



Gozo: The Magic of Calypso's Isle.

www.visitmalta.com/gozo






An island of mystery, history and faith

Gozo's charm is apparent the moment you step off the 25 minute ferry journey which brings you over from Malta. The intimate setting of a small, island community with a long tradition of warm hospitality will make you feel at home within moments of arriving. Greener, more rural and just one third the size of Malta, Gozo moves to a strikingly different, more leisurely, rhythm than its sister island.

Our island is steeped in myth. According to legend, this was Homer's isle of Ogygia, where the nymph Calypso held the Greek hero Odysseus as her companion for seven years. Today though, visitors willingly surrender themselves to Calypso's charms as they gaze over the glimmering red sand of Ramla Bay from the vantage point at the cave which, legend has it, served as the nymph's home.





Mystery surrounds the prehistoric stone builders who left us the awe-inspiring temples of Ġgantija, believed to be the world's oldest free-standing structure, and today a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Ġgantija temples take their name from the Maltese term "ġgant" meaning "giant", a name which testifies to the size and height of the megaliths from which the temples are built. There's no mystery about the Romans' impact on our island though. Calling it Gaulos, they considered Gozo important enough to be administered separately from Malta, and even gave us the right to mint our own coins.



Impressive and inspirational

Gozo's millennial megalithic structures probably served as the inspiration for the beautiful and monumental churches which dwarf the villages in the centre of which they stand. The most impressive of these is probably the church of Xewkija, a major landmark which boasts one of the world's largest domes. The island's administrative capital, Victoria, hosts two of our most magnificent churches, the Cathedral and the Basilica of St George.

The Cathedral, located within the imposing Citadel on the site of a Roman temple dedicated to Juno, is a fine baroque structure built entirely from local limestone. You will be surprised to discover that a 1739 painting of a dome on the interior of the church, a masterpiece in the art of perspective, successfully disguises the fact that the ceiling is actually flat. The basilica dedicated to St George, on the other hand, lies at the heart of the old town of Victoria. Among its highlights are the paintings on the dome by Battista Conti of Rome.

Another church which is spiritually very important to the Gozitan community is the Basilica of Ta' Pinu. Located in the open countryside, Ta' Pinu and its adjacent sanctuary stand as a beacon of religious faith, attracting devotees from all over the world.





Discover the beauty of Gozo

To really appreciate the beauty and unique character of our island, you should be prepared to stray from the beaten tourist track and explore its villages, its rugged landscape and spectacular coastline. There's always something to discover on Calypso's Isle, whatever the season.

Gozo in its entirety is excellent walking country and the island is criss-crossed by tracks and lanes. Between autumn and late spring, Gozo's countryside bursts into life revealing an incredible wealth of flora and fauna. The overall greenery quickly subdues the golden yellow summer scenery as early as the first rain showers of September which quench the dry soil.

Among the most popular areas for walking are Ta' Dbiegi near San Lawrenz, the Ta' Ġordan Lighthouse near Ghasri, Hondoq ir-Rummien near Qala and the San Blas valley near Nadur. However, make sure not to miss out on a visit to nature's majestic creations, the Dwejra Azure Window, the nearby Inland Sea and the fishing village of Xlendi. Ta' Čenč, with its typical Mediterranean scrubland vegetation and imposing cliffs, is a particular favourite with nature lovers.

The sea around the island is warm and clear, and there are dive sites to suit all tastes and levels. The red golden sands of Ramla Bay are perfect for families and swimming, while the spectacular Blue Hole beneath the Azure Window is a must for diving lovers. The coastline and surrounding waters also offer opportunities for sailing, windsurfing, kayaking and fishing.

Gozo offers various unspoilt bays, coves and sandy beaches that make for wonderful sunbathing or water sports. For swimming, you can choose between secluded rocky inlets or popular bays and beaches. Snorkelling and diving can also prove to be an exhilarating experience.





Where all roads lead to tranquillity

A tour of our island will reinforce the first impression you get once you set foot on the jetty at Mġarr Harbour, namely that life here seems to have stood still for generations. In fact, two words usually serve to describe the island's towns and villages: tranquil and picturesque. Authenticity is a hallmark of our character, and wherever you go you will find evidence of our attachment to our roots, whether this be our religious faith, our dialects, our affinity to the land or our traditions.

The hub of town and village life is the pjazza or square, which is also where you will find the local parish church. Though usually quiet during most of the year, these pjazzas come to life during our most important religious festivals, foremost among which is the festa dedicated to the local patron saint. The buildings around the main square tend to be the oldest and most picturesque, so do take the time to wander through the alleys and streets which branch out from the pjazza and admire the façades of old palazzos and town-houses, evocative corner niches and homely village shops. A typical itinerary should include the quaint and charming villages of Għarb, San Lawrenz, Għasri and Kerċem, as well as the larger localities of Xagħra, Sannat and Xewkija.

Approaching Victoria, or Rabat, the ancient and traditional name by which we still call Gozo's capital city, you will see its citadel rising steeply above the surrounding countryside. Given the superb views of the island that the impressive bastions command, a visit to this historic part of our capital is a must.

