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## Tourist Attractions in Malta and Gozo

The following pages are not meant to include a comprehensive list of **tourist attractions** to be found in the Maltese Islands – such a list would be too long and not make for very interesting reading. Nor will you find a detailed description of the tourist attractions mentioned.

Rather, these pages contain a **hotlist** of the top places to visit, grouped by theme and area, graded (our opinion!) and with a brief introduction of what the tourist is to expect – more information about these attractions can easily be found elsewhere on the Internet, a search is highly recommended to provide a better background to one's visit.

In many cases we also list attractions in the same area ("Also See") which are worth a drive-past or present a photo opportunity, if not a specifically planned visit.

### Top tourist attractions in Malta and Gozo:

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## **History - Historical Tourist Attractions in Malta and Gozo**

By far the largest number of tourist attractions fall under this category. Malta has been populated since the dawn of civilisation, and both man and beast have left their mark. From the fossils of long-extinct animal species at Ghar Dalam, up to the shell-scarred gunposts of World War Two, each period in between has contributed to the vast record of events that is called "Malta – the Island of History". Where possible these attractions have been listed in a geographically sequential order, to aid the planning of your tour.

### **South of Malta**

#### **Mnajdra and Hagar Qim Temples, Qrendi\*\*\*\***

The temple of Hagar Qim, excavated for the first time in 1839, dates from the Tarxien phase (c.3200-2500 BC). It stands on a hilltop overlooking the sea and the islet of Fifla and lies some 2km south-west of the village of Qrendi. Adjacent to Hagar Qim, further towards the cliff face, lies another remarkable temple site, Mnajdra. The surrounding area is designated a Heritage Park.

*Also See – "Xarolla" Windmill, Zurrieq.*

#### **Ghar Dalam Cave and Museum, Birzebugia\*\*\*\***

Sediments found in this cave, laid down when the valley was actually a river bed, are rich in remains of extinct prehistoric animal species.

*Also See – Borg In-Nadur Temple, Birzebugia; St Lucian Tower, Marsaxlokk; St. Thomas Fort, Marsascula; Salt Pans, Marsascula*

#### **Tarxien Temples, Tarxien\*\*\*\***

Megalithic Temples of an elaborate construction. Tarxien gave its name to the last temple period, which was from 3000 to 2500 BCE. The Tarxien temple complex turned out to be the richest deposit of prehistoric art objects on the Maltese islands. It was left untouched for thousands of years.

#### **Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, Paola\*\*\*\***

A Unesco World Heritage Listed Site, the Hypogeum is a subterranean structure excavated c. 2500 B.C., using cyclopean rigging to lift huge blocks of coralline limestone. Perhaps originally a sanctuary, it became a necropolis in prehistoric times.

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## **Fort Rinella – 100 Ton Gun\*\*\***

Fort Rinella is one of a series of four coastal batteries built by the British in Malta and in Gibraltar between the years 1878 and 1886, for the purpose of housing a massive Armstrong 100-ton gun.

*Also See – Fort Ricasoli; Kalkara Naval Cemetery; Zabbar Gate; Zabbar Church Museum*

## **City of Birgu (Vittoriosa)\*\*\***

This historic “city”, with its multitude of buildings dating to the 1700’s and picturesque, meandering streets, is well worth a visit.

## **Fort St Angelo, Vittoriosa\*\*\*\***

Fort St Angelo in Vittoriosa is a beautiful fort and was the headquarters of the Knights of the Order of St John.

*Also See – Maritime Museum, Vittoriosa Seafront; Folk Museum, Inquisitor’s Palace, Vittoriosa.*

## **City of Senglea\*\***

Senglea got its name from the man responsible for its fortifications, Grand Master Claude de La Sengle. Senglea was very badly damaged during WW2.

*Also See – Senglea Point Lookout (Gardjola); Fortifications around the Three Cities (Vittoriosa, Senglea, Cospicua); Kalkara; Churches in the Three Cities*

## **Central Malta**

### **Mdina\*\*\*\*\***

Mdina is known to many as a medieval, walled city. Its history, however, dates back more than 4000 years. Rabat can claim the origins of Maltese Christianity, the Apostle St Paul is said to have lived here after being shipwrecked on the Islands. Both Mdina and Rabat are fascinating to tour for their cultural and religious treasures.

### **Roman Villa, Rabat\*\*\***

The Roman Villa is situated just outside Mdina, and was excavated in 1881.

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## **St. Agatha's and St. Paul's Catacombs, Rabat\*\*\***

These catacombs are underground burial places, hewn out of the solid rock, and date to the 4th and 5th century.

*Also See - Verdala Palace, Buskett Gardens; "Cart Ruts", Clapham Junction, Limits of Buskett Gardens; Laferla Cross, limits of Siggiewi.*

## **Mosta Dome\*\*\***

The third largest unsupported dome in the world.

## **Wartime Shelters, Mosta\*\***

Provided cramped living quarters and shelter to the families living in the area, from the aerial bombardments of World War Two.

