



**GREETINGS  
FROM MALTA!**



# **DISCOVERY**

**Class Magazine**

**Year 5A - 2005/2006**



## Where is Malta?

The Maltese archipelago is found in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. The main islands are Malta, which is the largest and most densely-populated of the lot, followed by Gozo, which is less than half its size, and tiny Comino, which hosts only a few inhabitants.

Although small in size, these islands have much to offer, from tours in the sun-drenched landscapes to exciting coastal diving excursions, from trendy places of entertainment to historical sites dating back to millennia. Good food and plenty of local traditions are then surely the delight of visitors and locals alike.



Ghajn Tuffieha Bay -  
where sea and fields meet

## Where is Mgarr?

The rural village of Mgarr is located in the north-western side of Malta. Mgarr is surrounded by lovely countryside and fertile valleys ideal for farming, yet it is also just a short distance away from three of the most picturesque bays in Malta: Gnejna Bay, Ghajn Tuffieha Bay and Golden Bay. In Mgarr one may also find some of the oldest prehistoric temples in Malta.

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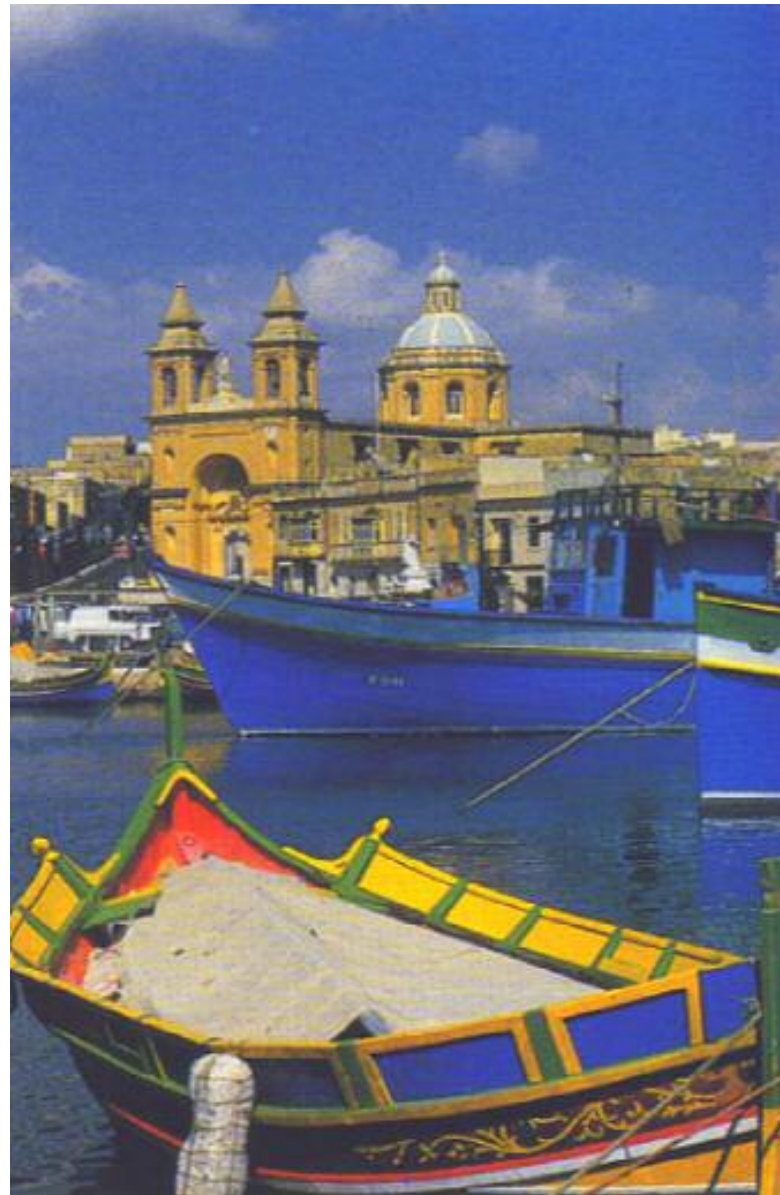
## WELCOME!

Hello and welcome to this year's edition of our class magazine. Since we would like to participate in a project with other European schools, which activity involves the collection and exchange of information regarding our respective countries, the articles in this magazine relate generally to three main topics, namely:

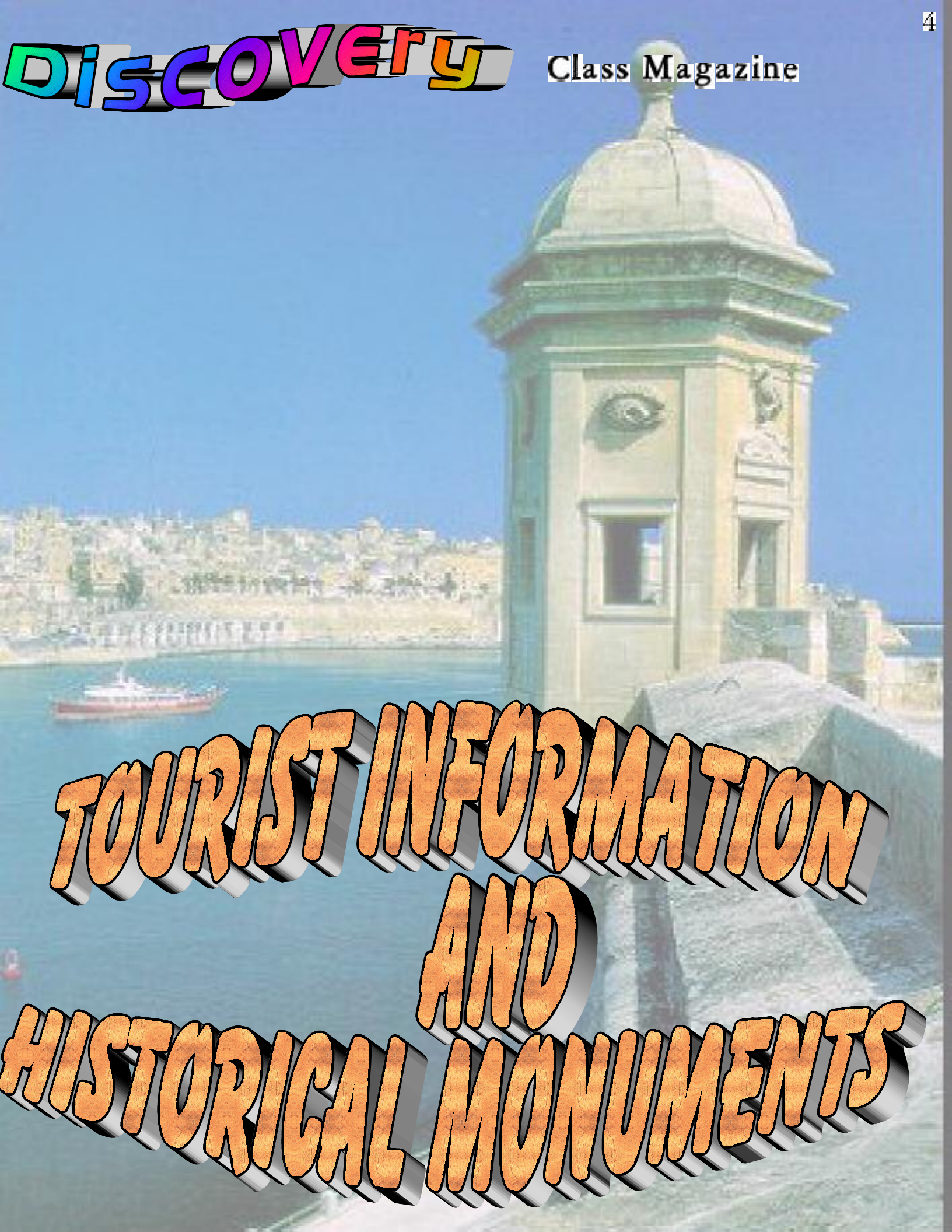
1. **Tourist Information and National Monuments,**
2. **Local Culture and Traditions, and**
3. **Gastronomy, Environment and Nature.**