Apart from being the geographical heart of the island, Victoria is also the centre of everyday activity. Combining as it does the bustle of its market and shops with a relaxed atmosphere, it is a great place to watch us go about our day, especially in the morning when the main market square, It-Tokk, comes to life. A stroll around Victoria's market and narrow winding streets will lead you to stalls brimming with fresh fish, delicious fresh produce, cheeses and wines, antiques and crafts, fishing nets and knitwear. Victoria is also the Island's cultural hub, having not one but two opera houses, both hosting major international performances.





A feast of colours and flavours

Don't miss a visit to a local bakery, where you will find that we have further perfected the already renowned Maltese art of making the tastiest bread. We also produce some superb wines made from indigenous and international grape varieties. Moreover, we have developed a penchant for coming up with an exciting range of liquors made from practically any fruit found on the island, including pomegranates, peaches and prickly pears. Our farmers have also successfully managed to bring the natural goodness of genuine farm produce within easy reach of the visitor. Traditional peppered *ġbejniet* made from goat cheese remain a favourite, while our honey enjoys a reputation going back to Roman times. You can take back home jars of this delicacy, which along with others filled with cottage fruit jams, capers, olives, carob syrup and sun-dried tomatoes can be bought off the shelf in traditional grocer shops.

A visit to Gozo will also give you the opportunity to obtain some quality souvenirs. Crafts such as knitwear, basket-making and lace have a long history in Gozo, while others, such as silver filigree, jewellery and hand-blown glassware have become highly sought after by visitors to the island. Crafts centres, which bring together a wide spectrum of workshops and outlets, are a good place to browse and buy typical hand made products. Souvenir and gift shops around the island also offer a variety of items made by local artisans. For the best shopping, however, head to Victoria, which hosts colourful markets, a variety of family-run shops and a number of shopping centres featuring the best of local and international brands.

Being essentially rural in character, it comes as no surprise that a visit to Gozo will entail the sampling of some of the Mediterranean's tastiest and juiciest gastronomic delights. Your stay in Gozo will be a journey of discovery of the island's rich natural flavours. With an abundance of fresh organic produce and traditional farming, a generous supply of fresh fish and its very own gastronomic specialties, our island will never cease to surprise you. Gozo is well served by restaurants which offer the best of the rich and varied local cuisine, as well as quality cosmopolitan fare.





Many ways to relax

The sense of timelessness and apparent isolation which pervades Gozo makes it the ideal getaway. Although our beautiful beaches are natural magnets for those seeking to escape the hustle and bustle, leisurely walks in the countryside or through quaint village alleys are an enticing alternative. Getting around in Gozo is extremely stress-free, with good roads and a regular bus service linking the main localities. If you do get lost, we will be only too glad to direct you to the nearest main road.

Boat trips around the island offer many sights and easy access to beautiful beaches, some quite difficult to get to by car or on foot. From the sea, you can enjoy a very special view of the towering cliffs and the many coves and caves which have formed over the millennia, now home to various bird species and other wildlife. A day trip usually includes a stop at the mythical Blue Lagoon in Comino, which is world-renowned for its crystal clear waters.

Relaxation will also be a major consideration when selecting your accommodation in Gozo. Traditional countryside houses, most of which come equipped with a private swimming pool, are a popular option with visitors. However, if you really intend to pamper yourself, the island also offers a range of world class hotels specializing in wellness which are frequented by the rich and famous.





History, culture and much more

Whenever you decide to visit Gozo, there will always be something to look forward to. Our events calendar is replete with an array of cultural and other happenings to suit everybody's taste: from art and crafts exhibitions, folk festivals and opera nights, to religious feasts, sports events and nightclub gigs by local rock groups.

On the other hand, if you'd like to delve into our island's past don't miss out on a visit to some of the several small museums which showcase the island's rich history and culture. Many of these are located in Victoria's citadel, including the Gozo Museum of Archaeology, the National Science Museum, the Folklore Museum and the Old Prisons.

Should you happen to be in Gozo in the summer, be sure not to miss the experience of one of our festas. The passion which goes into these festivities is impressive even by Maltese standards, with beautifully decorated churches, band marches playing jolly tunes and delicious traditional food under an illuminated canopy of spectacular fireworks displays. Carnival in Gozo is generally a time for fun and colour, and the spontaneous celebrations in the village of Nadur are certain to be a memorable experience. For a more romantic evening taking in the fresh sea breeze, a stroll along the promenade in Marsalforn or Xlendi will be the perfect prelude to a waterside dinner.







Malta Tourism Authority
Auberge d'Italie
Merchants Street, Valletta
Tel.: (+356) 22915000

info@visitmalta.com
www.visitmalta.com/gozo

airmalta*com



GOZO

(Għawdex)



COMINO

(Kemmuna)

Landmark Index

- 01** Calypso's Cave
- 02** San Dimitri Chapel
- 03** Ta' Pinu Basilica
- 04** Citadel
- 05** Xlendi Tower
- 06** Ta' Ċenċ Cliffs
- 07** Xewkija Church
- 08** Toy Museum
- 09** Ġgantija Temples
- 10** Xagħra Circle
- 11** Belvedere
- 12** Santa Marija Tower



Main photography

Nathaniel Attard
Ted Attard
Daniel Cilia
Mario Galea
Rene Rossignaud
George Saguna
Clive Vella