*Also See – Cumbo Tower, Mosta; St. Paul The Hermit Chapel in the Cave, Mosta; Speranza Chapel, Mosta; Fort Mosta; Victoria Lines.*

## **Wartime Shelters, Mgarr\*\***

Provided cramped living quarters and shelter to the families living in the area, from the aerial bombardments of World War Two.

*Also See – Fort Bingemma; Watchtowers along the coastline*

## **Palazzo Parisio, Naxxar\*\*\***

An opulent Palazzo built in 1773 by Grand Master Manoel de Vilhena.

*Also See – Parish Church, Naxxar; Fort Madliena, Limits of Naxxar; Captain's Tower, Naxxar; Gauci Tower, Naxxar; Restored WW2 Pill-Box, Targa Gap, Naxxar; Parish Church, Gharghur; 1935 Acoustic "Radar", Maghtab; Coastal Watchtowers, Bahar Ic-Caghaq.*

## **San Anton Palace and Gardens, Attard\*\*\***

Built by Grand Master Antoine de Paule, and currently the official residence of the President of Malta, San Anton Gardens are a haven of tranquillity and feature some very old, large tree species, large ponds and fountains among other features.

*Also See – Lija Belvedere Tower; Old Train Station, Birkirkara; Aqueducts, Santa Venera; "Ghajn Tal-Hasselin" (Public Clothes Washhouse), Msida.*

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## **Valletta\*\*\*\*\***

So much to see, allow time to tour at a leisurely pace and take it all in. Some highlights:

St. John's Co. Cathedral and Museum, formerly the Conventual Church of the Order of St. John built between 1573 and 1577. The "Beheading of St. John", Caravaggio's masterpiece, hangs in the Oratory.

The Armoury contains some fine examples of mediaeval armour and weapons used by the Knights of St John, including Grand Master La Vallette's suit of armour.

Museum of Archaeology, features the many rich and varied archeological remains excavated from the important historical sites of the Maltese Islands.

The 18th century Upper Barrakka Gardens are the best vantage point to view the fortifications of the Three Cities across the harbour.

Lascaris War Rooms. In 1942 General. Dwight Eisenhower, USA, Supreme Commander of Allied Mediterranean Forces and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, RN, C-in-C of Allied Naval Forces in the Mediterranean, used these rooms to conduct the war in the Mediterranean.

Valletta Waterfront – Pinto and Forni Stores. Very attractively restored trading warehouses and sea wall built by the Knights of St John.

The National Museum of Fine Arts, featuring works by many renowned artists, and a collection of coins from the period of the Knights of Malta.

Grand Master's Palace, built between 1571 and 1574, holds a unique collection of Gobelin tapestries, frescoes depicting the Great Siege of 1565 adorn the Order's Supreme Council Hall, other notable features are beautiful ceiling decorations and works by Ribera, Vanloo and Batoni.

The National Library. The 18th Century National Library, built by the Knights, houses many important and unique works, including chronicles of the Knights of St. John from 1113 to 1798.

St. Paul Shipwreck Church - this church contains impressive vault paintings by Attilio Palombi which portray episodes in the life of St. Paul. There is also a magnificent wooden statue of the apostle and, purportedly, a wrist bone of St. Paul and a piece of the column on which he was beheaded.

Manoel Theatre and Museum, one of the oldest theatres in Europe, built by Grand Master De Vilhena in 1731.

Casa Rocca Piccola, built in 1580, is a small Maltese palazzo, restored to reflect the lifestyle of Maltese upper class as it was centuries ago.

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Sacra Infermeria. Now known as the Mediterranean Conference Centre, originally the hospital of the Order of St. John, built in 1574, one of the oldest buildings in Valletta. "The Malta Experience", an audiovisual show, is screened daily and is a very professional photographic and narrated presentation of the history of the Maltese Islands.

The Siege Bell Memorial is a monument for those who fell during World War II.

Fort St. Elmo was built in 1488 and played a very important part during the Great Siege of 1565. Also see the underground grain storage silos.

The War Museum, just by Fort St Elmo, features many items and photographs from World War 2, including a Gloster Gladiator biplane.

*Also See – Fortifications around Valletta; Argotti Gardens, Floriana; Sa Maison Gardens, Floriana; The Granaries, Floriana; Manoel Island and Fort, Gzira; Fort Tigne', Sliema.*

## **North of Malta**

The North of Malta, being relatively difficult to defend from invasion and frequent raids by marauders, was never as populated as the central and harbour regions. Historical remains, in fact, are mostly connected with attempts to address this weakness, and are therefore not as rich as are found elsewhere on the Maltese Islands.

*Also See – Mellieha Church and Sanctuary; Selmun Palace, Mellieha; Fort Campbell, Selmun; Red Tower, Mellieha; Mistra Coastal Battery - Mistra Bay; Coastal Entrenchments and Defences, L-Ahrax and Armier Areas, Mellieha*

## **Gozo**

### **The Citadel, Victoria (Rabat). \*\*\*\*\***

The hilltop on which the Citadel was built has been settled since the Neolithic period. The Knights of Malta are responsible for much of the present defences of the Citadel. The magnificent Cathedral, was designed by Lorenzo Gafa', who was also responsible for the Mdina Cathedral. 360 degree views of Gozo are available from the Citadel's bastions. The Cathedral Museum, the Armoury and Archeological Museum are located in the Citadel's walls.