We hope that you will find this magazine informative and interesting as it has been for us in creating it!

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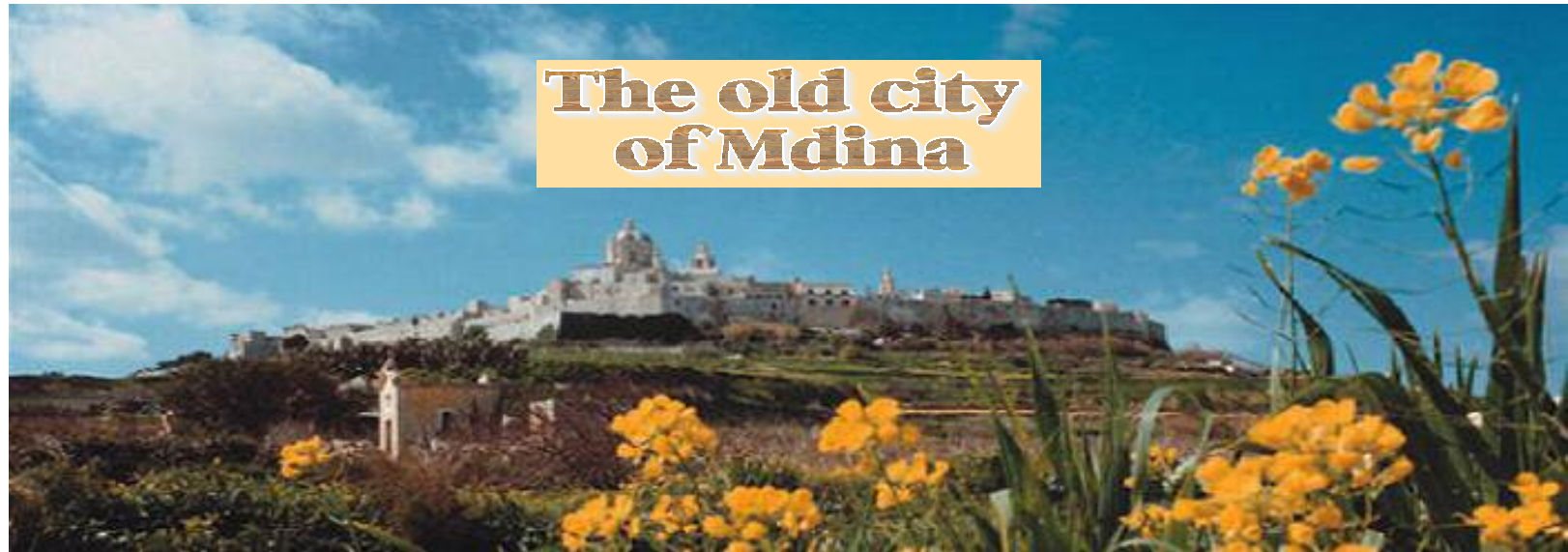


**Marsaxlokk - a typical Maltese fishing village**



**TOURIST INFORMATION  
AND  
HISTORICAL MONUMENTS**

### The old city of Mdina



### Cathedral of St Paul, Mdina

The skyline of Mdina, with its baroque cathedral, bastions and palaces, is an imposing landmark visible throughout central Malta. The Cathedral is the architectural heart of this elegant, walled city. In fact, the building of the Cathedral (1697-1702) caused a major re-design of the centre of medieval Mdina. Several streets and houses were cleared to create a more open view across a square in front of the Cathedral.

This late 17th century masterpiece of Maltese architect Lorenzo Gafa' lies on the remains of a much earlier Norman church destroyed by a violent earthquake in 1693. According to tradition, that church had been built on the site of the house of Publius, the Roman chief man on the Islands who was converted to Christianity by St. Paul in A.D. 60.



The Cathedral had been planned though before the earthquake. The building is one of the finest designs by Lorenzo Gafa'. Its imposing facade greets you abruptly as you emerge from Mdina's narrow streets.

# Discovery

## Class Magazine

# Valletta

Founded by Grand Master Jean Parisot de la Valette, and built on a grid pattern as designed by Francesco Laparelli in 1566, Valletta is Malta's capital city and serves as the islands' main centre of social, cultural, economic and administrative activities. The whole town has been identified as a UNESCO World Heritage site, and contains numerous monuments that should not be missed.



**Valletta peninsula - aerial view**



**Valletta waterfront**



**Valletta street and balconies**



**Castille Palace  
Valletta**

**Grandmasters  
Palace Valletta**

**St. John's  
Co-Cathedral  
Valletta**



# Discovery

# Cottonera

All three towns of Cottonera are situated within the Grand Harbour area. The towns are also alternatively known as Vittoriosa, Cospicua and Senglea

Vittoriosa (Birgu) is the oldest of the three cities and was Malta's Maritime town. Here, one can visit the Maritime Museum and the Inquisitor's Palace.

At its tip is Fort St Angelo which, since mediaeval times until World War II, saw many sea battles take place around its shores. The fort became the first seat of the Order of St John when it took up residence in Malta. The British Royal Navy adopted Fort St Angelo as its naval headquarters in the Mediterranean.



