission is charged.*

The Malta Experience – This is a fascinating audiovisual spectacular that takes visitors through Malta's turbulent and exciting history. *Admission is charged.*

The Lascaris War Room – This is the original RAF fighter control room from which all operations against the Germans and Italians were planned and initiated during World War Two. The rooms have been set up as they would have been in the war, below the bastions. *Admission is charged.*

Upper Barraka Gardens – These were originally the private gardens of Italian knights. This site commands magnificent panoramic views of the Grand Harbour and the Cottonera region across from it.

The Knight Hospitallers – Situated near the historic Fort St. Elmo, this visit will give you an insight into the chivalrous world of the Hospitaller Knight. Walking through this authentic site, you will be able to go back in time and travel across 700 years of history. *Admission is charged.*

MDINA

Malta's "Old Capital", Mdina, dates as far back as AD 870 and has tenaciously held the many chapters of the island's history within its walls. Standing atop the highest point on the island, Mdina commands some of the most panoramic views of Malta from its ancient bastions. The narrow winding streets are a joy to stroll through although they can be somewhat bewildering at first. There is good reason for this as they served to confuse its invading foes and also to keep the city cool in the long hot summers. You may be surprised to know that for a place that is so quiet, the city is actually fully inhabited. Mdina is also known as "**The Silent City**", and its residents ensure that silence reigns supreme. Only residents' cars are allowed in the city and the sounding of horns is banned. Catch the bus no 80 from Valletta for Mdina.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN MDINA

St. Paul's Cathedral – This 11TH Century Sicula – Norman cathedral was destroyed by an earthquake in 1693 and the present Cathedral built four years later is believed to stand on the site originally occupied by the House of Publius, the Roman Governor during St. Paul's stay on the island. The Cathedral Museum has many treasures including a fine collection of Durer woodcuts and paintings.

Museum of Natural History – Situated at Vilhena Palace in Mdina, this museum houses seven sections with both local and foreign collections including skeletal anatomy, fish, insects, shells, birds, fossils and geology. Admission is charged.

Mdina Dungeons – Mdina has its own “Chamber of Horrors” in the old cells beneath the Halls of Justice. Twenty or so waxwork pieces bring to life the numerous implements of torture used to extract information from the imprisoned. Admission is charged.

There are a few relatively inexpensive places to eat in Mdina such as the “Fontanella” which has a unique setting above a small courtyard with spectacular views from the north bastion. The “Medina” is a moderately priced restaurant offering good food in a relaxed courtyard setting and “Casa Mdina” is a souvenir shop, which also offers good value snacks.

RABAT

Rabat is situated outside Mdina and is well known for its honeycomb-like network of catacombs. In Roman times the Christians were not allowed to bury their dead within the city walls, therefore, they created a virtual necropolis that was hewn out of solid rock. The bus no 80 from Valletta will stop at Rabat en route to Mdina.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN RABAT

St. Agatha and St. Paul's Catacombs – The catacombs at Rabat are typical of the underground Christians' cemeteries that were common in the 4th century. The characteristic feature of the Maltese catacombs is the presence of round tables known as “Agape Tables”. The museum is also worth a visit. Guides here are free but a donation is anticipated. St. Agatha's catacomb includes detailed frescoes of the saint. Guided tours only.

Roman Villa and Museum – Evidence of the wealth and magnificence of Malta during the Roman rule (218 BC up to 870 AD) may be seen here, including some fine mosaics. *Admission is charged.*

At St. Paul's Grotto – St. Paul reputedly lived in this cave beneath the church during his 3 month stay on the island after his shipwreck in 60 A.D.

Buskett Gardens – These beautiful public gardens include a vast citrus orchard and vineyards and are well worth a visit for a peaceful afternoon stroll in the shade. The Roadhouse restaurant nearby is well known for good and inexpensive food.

Verdala Palace – This is situated on a hilltop overlooking Buskett Gardens. Grand Master Verdala built it in 1588 as a summer residence. Following the recent restoration work, this historic building is now used as a Government guest palace. It is open to visitors from Tuesday to Friday and admission is free. Guided tours only.

Just down the hill from Rabat going towards Siggiewi is a good open-air nightclub called ‘Ta Gainpula’ which is set within an old converted farmhouse. It is only open during the summer months and it is best to ask for directions, as it is quite a way off the beaten track.