### **St. George's Church, Victoria (Rabat). \*\*\***

Built in 1678 and featuring a very richly decorated interior and artworks.

### **Ggantija Temples, Xaghra. \*\*\*\*\***

Gozo's answer to Malta's Hagar Qim and Mnajdra temples. Dating to approximately 3500 BC, and still in an excellent state of preservation.

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## **Kola's Windmill, Xaghra. \* \* \***

A restored windmill, equipped with period workshops and scenes from the time when the windmill was in active use.

## **Ta' Pinu Basilica, Gharb. \* \* \* \***

The large church building, completed in 1932, incorporates the original 16th Century chapel where a peasant woman allegedly heard the voice of the Virgin Mary in 1883. The church contains numerous votive offerings.

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## **Sightseeing and Places to Visit**

Some listings here may already have been mentioned in other sections – this because there may be different reasons for visiting these tourist attractions. Listed here however are those tourist attractions that have a more “general” appeal, not only for those with specific interests, and those which do not quite fit elsewhere. Still, refer to the list of “History” attractions as this will be where much of your personal “must-see” sightseeing checklist will come from.

### **Blue Grotto and Zurrieq Valley Creek**

A natural sea-cave, accessible by little boats performing regular trips, weather permitting.

### **Marsaxlokk**

A fishing village and open air market.

### **Valletta**

Malta’s capital city. Walk around the streets of Valletta, the city of the Knights, and visit the newly restored “Valletta Waterfront” (quite a walk from the centre of Valletta).

### **Mdina**

Even if you don’t specifically visit for the history of the place, still a great walk-around.

### **Crafts Village, Ta’ Qali.**

See blown glass being made, purchase silver filigree items and other Maltese products.

### **Sliema**

If you want to get a feel for the more cosmopolitan Maltese lifestyle, pay a visit to Sliema.

### **Gozo**

It’s not quite Malta... a must-visit for any tourist. See the Citadel, Victoria, Dwejra/Azure Window, Ggantija, Ta’ Pinu, and the Crafts Village on a day tour.

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## **Landscape and Nature**

Mostly the list that follows, describe areas of natural beauty, ideal for walks. To note that during the hunting and bird trapping season, one must make efforts to avoid the immediate vicinity where these activities are taking place. The following areas are coded as follows: W = Good for walking/trekking; V = Good views; P = Photographic opportunities; H = Pay particular attention to hunting activities.

## **Malta**

### **Delimara Point, Marsaxlokk W/V/P/H**

Preferably take the high ground from Tas-Silg area, and walk to Delimara Point, and where possible follow the coastline, which can take you all the way to St. Thomas Bay.

### **St Thomas Bay, Marsascula W/V/P/H**

The route mentioned above, can be done in reverse starting from here. Walk towards the point known as Il-Munxar where waves can often be seen breaking on the shallow offshore reef, and where high white cliffs (not visible from the bay) offer a spectacular sight.

### **Ghar Hasan and Cliffs, limits of Birzebbugia V/P/H**

Ghar Hasan, site of a popular legend, may or may not be open, but the cliff area is worth a drive and a short visit anyway.

### **Blue Grotto and Zurrieq Valley, Zurrieq W/V/P**

A very beautiful coastline where one finds the Blue Grotto, and the rugged valley walls. Apart from walking to the valley from Zurrieq, which is pleasant enough, further walks can however be rough in places.

### **Mnajdra, Limits of Qrendi W/V/P/H**

Apart from the temples, the surrounding area lends itself to a scenic coastal walk, which could for the more adventurous take you all the way to Ghar Lapsi.

### **Ghar Lapsi, Limits of Siggiewi W/V/P**

There is a good walk to be had walking along the coast towards the South/Mnajdra/left when facing the sea.

### **Fawwara, Dingli W/V/P**

Approach either from the road starting from a little before the "Dar Tal-Providenza" area (you need a map) or else from the left-most side of Dingli Cliffs.

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## **Dingli Cliffs W/V/P**

Walk along Malta's highest point, which overlooks the sea for miles, you may walk to (or from) Buskett Gardens, and Mtahleb.

## **Buskett Gardens W/P**

A small forested area, with mature trees and a small stream which runs during the wet season. Also a good place to start walks along country roads.

## **Mtahleb, Limits of Rabat W/V/P**

A beautiful, tranquil place, one may also walk along the spectacular cliff edge (caution required in places) if you start your walk from the parking area at Migra il-Ferha. Coves and sea-caves may be seen, and you may also descend to the water's edge via a narrow passageway in the cliff face just by the parking area. Popular dive spot.

## **Bahrija, Limits of Rabat W/H**

You may get to Bahrija Valley from Mtahleb, either along the cliff-top road (recommended) or underneath the cliffs, not an option during the hunting season. Or just drive there from Rabat.

## **Fomm Ir-Rih Bay, Limits of Rabat W/V/P**

The downhill road to Fomm Ir-Rih offers a straight-ahead option (walk to the point, where some temple remains may be found) or take the right half way down the hill, and walk all the way down to the little beach via a narrow passageway.