**Grand Harbour view from Valletta overlooking Cottonera**



**Birgu waterfront and Maltese boat**



**Fort St. Angelo Birgu**

**Typical street in Cottonera**



**Bormla**



**Fort St. Michael Isla**



**British Fleet in Grand Harbour**

# Ghar Dalam

This prehistoric cave is situated outside the town of Birzebbuga. To reach the cave from the road, one first enters a museum housing a vast collection of skeletal remains of elephants, hippopotami and deer which were found inside the cave and which abounded in Malta during the Glacial Period.



# Marsaxlokk



Malta's main fishing village is situated in the south-eastern harbour of the island (hence its name). This fishing village has the largest fishing fleet of luzzu boats. On Sundays a sizeable street market is open throughout the day.



**Our class on an educational visit to Marsaxlokk, here beside a luzzu boat**



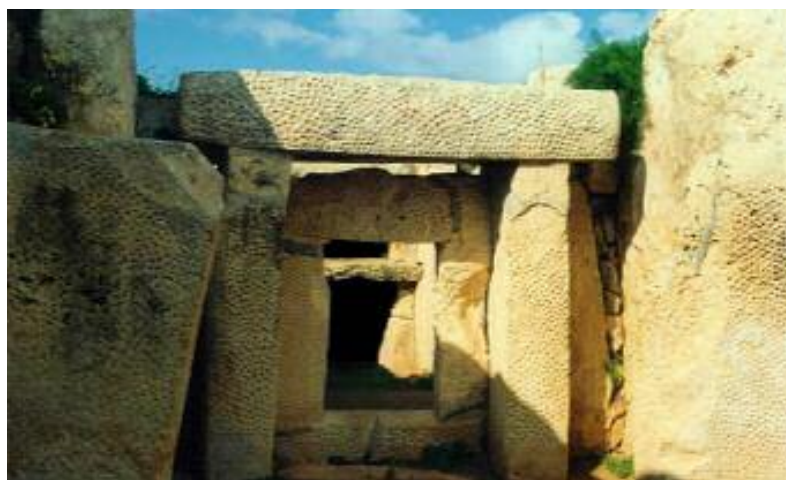
# DISCOVERY

## Class Magazine

# MNAJDRA

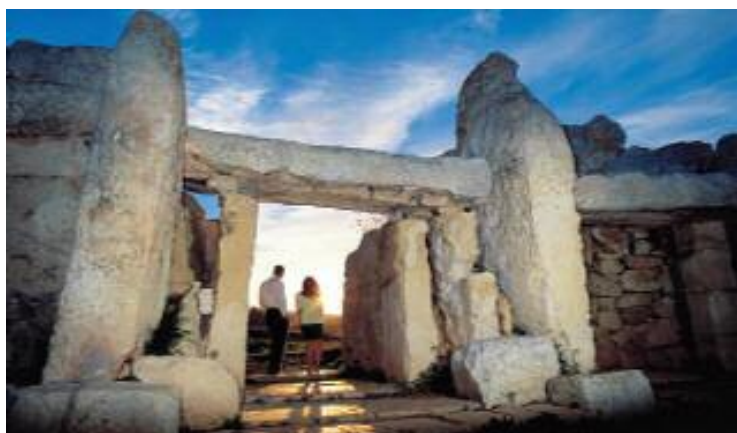
This is a temple dating back to about the end of the third millennium BC. It stands at about 500m to the west of Hagar Qim. Whereas the latter is on the top of the rocky plateau, Mnajdra is built close to the edge of the promontory facing the blue sea and the islet of Filfla.

Unlike Mnajdra, Hagar Qim is built of soft stone. It stands on a soft rock known as 'globigerina limestone', that flakes in huge slabs, and makes the quarrying of the stone a comparatively easy task. Walking down towards Mnajdra, the laminated zones of the soft stones are very conspicuous. These slabs had only to be cut to the required size and levered up in order to have them ready for use as building material.



Mnajdra is mostly built of heavy, hard stone, known as 'coralline limestone'; hence its rugged appearance. On the other hand, the polished slabs and blocks that are rubbed smooth and decorated, are of globigerina limestone brought down from the neighbourhood of Hagar Qim; the coralline limestone being difficult to work.

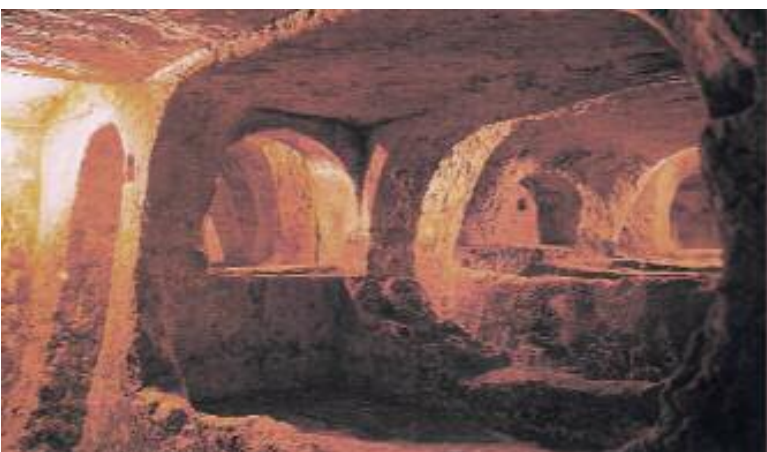
Mnajdra consists of two buildings at different levels; the one at a higher level looking south-east, the other one looking due east.



## ST PAUL'S CATACOMBS

Roman laws used to insist that all burials should take place outside a city's walls, for which reasons the underground system of cemeteries of Roman Malta are found in the northern zone lying just outside the presumed border of the old city of Melita, today including Mdina and the Rabat area.

St Paul's catacombs are certainly the most extensive, but other small complexes have survived in the area. St Paul's catacombs appear to have had a Christian character from the beginning, with typical tomb architecture, as well as a number of examples of stone (agape) tables by which relatives of the deceased took part in the funeral service.



## Hagar Qim

This Copper Age temple was originally built about 2,700 BC but during the same period it underwent several modifications. For some unknown reason the axis of the first temple was altered and the temple itself was several times extended.

The kind of stone used in the building of this temple (Globigerina Limestone) is rather soft and relatively simple to work; possibly for this reason there are several "porthole" openings in Hagar Qim.

A pillar "altar" with an unusual palm frond decorative carving has been found in this temple, but not in any other; it is possible that this pillar was not originally part of the temple furniture and was placed there at a later date.





# Mdina

**Mdina** is the old capital of Malta and is a typical medieval town in the centre of the island.

The **Cathedral** was built in 1697 and is believed to stand on the site originally occupied by the villa belonging to Publius, the island's headman at the time of St. Paul's shipwreck.