## **Kuncizzjoni, Limits of Rabat W/V**

Walks along country roads and paths.

## **Gnejna Bay, Mgarr W/V/P**

Short walks in this picturesque bay area, alternatively walk towards the tower overlooking the bay (from the high ground, take the road on your left just as you have come up Gnejna Hill, past a gate) and you may walk all the way to Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands along the cliff edge.

## **Ghajn Tuffieha and Golden Sands Bay W/V/P**

Reverse the route above, or walk in the opposite direction (northwards) behind the new hotel (take narrow passageway on the right hand side hotel boundary wall) and take a cliff edge walk which may take you all the way to Mellieha, or even further.

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## **Anchor Bay, Mellieha W/V/P/H**

More of the beautiful rugged coastline to walk.

## **Qammiegh Point, Cirkewwa/Mellieha V/P/H**

Vantage point, which you can walk to or drive to, tricky to take walks here as the right route (to Paradise Bay) is not so obvious, but if discovered, well worth while.

## **Paradise Bay, Cirkewwa W/V/P**

Beautiful bay nestled under cliffs, reverse the previous route on the cliff edge or take a short walk North towards Cirkewwa.

## **Cirkewwa to Ahrax Point Promontory area W/V/P**

You may walk all around the coastline, by the little sandy beaches of Armier, to the promontory point where the little chapel and statue of the Madonna is located, all the way to Ghadira (Mellieha) Bay.

## **Mgiebah Bay W/V/P**

From Selmun, by the chapel, watch out for the easy to miss sign for Mgiebah Road, as you get to the clay slopes overlooking the bay, you may take a left and walk towards Ghadira (Mellieha) Bay, or just go down by the beach.

## **Selmun and St. Paul's Islands W/V/P**

Walk the clay slopes downhill towards St. Paul's Islands, you may walk all the way round to Mistra Bay.

## **Mistra Bay and Valley W/V/P**

You may start this walk from Xemxija, behind the hotel situated at the northern corner of the bay, walk up a Roman road past some ancient remains, and directly down again via a pathway, to the valley floor, following the path towards the sea.

## **Mizieb Wooded Area (Hunting Reserve) W/H**

A pleasant walk, not much of note otherwise, but to avoid completely during the hunting season.

## **Coast Road, Bahar Ic-Caghaq W/P**

The coast road is quite busy, but makes for a pleasant, comfortable walk with no hills of note all the way from Qawra to Bahar Ic-Caghaq, staying by the coast just before the hill to St Julians, the walk gets a bit rougher, but can take you all the way to Pembroke/St Julians.

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## **Pembroke, limits of St Andrew's/St Julians W**

A coastal area allowing for a walk across natural rock and scrubland.

## **Ghargur/Madliena Victoria Lines Area and Valleys W/V/P**

The view from here stretches towards Gozo on a clear day, and the Victoria Lines hug the sides of this natural fault line at the steepest of places.

## **Mosta Valley, Mosta W/P**

Start the walk either from by the school/Markiz Mallia Tabone Farmhouse behind and to the right of the Mosta Dome, and walk down to the valley floor. The walk may be rough in places. Alternatively walk down from by the bridge further along the valley, opposite Fort Mosta, for an easier walk. The valley leads to the Burmarrad area, via country roads you may walk all the way to Salina, the Coast Road or Qawra.

## **Wied il-Kbir, Qormi W/P**

A steep-sided valley, which may be walked from Qormi end to Qrendi, or taking the right hand side fork in the valley, towards Zebbug/Siggiewi.

## **Gozo, Comino**

Apart from the places and walks listed below, Gozo offers a myriad of quiet country lanes, especially suitable for walks during the cooler season.

## **Xatt L-Ahmar to Xlendi W/V/P/H**

This is a long but very beautiful walk, which may even be started before Xatt L-Ahmar (Start from Mgarr Harbour and walk westwards along the coast, although this option can get quite rough), which takes in beautiful cliff edge views of Comino and Gozo, the stunning creek at Mgarr Ix-Xini, and Ta' Cenc Cliffs. You may start this walk at any of the following points and walk in any direction, if you wish to make it shorter. Optional start points, east to west: Mgarr Ix-Xini; Sannat (Ta' Cenc); Xlendi (cross the little footbridge towards the tower, and walk east). In some places, during the hunting season, you may be asked to take an alternative route, as much of the land is private.

## **Dwejra/Azure Window/Inland Sea W/V/P**

The area is highly picturesque, with numerous natural and man made features. Walks tend to be limited to the general area, but are highly rewarding all the same.

## **Wied il-Mielah to Marsalforn W/V/P**

There is another, little know natural rock "window" here maybe not as beautiful as the one at Dwejra, however this is an ideal start point for a coastal walk along the country track and pathways which you can take all the way to Marsalforn.

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## **Ramla Bay W/V/P**

There are some interesting but rough pathways to both sides of the bay, and also country roads leading to this bay. A beautiful area, although not recommended to use the pathways to attempt to reach any other place, as in places even some climbing skills are required.

## **Hondoq Ir-Rummien W/V/P**

Walk eastwards along the coast (some places caution required) all the way to Mgarr Harbour. Possibly the best views of Comino from this walk.

## **Comino W/V/P**

Pretty much a "free" walk, to start depending on your landing place, the coastline is probably the most rewarding option. Can be rough in places.

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## Beaches and Bathing

Malta and Gozo offer a number of places ideal for bathing. Sandy beaches are the most obvious choice, especially for families, but bathing off the rocks is also extremely popular. Rocky beaches are not beaches with rocks instead of sand, but bathing spots where the coast is natural rock, often in the form of flat platforms ideal for sunbathing (without the sand) and sometimes improved by means of diving platforms and steps/ladders. Beach clubs/lidos are also great for those who appreciate the convenience and added facilities. To allow a bit more space to yourself by avoiding excessive crowds, we recommend that sandy beaches preferably be visited weekdays. Below is a list of the main bathing spots and notes.

### Guide:

Beach Rating - \* to \*\*\*\*\*



Some facilities available



Suitable for children



Good for snorkelling



May be on the wild side in places!

## Beaches in Malta

~Sandy Beaches~

**Mellieha (Ghadira) Bay, Mellieha.** \*\*\*\*\*  Malta's largest sandy beach, facilities for bathers and watersports options. Can get very busy, especially weekends, June – September. Good for children.

**Mgiebah Bay, Limits of Selmun, Mellieha.** \*\*\*  A small secluded bay set in stunning natural scenery. No facilities at all, good for snorkelling.

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**Golden Bay and Ghajn Tuffieha Bay.\*\*\*\*\***  Limits of Mgarr. Two very attractive, adjacent beaches set within the cliff face. Some more facilities at Golden Bay but both beaches are very popular. Great for snorkelling, exploring the little inlets and coves at the sides. Although illegal, a small inlet at the far left of Ghajn Tuffieha Bay seems to be frequented by nude bathers, but you are unlikely to notice as this is out of the way and quite a walk or swim. There is quite a descent (and obviously ascent) to Ghajn Tuffieha Bay via stairs, which may be worth noting. Again can get very busy on weekends, you may have to park your car quite some distance away. Good for children.

**Gnejna Bay, Limits of Mgarr.\*\*\*\***  Possibly not quite as nice as Golden Bay and Ghajn Tuffieha, though you do get the option to choose a quieter spot at this beach. Again, a long and rough possibly dangerous walk along the right hand side of the beach takes you to an area popular with nude bathers. Good for children.

**Paradise Bay, Cirkewwa.\*\*\*\*\***  Limits of Mellieha. Possibly the most attractively set beach in Malta, set within a natural cove, which more than justifies the name. Some facilities for bathers available. The actual beach is quite small however. Good for snorkelling.

**Armier Bay and neighbouring bays.\*\*\***  Limits of Mellieha. Quite small beaches, but with some well known lidos and facilities. Weekends can be noisy, and a hot tip is to avoid Mondays in summer – Typically Monday is the post-village-feast outing day, and Armier Bay is a hotspot for the revellers, of whichever village in Malta whence they carcade with much noise and fanfare to Armier. Good for children.

**Fomm Ir-Rih Bay, limits of Rabat.\*\*\***  If you really want half the beach to yourself, even though the beach may not be that large, then Fomm Ir-Rih is a good choice. Be warned that the reason for this is that the walk down to the beach is a good 15-20 minutes via a tricky and sometimes steep and slippery pathway, so you have to be determined – especially bearing in mind the return climb in 30-degree-plus heat and sun. Absolutely no facilities for miles, as might be expected. Very good for snorkelling.

**Bahar Ic-Caghaq.\*\*\***  Along the coast road from Qawra to St Julians, are a couple of very small sandy beaches. Never so busy and parking is usually available close by, thus convenient to escape to from St. Julians. Good for snorkelling. Good for children.

**St George's Bay, St Julians.\*\*\*\***  A recent major improvement on the previous tiny patch of sand that used to be St George's Bay, this beach is now larger and properly managed. Facilities are available, and one is less than a minute's walk from the restaurants, etc of St. Julians. Good for children.

**Rinella Bay, Kalkara.\*\*\***  A very small sandy beach, pretty but not always recommended due to possible pollution from ships.

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**St Thomas Bay, Marsascalea.\*\*\***  This beach is listed under “Sandy Beaches” but the actual sandy area out of the water is extremely small, about 20 metres – however flat rock, concrete platforms and seating by both sides of the beach explain its popularity. Facilities available. Good for children.

**St George’s Bay, Birzebbugia.\*\***  A small, pretty sandy beach. No facilities on the actual beach, but in Birzebbugia proper. Good for children.

**Pretty Bay, Birzebbugia.\*\*\***  Considering the actual expanse of sand, if not the length, this could be classified as a “medium” sized beach by Maltese standards. Lots of facilities, it being situated at the busiest part of Birzebbugia. Attractively landscaped too. Good for children.

~Malta - Rocky Beaches~

**Cirkewwa to Ahrax Point, Limits of Mellieha.\*\*\***  Apart from some small sandy beaches, there are plenty of places where one may enter the water from the rocks or, in places, concrete bathing platforms.