The **National Museum of Natural History** situated at Vilhena Palace, within Mdina, houses seven sections comprising both local and foreign collections including skeletal anatomy and so on.

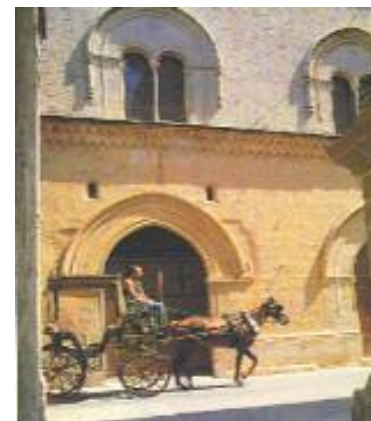


The **Cathedral Museum** contains various art treasures, including a fine collection of Durer woodcuts and paintings.



At the *Mdina Dungeons*, inside the main entrance gate, one finds life-like figures displaying dramatic events and characters from the past with startling realism, giving visitors an impressive experience.

**Norman House** is the most complete of Mdina's medieval buildings. It stands at the end of Villegaignon Street, which is named after the Knight of Malta, Nicolas Durand of Villegaignon, who organised the defence of Mdina against a threatened Turkish attack in 1551. Norman House is a private house whose owner generously opened it to the public.





# VICTORIA GOZO

The Gozitans always call it Rabat. It is the only town in Gozo and was named Victoria in 1897 on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It is in the centre of the island and has been the capital of Gozo probably from the times of the Romans.

The Romans built defensive walls around their town which the Arabs continued to reinforce after they took over in 870 A..D. Nothing structurally very old has survived but one can see in the irregular twisting lanes and alleyways of the town, the splendid balconies and other features of local architecture.



**The  
Citadel  
over-  
looking  
Victoria**

The main Government offices are scattered in the Centre of the town, while the banks, the Main Police Station, the Bishop's Curia and the Government Secretariat for Gozo are at Republic Street.

The visitor finds a varied choice of items in the many tiny shops, mini-markets, pharmacies, boutiques and jewellery shops all over Victoria.





# XLENDI



Xlendi is a colourful little creek, busy with tourists in the morning but quiet and peaceful at night. It is therefore ideal for those who want to get away from the strolling crowds of Marsalforn. The night lights, the cool breeze and crying of seagulls from the cliffs help to enhance a pleasant evening here.



# Marsalforn

This picturesque bay is a very popular summer resort for the Gozitans and Maltese. One finds here several watersport facilities. The restaurants specialise in sea-food dishes.

# XAGHRA WINDMILL



This windmill was built in 1724 together with one at Nadur and another at Gharb by the Portuguese Grandmaster Manoel de Vilhena. A report drawn up in 1779 by a master mason employed by the Order of St. John stated that this windmill was structurally defective. It was suggested that it be pulled down and rebuilt. This never happened.

This mill, like the other at Qala, seems to be going through its worst days of decline. However, there is a hope that one day it will find its right guardian and be restored to its original proud status along with the rest of other places of interest in the village of Xaghra.



**Local Culture  
and  
Traditions**

# Folklore

The Islands possess a rich history of folklore. The various rulers here, from the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs through the series of European dynasties during the Middle Ages to the Knights of St John and the British, have all left their mark on the traditions and customs of the Islands.



**Maltese fishing boats**

The strong religiosity of the people has also made its mark on the Islands. People leave votive offerings at numerous Holy shrines and chapels across the Islands. Holy images are hung in public places, such as bus drivers' cabs.



**Traditional Maltese food and costumes**

**Maltese folk dancers**



On the other hand, the Islanders cling to their own centuries-old beliefs in the face of those imported. And as a people dependent on the sea for trade and fortune, maritime history has also played a role in creating customs.



**The 'regatta' - traditional boat race**

**Traditional 'bandalori' decorating streets on feast days**



# Seasonal Festivities

The Maltese Islands are a strongly Catholic country with all the festivities - spiritual, serious and fun - which make up the religious year. Feast days are very much the life of the Islands. Some holy days are national holidays, such as the feast of Santa Marija in mid August. Others, such as the harvest festival (l-Imnarja) at the end of June, are steeped in folklore. The most well known of all are the village festas in honour of the parish patron saint.



Feasts make for a very special time to visit. They are not only times of spiritual contemplation, but also occasions to socialise. The annual summer festa is a time for a whole village to strengthen its sense of community.



Even on this small archipelago, people are rightly proud of their home parishes and they go to great lengths to organise and prepare for the feast day.

Whatever the occasion, visitors are made especially welcome. Join the crowd or congregation for an insider's view and to really get to know the people and culture of the Maltese Islands.





# CHRISTMAS IN MALTA

There are two reasons to visit the Islands at Christmas. December is a great time for a winter sun. The weather is often dry and mild compared to northern climates and it is a super month to tour the Islands, especially since towns and villages are decked out in their Christmas finery.



The other reason is that Christmas is very much a religious festivity in this Catholic country. Here, the season is celebrated to the full. You'll find Nativity scenes, displays of cribs, carol services and other events organised in each locality. For a very special, spiritual evening, join the congregation at St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta for a candlelit carol service.

Baroque parish churches across the Islands are just as awe-inspiring during advent. Their interiors are decked out in papal crimson and altars are adorned with flowers. All churches have a calendar of events ranging from the procession of Mary and Joseph figures on a donkey, to streets with groups of children carol singing.

Cribs are everywhere, from private houses to small wayside chapels. Visiting public cribs is the thing to do at Christmas. So look out for the signs and investigate for yourself. Some are very elaborate, obviously the work of dedicated craftsmen.



There is plenty to do around Christmas time in Malta, but probably the most popular outing, for children and adults alike, is the annual pantomime held at the Manoel Theatre, Valletta. It is a happy mix of slap-stick good humour for children and satire for adults. Restaurants, hotels, bars and clubs all have their own festivities and entertainment too.

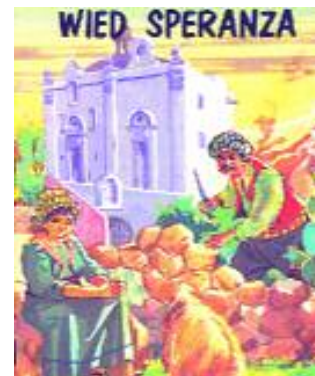
# Maltese Tales and Legends

Maltese narrative folklore is so rich that very often foreign folklore enthusiasts wonder how in such a small country one comes across so many folk-tales, fables and local legends about practically every hill and vale, and every church and old building throughout the islands.



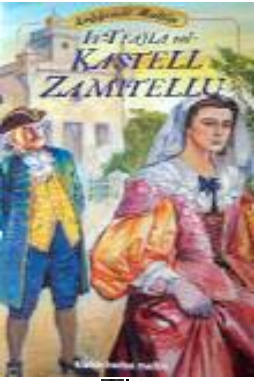
Maltese folk-tales narrate stories about silly Gahan, about the underworld, fountains of oil, the winds, the far ends of the earth, giants and dragons, enchanted horses, Toninu and his envious brothers, and galleys sailing on land!

Many Maltese legends concern attacks by Turks and pirates and also the happening of miraculous events. Thus one can mention the legends of Castle Zamitellu, Wied Speranza, Ghar Hasan, the bride of Mosta, St. Dimitri, the miraculous stream of oil at Gharb and the wonderful bubbling water which appeared when building the first chapel of St. Lawrence, the hearing of St. Paul's voice in Gozo while the Apostle was preaching Christianity to the Maltese, and numerous others.



Other legends tell of local bravery, myths and strange occurrences. We find the legends of Toni Bajada and other heroes, Calypso Cave where Ulysses supposedly spent more than seven years before continuing on his journeys in the Odyssey, the disappearance of the seven daughters of Selika into the whirlpool of Belliegha Cave, the brave girls of Marsalforn bakery, the golden calf, the giantess who carried the stones of four prehistoric temples, and many more which are all local legends, but not without some foreign influence.





# THE LEGEND OF ZAMITELLU CASTLE

There once lived a baron in this castle. He had a beautiful daughter. As soon as she was old enough her father wanted her to get married.

He found a count from Sicily who was his friend. He asked him to marry his daughter. In the past, the father used to choose the groom for his daughter. The baron's daughter however preferred to become a nun and work in a hospital but her father didn't consider her wishes.

He prepared everything for the wedding and all the invited guests arrived on the day. They waited for the bride but she didn't come. They looked for her everywhere: in the castle, in the garden and in the streets but they didn't find her.

After many days looking for her, they thought that someone had kidnapped her. In the past this was very common because pirates roamed our shores.

After some years she appeared as a vision to her father, dressed as a nun and radiant in holy light. She told him that she had in fact been kidnapped by pirates on the day of her wedding, but managed to escape and became a nun. She spent many years on the battle grounds overseas and was killed in the war while she was looking after the injured people. She went to heaven from where she was now praying for everyone.



**Zamitellu Castle at Mgarr, Malta**

# THE LEGEND OF WIED SPERANZA



Many, many years ago, there was a young woman who lived at Mosta. Her father had many goats and he used to sell milk in the streets. This young lady used to take the goats to graze in a valley called '*Wied il-Ghasel*'.

One day, while this young woman was in the valley, she saw some corsairs (in Maltese '*furbani*') coming in her direction. She was very afraid! She knew that if these men caught her they would take her with them as a slave .

One of them saw her. He told the others and they began running after her. The young woman began to run as fast as her legs could carry her. Seeing that she was not going to be able to reach home fast enough, she started looking around, trying to find some place where to hide. She noticed a cave which was covered by a big cobweb. She went inside and hid in the darkest corner. She was so afraid that the pirates would find her, so she started to pray to Our Lady, Mother of God, to save her.

In the cave entrance there was a spider, which began to weave a huge web. It finished it in almost no time, so much so that when the pirates passed by the entrance of the cave, they didn't even bother to look inside, since they considered it impossible that someone could have entered the cave, leaving the huge cobweb intact.



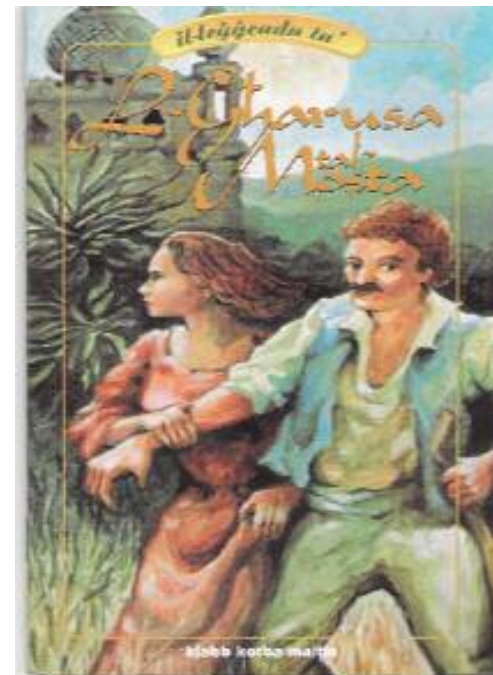
When the corsairs left the valley, the young woman was able to run quickly home. There she told everything to her father, and the whole village came to know about the miraculous occurrence. Not long afterwards a chapel was built over that cave, as a sign of gratitude to Our Lady.

# THE BRIDE OF MOSTA

In 1526, Muslim corsairs led by Sinan assaulted the village of Mosta. That day the Maltese weren't expecting such an attack. Some of the Maltese were at the wedding of the daughter of a nobleman from Mosta, others were asleep and many were therefore unarmed.

Many people were abducted and taken as slaves to *Barberija* (the Barbary Coast). Among those taken was the bride herself, as well as many of her family members and guests. The husband-to-be vowed to get his bride back, and left to rescue her.

Some say that a considerable amount of money was paid as ransom, others that she was helped to escape by a kind sultan's daughter. However, when the bride was saved she died soon after reaching Malta because she had suffered so much in slavery.



Cumbo Tower  
at Mosta

# Gahan and the cat



'Gahan' had been wishing to eat a piece of grilled meat, but meat was very expensive to buy. One day he bought a lottery ticket for his neighbour and won three kilos of fresh meat. He immediately went home and asked his wife 'Buhalaqa' to grill it for him.

His wife started cooking early in the morning, and sat down waiting for the meat to cook. When it was ready, she couldn't resist tasting the meat, after smelling the nice smell. "Well," she said, "Gahan won't notice! He won't be here till noon!!" She continued nibbling from the meat, until none of it was left!!

cont./..

At noon Gahan arrived home. "Buhalaqa! Buhalaqa!" he shouted to his wife, "Where is the meat? Where is it?! Bring it to me." Buhalaqa tried to find some excuse to explain what had happened and instead brought him some home-made wine. When he finished, he called again, "Buhalaqa! Buhalaqa! Bring me the meat."

"I will bring you some of the meat's sauce to taste," she said, and brought him some sauce on a plate. When he ate the sauce he angrily called again, "Bring me the meat!! Bring me the meat!!" At last Buhalaqa went near him and whispered an explanation in his ear. "What?!" shouted Gahan, "He left me nothing?!!"

"No, nothing! Nothing at all."