**Selmun, St Paul’s Islands.\*\*\***  Accessible either strictly by Jeep or a 10 minute walk, thus no crowds guaranteed, and great view of St Paul’s Islands which are a few meters offshore. Excellent for snorkelling. No facilities, OK for families if you have vehicular access.

**St Paul’s Bay, Bugibba, Qawra.\*\*\***  The entire coastline boasts numerous places ideal for bathing, and is almost entirely open to the public. The inner harbour areas are less attractive however. Qawra Point (referred to as Ta’ Fra Ben) is particularly popular. Good for snorkelling.

**Coast from limits of Salina Bay to St George’s Bay, St Julians.\*\*\***  Again, the entire coast offers many entry points, which vary in suitability for families and ease of access. The sea water quality here also makes this a good area for snorkelling.

**Paceville, St Julians.\*\*\***  By the right hand side of the Casino, is a popular small rocky beach. Approximately 200 m offshore is a well known reef popular with divers, and thus the area is excellent for snorkelling. Facilities on the beach itself limited to the occasional ice-cream vendor, but you are never more than 300m from town.

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**Sliema.\*\*\*\***  Sliema's entire coastline with the exception of Valletta Harbour side is suitable for bathing. Sliema's rocky beaches are very popular during the summer months, due to proximity to town and facilities available, easy access, plus plenty of flat space to lay down a towel. Sliema's beaches have a wide appeal to all, you will find families with children, individuals having a dip during their afternoon work break, youths chilling out at a beach cafe', and tourists from the nearby hotels. Suitable for snorkelling, too.

**Valletta.\*\*\***  Not that well known or popular, for this very reason, except with locals, Valletta Point beneath the bastions of Fort St Elmo is also a good place for bathing and snorkelling. Not very suitable for children, as there do not seem to be any shallow areas.

**Marsascala – Zonqor Point to St Thomas Bay.\*\*\*\***  Apart from the inner harbour area, all the area is suitable for bathing and snorkelling. Zonqor Point and the St Thomas Tower area are particularly good for snorkelling. There are some watersports facilities at the Jerma Palace Hotel, by St Thomas Tower.

**Xrobb L-Ghagin Bay,\*\*\*\***  a not very well signposted left turn from the road leading to Delimara Point, limits of Marsaxlokk, is a highly scenic area offering clear water of varying depth, a little island just 20 - 30 metres offshore, and the possibility for the more adventurous to go seriously off the beaten track. Access to the main beach is relatively easy, and families do frequent the place. Great snorkelling. No facilities at all.

**St Peter's Pool, Delimara,\*\*\*\*\***  limits of Marsaxlokk, and nearby coves. Another area of natural beauty offering crystal clear waters. Popular, but never crowded and you can have as much space for yourself as you need. Also very good snorkelling, OK for families. No facilities.

**Qajjenza – Limits of Birzebbugia, to Marsaxlokk,\*\*\***  St Lucian Tower area. Some limited bathing areas available.

**Zurrieq – Wied iz-Zurrieq (Zurrieq Valley).\*\*\*\***  Just by the Blue Grotto (although the Blue Grotto is only accessible by boat), the area is quite popular with locals and visitors. Water is somewhat deep, therefore not so suitable for young children. Very popular with divers, thus also some excellent snorkelling. The bathing area is just a short distance away from the restaurants and snack bars and other facilities such as public toilets.

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**Ghar Lapsi (Lapsi Cave) – Limits of Siggiewi.\*\*\*\***  A unique bay within a cave, OK for children, and clear water for excellent visibility while snorkelling. Facilities available, but not too much space in the main bathing spot so best to avoid weekends. Or walk a short distance and find your own secluded spot, but this option is not child-friendly.

**Gnejna Bay.\*\*\***  By the right side of the main sandy beach, there is also a stretch of flat rock ideal for bathing and sunbathing, if you prefer to avoid the sand. Some facilities available, and also watersports rentals.

## Beaches in Gozo and Comino

~Sandy Beaches~

**Gozo - Ramla Bay,\*\*\*\*\***  Limits of Xaghra. Gozo's largest sandy beach. Very attractively set within a valley, and still unspoilt. Called Ramla il-Hamra in Maltese, which means Red Beach, referring to the hue of the sand. Some facilities available, good for snorkelling and children.

**Gozo - Marsalforn Bay.\*\*\***  A small sandy beach in the heart of Marsalforn which is quite popular. Facilities to hand, good for children.

**Gozo - Qbajjar Bay,\*\*\***  limits of Marsalforn. A couple of small sandy beaches, pretty and never crowded. Facilities available, also good for snorkelling and children.

**Gozo - Xlendi Bay.\*\*\***  A small but attractive sandy beach, facilities available, good for children. Not much space though.

**Gozo – Mgarr ix-Xini,\*\*\*\***  Limits of Xewkija. A small bay within a creek and a steep sided valley. Very picturesque bay, a walk along the valley sides is also recommended. No facilities, but good for children and also snorkelling.

**Gozo – Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay,\*\*\***  Limits of Qala. A small sandy beach directly opposite excellent views of Comino Island. Some limited facilities, good for children and snorkelling.

**Gozo - Dahlet Qorrot Bay.\*\*\***  A very small sandy beach (a few metres) but very tranquil and you can bathe off the concrete platform if there is no space on the sand. Good for snorkelling. No facilities however.

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**Gozo – San Blas Bay.\*\*\*\***  A small secluded sandy beach situated in a beautiful natural location. A short but steep walk to the bay, so not ideal for taking any umbrellas or other heavy items. No facilities, OK for children unless they need to be carried and good snorkelling.

**Gozo – Inland Sea.\*\*\*\***  A beach which is more pebbly than sandy, but a very unique bay being more like a little lake connected to the open sea via a natural tunnel. Facilities available, good for children. Popular diving entry point, but visibility inside the actual bay unlikely to be good enough for snorkelling.

**Comino – Santa Maria Bay.\*\*\*\***  A small sandy beach, not far from the Comino Hotel. Facilities limited to the Comino Hotel. Good for families.

**Comino – St Nicholas Bay.\*\*\***  Two small sandy coves, may be reserved for hotel guests during the summer months.

**Comino – Blue Lagoon.\*\*\*\*\***  Strictly speaking this might not be a sandy beach, in that the sea bottom is sand but there is very little sand outside the water. However the water is very shallow in places and Blue Lagoon is uniquely beautiful bay. In a way you get the sand where you want it, under your feet in the water, but none on land where your belongings are. OK for children, facilities limited to what the cruise boat you probably arrived on, provides. Snorkelling a must!

*~Gozo and Comino - Rocky Beaches~*

**Gozo – Dwejra Bay and Azure Window area.\*\*\*\***  Apart from the dramatic scenery, good for bathing off the rugged rocks, and excellent for snorkelling. Unsafe in rough seas. Facilities available, unsuitable for children or unfit persons.

**Gozo – Marsalforn Bay to Qbajjar Bay and nearby.\*\*\*\***  This stretch of coastline offers the possibility of bathing from a number of locations, access tends to get more difficult the further west one travels. Apart from the Qbajjar sandy bay area, not suitable for young children as the water is deep. Very good snorkelling, and facilities at Qbajjar and Marsalforn.

**Gozo – Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay.\*\*\***  Limits of Qala. Apart from the small sandy beach, bathing off the rocks is possible. Some limited facilities, good for snorkelling.

**Gozo – Xatt I-Ahmar Bay.\*\*\***  Limits of Ghajnsielem. A popular bay with Gozitans, access is via a bumpy road. Good for children, snorkelling, etc, but no facilities.

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**Comino, Blue Lagoon.\*\*\*\*\***  Access to Comino's Blue Lagoon is off the rocks, even though the seabed is sandy. A very beautiful bay featuring a number of islets just offshore within easy reach of swimmers. OK for children, facilities limited to what the cruise boat you probably arrived on, provides. Snorkelling a must!

**Comino, General Coastline.\*\*\*\*\***  There are plenty of places where you may bathe off Comino's rocky coast, varying in difficulty of access. Where you choose will also be dependent on how you got to Comino – Cruise boats normally set anchor at Blue Lagoon, while the small ferry boats servicing Comino usually tie up by the Comino Hotel.

## Beach Lidos and Fun Parks

Beach Lidos will be defined as those beaches having restricted access but open to the general public (against payment, or where usage of facilities such as umbrellas and deckchairs is against payment) where a minimum of facilities available would comprise the aforementioned umbrellas and deckchairs, showers, and a basic food/drink outlet. Excluded are those lidos exclusively for use of a particular hotel's guests, and deckchair/umbrella rental sites on fully open public beaches, i.e. where you can freely set up your own.

**Sliema** – Pebbles Lido, Qui-Si-Sana.

**Sliema** – Surfside Lido, Fond Ghadir

**Sliema** – Preluna Hotel Lido

**Sliema** – Fortina Hotel Lido, Tigne'

**Sliema** – Torri Lido, Exiles

**St Julian's** – Dragonara Beach Club Lido

**St Julian's** – Cornithia Marina Hotel Lido

**Qawra** – Sunny Coast Lido

**Qawra** – Suncrest Hotel Lido

**Qawra** – Qawra Palace Hotel Lido

**Qawra** – Luzzu Lido

**Mellieha** (Limits of) - Ray's Lido, Armier Bay

**Bahar Ic-Caghaq**, Limits of St Julians - Mediterraneo Marine Park

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## **Leisure and Entertainment Options**

### **Restaurants and Bars.**

You are never far from a restaurant or bar, wherever you are on the Maltese Islands. All forms of cuisine are served, for all tastes. There is a concentration of restaurants in the Sliema/St. Julians area, Bugibba/Qawra/St. Paul's Bay, Valletta, Mellieha, Marsascala, Marsaxlokk, Mdina and Rabat. If you want to try something different, go to a restaurant in one of the smaller villages such as Mgarr or Bahrija, where the main dish, out of a very short list of options, is rabbit. The restaurant might not be very classy, and the service very casual, but the experience is "different", the food is normally abundant and tasty, accompanied by Maltese cheeses and wine.