"You have seen him, why didn't you stop him! Why did you let him eat it all? Why?" Gahan shouted. "The meat, Buhalaqa, the meat!!"

His wife was afraid because of what he could do when he was angry.

"Come here Buhalaqa, come here!" repeated Gahan angrily. His wife, shaking, slowly went near him. "Go and get him, so I'll see whether he ate the meat or not." Buhalaqa was afraid but knew it was her fault. She went to get him as instructed by her husband. She brought him in a cane basket, "You see, it was him."

"What can I see?"

"He is licking his mouth, just to thank you."

"Thank me?! Since when have you started understanding his language?"

Buhalaqa tried to stop him, "Come on, Gahan, leave him alone! He has done wrong and he wants you to forgive him."

"Forgive him! Forgive him?! Now you are reading his mind too!! This . . . !!"

Buhalaqa repeated again, "Leave him. Everyone makes mistakes, even I!"

"Even you! Don't tell me that . . ." but with her cries he couldn't continue. "Go and bring me the scales, and stop crying!" he ordered.

"What do you need it for?"

"I told you to bring it. Now you'll see."

Buhalaqa went without saying another word and brought the scales. Gahan put the kilo weight on one side of the scales and the basket on the other side, then he started shouting, "Who knows who ate the meat? The cat weighs less than one kilo! If there is the cat in the basket, where is the meat? And if there is the meat in the basket, what happened to the cat? Poor Fufinu! Get out of here, because it is you whom I am going to eat, maybe I'll taste that meat you have eaten!"

# Feasts and Carnival

Maltese feasts (religious feasts marking the patron saint of the village church) are lively and colourful affairs with fireworks, music, dancing and plenty of food. Each village has at least one 'festa' a year, and there is a healthy rivalry over which community will put on the best fireworks display.

Malta also has a carnival before the beginning of Lent. A major music event is the Malta Jazz Popular Festival.



The Malta Jazz Festival takes place every year on the third weekend of July. The venue is the spectacular area below the Valletta bastions next to the waters of the Grand Harbour. Valletta is Malta's 16th century Capital city. A truly breathtaking location.

A variety of styles and nationalities is always on offer in an effort to satisfy all tastes within the jazz scene.

In 1883, not so far away from the village of Gharb, a spinster, Karmni Grima claimed to have heard a mystical voice calling her from within a countryside chapel. From then on the devotion to the Madonna ta' Pinu chapel arose and many were those who paid homage and recovered from serious illness. Eventually the present beautiful church was erected and the chapel integrated within it. The sanctuary is today a place of pilgrimage to thousands of devotees from Malta and Gozo.

# TA' PINU CHURCH



# Maltese Lace



Maltese lace is a traditional craft handed over to us from generation to generation. Lace occupies an important place among other works of art.

It was imported to Malta from other countries by a Gozitan priest, who brought with him some bobbin lace and showed it to two Gozitan ladies. They later made some patterns and began to work bobbin lace themselves. They also taught this handcraft to others, until it spread all over the island.

Lace is worked on a pattern which is pinned to a pillow, in Maltese called 'trajbu'. The pillow is made by sewing two pieces of strong cloth 60cm by 30cm together. Then it is stuffed with straw and covered with brown paper for several times. Bobbins are then wound in pairs by strong thread. A hitch is made on each bobbin to hold the thread in place without letting the bobbins run down the pillow. The stitches are worked on the pillow according to the pattern and held in place with coloured beaded pins. Different stitches are worked and beautiful patterns are created which shows the skill of every lace maker.



Bobbin lace is called Malta lace because Maltese women can work it with great accuracy, with the difference that the Maltese type contains a particular characteristic to any other lace, for instance, the Maltese Cross. Women of these islands have been working this type of lace for over a century.



# I-Imnarja



The origins of I-Imnarja can be traced back to before the arrival of the Knights in 1530. Following closely the hard toils of harvest time, I-Imnarja made a pleasant break in the peasant's dull, everyday routine.

The word Imnarja is a corruption of the Italian word *luminaria*, recalling the illumination of Mdina cathedral and the torchlight procession followed by the firing of 100 petards. On the weekend closest to St John's Day, celebrated on June 24, it was customary to herald I-Imnarja with the Bandu, a proclamation issued for the good order of people and read by the town crier. This custom was recently revived on the initiative of the Casino Notabile and the Agrarian Society.

Like everything good in summer, I-Imnarja happens outside. In the 16th century, there were the races for men, boys, slaves, donkeys and horses in front of the Banca Giuratale in Mdina. Animals were ridden barebacked, the riders gripping their mount with the knees and urging on the beasts with short sticks in either hand. The prize was a damask banner, known as the palju, which was handed out to the winners by the Grand Master himself from a tribune purposely built at *Saqqajja*.

People would then spend the night at Buskett, eating, drinking and generally making merry. It is traditionally held that country girls used to stipulate with their intended husbands that they should take them to I-Imnarja once a year. The women appeared at Buskett in their wedding dress, irrespective of the season in which they were married. Nowadays, no newly-married bride would dream of going to Buskett in her wedding dress. Still the people who gather there today are no less colourful.



A small boat with a rainbow-colored stripe is on a calm blue lake. The background shows a hazy, green landscape.

# GASTRONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

A person in a yellow shirt and another person in a red shirt are sitting on a balcony with a metal railing. They are looking out over a scenic view of a town and a body of water. The scene is bright and sunny.

# Maltese Cuisine

Maltese gastronomy is a fascinating blend of influences that reflects Malta's location and history. Primarily Italian in character, Maltese cuisine also borrows extensively from the kitchens of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean. Over the centuries, all of these distinct components have been integrated into a uniquely wholesome and flavourful mixture. We hope you will find the following examples of traditional recipes to your liking.

## Qaghaq ta' l-Ghasel (Honey Rings)

### Ingredients:

#### For the pastry:

400g flour  
75g semolina  
150g margarine  
100g sugar

#### For the filling:

400g treacle  
400g sugar  
2 tablespoons cocoa  
1 tablespoon semolina  
2 tablespoons anisette  
rind of an orange  
rind of a lemon  
a pinch of ground cloves  
half teaspoonful mixed spice  
250ml water

### Method:

Place flour and semolina into a bowl. Rub in margarine. Mix in sugar and finally add enough water to form a smooth and manageable pastry.

### Method:

Mix all the ingredients except the semolina into a saucepan and gently bring to the boil. Add the semolina stirring all the time. Simmer until mixture thickens. Remove from heat and cool. Roll out pastry into long strips of 8cm wide and 30cm long. Place filling into middle of each strip. Roll pastry over the filling and join each end of the roll to form a ring. At intervals of 6cm cut small slits in the pastry. Put rings on a floured baking dish and bake in hot oven until golden brown.



# Stuffat tal-Fenek

### Ingredients:

1 rabbit  
 120g onions  
 3 bay-leaves  
 120g fresh peas  
 180g tomatoes  
 2 tablespoons oil  
 120 g potatoes  
 120g fresh carrots  
 1 glass of red wine  
 2 glasses of water  
 fresh garlic  
 salt and pepper

## (Rabbit Stew)

### Method:

Cut the rabbit into small pieces and fry lightly in a small amount of oil or butter. In a separate saucepan fry the chopped onions and garlic till golden brown. After add the chopped, peeled tomatoes and bay-leaves.

Add the water to the rabbit and leave it to simmer for about 15 minutes. Then pour the wine and put in the peas, chopped onions, chopped potatoes, salt and pepper, leaving it to cook for another hour on low fire.



# Biskuttini tar-Rahal

### Ingredients:

250g flour  
 250g sugar  
 55g of margarine  
 grated lemon peel  
 grated orange peel  
 crushed cloves  
 a pinch of cinnamon  
 a teaspoon of chocolate powder  
 1 egg  
 2 spoons of milk



### Method:

## (Village Biscuits)

Mix the flour, the margarine and the sugar together. Mix them well with your fingertips. Afterwards add the other ingredients and the beaten egg. Add 2 spoons of milk to make the mixture more soft.

Grease an oven dish with margarine and spread some flour on it. From this mixture, form some biscuits and place them on the dish. Leave a little space between them. On top of them spread a bit of sugar. Bake in a moderate oven for about 20 minutes.



One Maltese food speciality is the cheese cake or pea cake, known in Maltese as 'pastizzi'. These usually have a characteristic form and consist of a special type of pastry with cheeselet or pea filling.

### Ingredients:

For the Pastry:

400g plain flour

½ tsp. salt

200ml cold water

125 - 150g margarine

For the Filling:

400g rikotta

salt and pepper

3 eggs beaten

## Pastizzi (Cheese cakes)

### Method:

Mix the sieved flour and salt with approximately 200ml of cold water into a soft pliable but not sticky dough, knead well leave to rest for about 90 minutes. When rested, roll, stretch and pull the dough on a floured surface into long strips. Spread half the fat over the entire length of dough, first with a palette knife then with clean hands. Take one end of the dough and roll it up like a swiss roll, make it uneven turning it tightly sometimes then more loosely. Rest it in the fridge. Repeat the rolling so that the roll is once more a long strip. Spread the remaining fat, roll it up again like a swiss roll, this time in a different direction from the first roll. This enhances the flakiness of the finished pastry. Rest it again.

Mash the rikotta with the salt and pepper, add the beaten eggs, cut off pieces of dough the size of a small ball with a sharp knife and pull out each piece with your fingers like a thin disc. Place a spoonful of rikotta mixture in the centre, close the dough around it and seal the edge with your fingers. Place on a lightly oiled baking sheet and bake in hot oven for 25 minutes or till golden.

# MINESTRA (VEGETABLE SOUP)

### Ingredients:

2 to 3 large onions  
 3 large potatoes  
 2 sticks of celery  
 3 carrots  
 half a cabbage  
 180g long marrow  
 180g cauliflower  
 half a pumpkin  
 a little tomato  
 a dessertspoon of salad oil  
 salt and pepper  
 120g to 180g of dried broad beans,  
 haricot beans, chick peas or lentils  
 pasta, usually a thickish variety.

### Method:

Cut up all the vegetables roughly and place in a large saucepan. Add water to about half way up, and tomato, oil, salt and pepper. Bring to simmering point and simmer for about 3 hours. The beans (or other pulses) are best cooked separately and added in the last 30 minutes. Their treatment depends on their age and variety - not all pulses need to be soaked overnight. A pinch of bicarbonate of soda may be added to hasten cooking.

When the vegetables are cooked (most of the water having been absorbed) the soup may be mashed roughly or left as it is. Now the pasta is added - a little more water may need to be added first, in which case make sure the water boils before adding the pasta. In some villages it is customary to use 2 or 3 different varieties (i.e. shapes) of pasta.

Before serving, a little milk and a good lump of butter may be added, and the minestra is served with generous helpings of grated cheese - preferably parmesan.





# Krustini (Country Biscuits)

### Method:

Sift flour, add baking powder and rub in the margarine. Beat egg in a bowl and add the sugar. Mix the egg and sugar well and add to the flour.

Add orange juice together with all the other ingredients. Mix well and add a very little water to obtain a rather stiff dough.

Divide dough into four portions and form each portion into a long flat roll. Bake in a moderately hot oven until light gold in colour.

Allow to cool completely. Cut the baked rolls in 1cm thick slices and bake again until golden and crisp.

### Ingredients:

- 400g flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 100g margarine
- 100g sugar
- 50g candied orange peel, finely chopped
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla essence
- Grated rind and juice of 1 orange
- 50g roasted almonds, roughly chopped

# Gbejniet

Drying *gbejniet*, the cheeselets made from sheep's milk, is summer work. The *gbejniet* are put to dry in a 'cheese safe' (*qafas*), in the cool, dry shade. They are then put into a clean cotton sack and stored in similar conditions.

Well-dried *gbejniet* are delicious when gently fried in olive oil until golden, then served with good Maltese bread and a salad. When they are too dry, it is best to soak them in good vinegar for an hour or two, removing them and placing them in a jar with plenty of freshly ground pepper. Shake the jar until the *gbejniet* are coated in pepper then add a dash of vinegar. These are called *gbejniet tal-bzar*.



**Gbejniet friski**

# Melita, land of honey

Malta's ancient name, Melita, is derived from the Greek word meaning honey. The name was probably given in the early ages, when large quantities of honey were already being produced by the residents of these islands.

Nobody is sure when honey first started being produced in Malta. In Roman times honey was already being produced in large quantities. In 71 BC Caius Verres, the Roman Governor of Sicily was accused of stealing several honey pots from Malta.

Apiculture, the art of bee keeping, has greatly changed nowadays. Modern methods based on scientific research have been introduced in Malta but the taste of honey has remained the same.

Malta's climate is ideal for bee keeping. The mild winters mean that bees can be active throughout the year. The large number and variety of wild and agricultural flowers are also important as they ensure a steady supply of nectar which bees collect to produce honey.



The taste of the honey depends on the flower from which the nectar was collected. The best known flavour is thyme honey, which is very popular and in demand. Thyme grows in small bushes with tiny purple blossoms, in the arid rocky areas. Bees also collect nectar from carob, clover and orange bloom.

An ever growing number of people use honey because of its prevention against various diseases. It also contains important minerals which are vital to our health.