Bars come in all forms too, from village bars serving wizened old men tea in large glasses, to super-trendy music and themed bars for the young set.

### **Cafe's.**

Cafe's can be found in most towns, especially in Sliema/St Julians, the St Paul's Bay area and Valletta, and of course all tourist areas around Malta and Gozo. Some cafe's in Valletta are historic, and many offer open-air seating, plus excellent coffee and a wide selection of sweets and snacks.

### **Cinemas.**

Cinemas in Malta and Gozo screen the latest films in modern auditoria. Cinema complexes are located in St. Georges Bay, St Julians (also an IMAX theatre), Valletta, Fgura, Marsascala and Bugibba. In Gozo there is a cinema just outside the Cittadella.

### **Casinos.**

There are three casinos in Malta (none in Gozo). The Dragonara Casino is the oldest established, situated in St. Julians. The Oracle Casino is in Bugibba, and the Casino' Di Venezia in the restored Scamps Palace, Vittoriosa Waterfront.

### **Clubbing and Discotheques.**

There is a very active clubbing and dancing scene in Malta and Gozo. A number of clubs can truly be considered to international city standards, and entrance fees where applicable are very reasonable. The area of St. Julians known as Paceville is the hot spot for clubbing in Malta, while in Gozo Victoria and nearby Xlendi offer entertainment options. Don't visit early though, as things start moving around 11pm or later, and outside of the summer season, clubbing is very much a weekend thing. In summer, a number of open-air venues also become a part of the scene. Parties, with internationally renowned DJ's are held regularly at various locations in Malta and Gozo, again especially during summer, check any of the entertainment websites for scheduled activities.

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## **Village Feasts.**

Mostly during the summer, pretty much every week one or more villages or towns will be celebrating it's patron saint's feast (some places have more than one patron saint, and some saint's feasts are celebrated in more than one place, so the timetable is hectic!). Quite an experience, the religious aspect with the highly impressive church decorations, processions and displays of devotion, the brass band followed through the streets by the enthusiasts, and last but not least the dramatic fireworks display on the eve. Plus the open-air party atmosphere, especially just outside the local watering holes, to make it all come together.

## **Other Activities.**

Try Bowling (St. Julians), Bingo (Bugibba), play a game of American Pool, Snooker or Darts at a pub or a village band club or political party club premises.

## **Main Entertainment Centres in Malta and Gozo**

Strictly not an exclusive list. All villages and towns have local bars, some of which may also be very popular and highly frequented by non-locals, and most villages/towns in Malta also boast restaurants / cafe's, some restaurants in particular being renowned for their cuisine. Below therefore are listed only areas where quite a choice of venues is offered.

**Paceville, St Julians** – Clubs, restaurants, bars, cinemas, cafe's, casino, bowling. Malta's night-time entertainment centre. The St. George's Bay area offers options for families, too, not just the late-nighters.

**Sliema** – Restaurants, cafe's, bars.

**Valletta** – Restaurants, cafe's, cinemas, bars, trendy wine bars. Not so much a "late" venue.

**St Paul's Bay area – Qawra, Bugibba** – Restaurants, bars and pubs, cafe's, clubs (not as hot as Paceville), casino, bingo.

**Marsascala** – Restaurants, bars, cafe's, cinemas. Play area for children with slides, swings, etc.

**Mellieha** – Restaurants, bars, cafe's.

**Marsaxlokk** – Restaurants, cafe's.

**Mdina/Rabat** – Restaurants, cafe's.

**Birzebbugia** – Restaurants, cafe's.

**Gozo – Victoria** – Restaurants, cafe's, bars, clubs, cinemas.

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**Gozo – Marsalforn** – Restaurants, cafe's, bars.

**Gozo – Xlendi** – Restaurants, bars.

**Gozo – Mgarr** – Restaurants, bars.

## **Must-Do's**

Here are our favourite must-do's on any vacation to Malta or Gozo, if you want to try something uniquely Maltese.

**You must try hot "pastizzi"** ("past-itsy") – also referred to as cheesecakes, although bearing no resemblance to what is ordinarily referred to as cheese cake, available from hot-snack takeaway outlets in most villages, often called "Maxims" or some derivative thereof. Folded pastry filled with either a ricotta-cheese mix, or a pea mash, both equally delicious when eaten straight from the oven. Other similar pastry-based snacks such as "qassatat" ("us-aht-aht") and pizza slices, macaroni, etc, also available from these little shops.

**You must try "gbejniet"** – (difficult one, this – try "g-bay-nit") little soft cheeselets available plain or peppered, made from goat's cheese. Perfect for any salad, sandwich, or even pasta sauce.

**Buy a loaf of Maltese bread**, hot, direct from the bakery. Slice it up, prepare with your favourite fillings, (why not try olive oil, ripe tomatoes, and gbejniet) and eat promptly. Maltese bread tastes like no other bread in the world, but must be eaten fresh, on the same day it was baked.

**Go to a "rabbit" eatery** – see Leisure and Entertainment.

**Go to a village feast**, if you are visiting during the summer months (a few village feasts are also celebrated in other seasons, too). See Leisure and Entertainment.