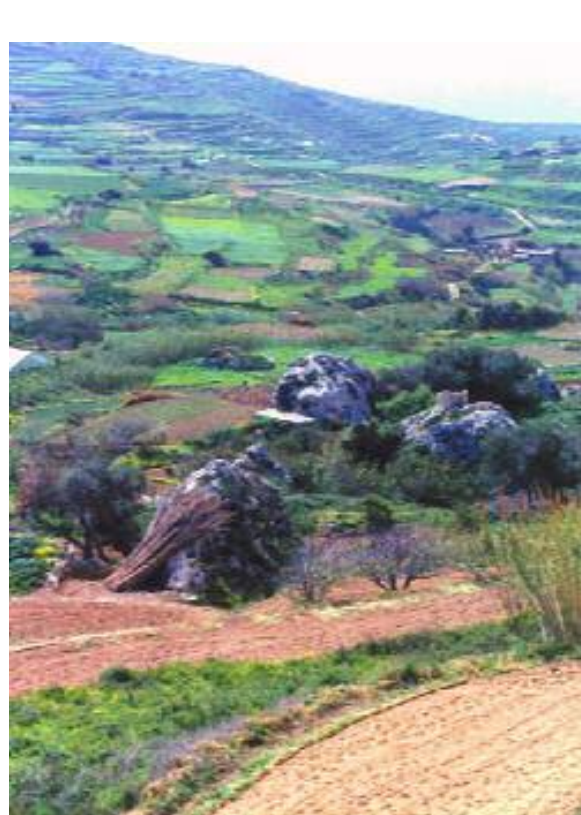


# Landscape



The landscape is typically Mediterranean, with its rocky heathland, dwarf vegetation and resilient, drought-resistant plants. Although the soil is thin over the limestone rock bed, it supports a thriving agricultural industry.

There's a surprising variety of vegetables and fruit on offer at local markets: giant-sized vegetables, as well as the harvest of oranges and lemons in winter, and sun-ripened tomatoes, peppers, aubergines, figs and melons in summer.



The Islands' landscape is made up of terraced hills and valleys. Over the centuries, farmers have used prickly pear to mark boundaries: rampant, spiny cactus which has now spread everywhere. In winter, freak storms form temporary streams and fill the precious reservoirs.

# Countryside & walks

The first rains after the long, hot summer bring the landscape to life with an astonishing variety of wild flowers. From mid November until mid May or so, you'll find the Islands green and lush. Fields are full of vegetables and waysides are carpeted with fennel, clover, wild iris, myrtle and much more. By late spring, a thousand or more species of plants will be in flower.



Away from the resorts and urban areas of central Malta, there is a surprising amount of countryside, some left almost untouched by the 20th century. Farmers often use traditional labour-intensive methods of yesteryear. Village life still centres on the agricultural and fishing seasons.



Today, as in past times, you will still see old men and women, sometimes with their extended families, working the fields. In the north of Malta, where the ground is barren, and in many parts of Gozo, you'll come across small flocks of shaggy-coated goats and sheep being herded along the wayside country tracks.





**Blue Grotto at Wied iz-Zurrieq**

# Cliffs

The cliffs are the most spectacular natural monuments on the Maltese Islands and rank among the more impressive landmarks in the Mediterranean. They rise up a staggering 250 metres above the sea places. The best views are at Dingli Cliffs on the West of Malta, and at Ta' Cenc in Gozo.



**Ta' Cenc Cliffs**



**Azure Window at Dwejra**

But to gain a really impressive view, take a boat trip around the Islands. On land, coastal footpaths at Fomm ir-Rih or Xlendi in Gozo provide the easiest view points. There are magnificent natural sculptures such as the Azure Window at Dwejra in Gozo, Fungus Rock and the Inland Sea nearby.

Besides their natural beauty, cliffs are home to a variety of wildlife and birds. They have also provided a home to the Bronze Age islanders. On the more accessible, inland escarpments, natural caves were enlarged and used even until well into the 20th century as homes to a few families.



**Comino cliffs**

# The national plant of Malta: Widnet il-Bahar



The national plant of Malta is named 'Widnet il-Bahar' (in English: Maltese Rock-Centaury). This is not very common, and in Malta it only grows in the wild.

It is mostly found growing on cliff faces, such as those close to Ghar Hasan in Malta or Ta' Cenc in Gozo, or in the deep valleys of Wied Babu, Gebel Ciantar and near Bahrija, situated in Malta.

'Widnet il-Bahar' makes violet flowers that blossom between June and August. This plant sometimes grows in the roundabouts of the roads too.



# Comino



The one square mile island of Comino lies between the two bigger islands. It is usually reached by privately-owned boats. The lonely tower watching over the island was built in 1613 during the grandmastership of Aloff de Wignacourt. The Blue Lagoon has the most lucid clear waters of the whole archipelago.



# The National Bird of Malta: Merill (Blue Rock Thrush)

Dark, but intensely blue in good light and at close range, the Blue Rock Thrush is mostly found around cliffs and deep gorges; it also occurs around coastal villages and developments, perching freely on roofs and wires. In more remote places, it is often best located by its loud song. Females are more problematical than males but equally distinctive if seen well. The Thrush-like silhouette, with a particularly long, thick, spike-like bill, is a useful feature.



**VOICE:** Deep, thrush-like chook, higher squeaky notes; song rich, musical warbling, melancholy, Blackbird-like, carrying far across gorges and cliffs nest.

**NESTING:** Grassy cup in hole in wall or cliff or under rocks; 4 or 5 eggs; 1 or 2 broods; May-July.

**FEEDING:** Picks insects, spiders, worms, lizards, berries, and seeds from ground.

**FLIGHT:** swift, direct; flappy over long distance, recalling Blackbird.

**EXCLUSIVE ON CLIFFS:** The blue male is handsome when seen well but is surprisingly difficult to spot against rocks. His similar species are the Blackbird, Rock Thrush and Spotless Starling.



# CALYPSO'S CAVE



Calypso's Cave takes one back to the legendary days of Homer. Though it is hard to compare the present state of the cave and its surroundings with Homer's description of Calypso's dwelling place, prehistoric sherds of the Ggantija phase 3600 BC have been found a few metres away from the mouth of the cave. This site has been acclaimed as Calypso's Cave for many years.

From the heights of the cave the view stretches over the valley of Ramla and the red sand dunes of the Bay below.

# The Fungus Rock

The huge boulder-like rock stands still further to the Azure Window and is also known as the General's Rock (il-Gebla tal-General). On it grows a flowering plant (often called Malta Fungus) which was greatly sought during the Knights' period from all over Europe for its supposedly medicinal qualities.



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