



DISCOVER
GOZO





Welcome to the Island of Gozo



Just a 25-minute ferry-ride away from the mainland lies Malta's littler sister island – Gozo. It is the second-largest island in the Maltese archipelago, and is located to the northwest of Malta.

Although highly influenced by Malta's way of life, Gozo has a wonderful character of its own, typified by a slower-paced and more traditional way of life.

Home to around 32,000 people, Gozo feels like a largely unspoilt piece of paradise right in the heart of the Mediterranean. Covering an area of just 67sq km (26sq miles) it is an island you can happily explore and really fall in love with on a longer stay. In fact, while travellers do venture here on a day trip, they often regret not allocating the several days needed to really get to know it. After all, Gozo is famed for its hospitality; locals will

welcome you and encourage you to experience the aspects of the island that they love so much.

Gozo is also renowned for its picturesque landscape, with plenty of open spaces and pretty villages. Here life is mostly tranquil and the locals relish their laid-back ways. Authenticity is treasured, and you will become part of a traditional way that has been handed down from generation to generation, and which is still celebrated today.

But that certainly doesn't mean that you will be bored. Gozo has embraced many of the finer things in life: five-star accommodation, world-class restaurants and high street shopping. On top of that, its lively cultural calendar makes the most of the 300-plus-days of sunshine that the Island enjoys every year, with events and activities everyone will love to be part of.

Travelling to Gozo

Connecting to Gozo is easy, on a 25-minute car ferry that operates round the clock

Travelling to Malta

As there are no air links to Gozo, the island of Malta will be your first stop if you're planning to visit.

Malta is a very convenient destination, with numerous flights to and from most European countries each week. You will be able to choose to fly with Malta's national airline, or with one of the several low-cost airlines that now travel regularly into the country.

Getting to Gozo

Once you're in Malta, getting to Gozo is really easy. Public buses travel regularly between Malta International Airport and the ferry point in Cirkewwa, and taxis are also available.

An efficient ferry service runs from Cirkewwa in the north of Malta to Mġarr in Gozo; every 45 minutes during the day, and less frequently at night. The 25-minute crossing will take you past the Island of Comino, and the ferry can carry both passengers and cars. Ticketing happens on the way back from Gozo, so you will not need to purchase a ticket in Cirkewwa.

Exploring Gozo

While a regular public bus system operates round the clock on Gozo, we do recommend that you hire a car. This will enable you to stick to your own schedule and to explore the island at ease.

You will find that all of the road signs and markings are in both Maltese and English, and that we drive on the left hand side of the road.

If you would rather not drive, there are other alternatives. Bicycles, motorbikes and quad bikes are all available for hire, while taxis are readily available in prime areas.

You could also choose to join an excursion on land or sea. These include open-top bus tours, tours on fishing boats, private yacht charters, segway tours, jeep safaris and bespoke tours in private cars.

While in Gozo, you may also wish to plan a trip over to Comino. Ferries to this island regularly depart the Mġarr Harbour and take around 20 minutes.



Discovering the undiscovered

While Gozo may have some of the most beautiful beaches and exciting historical treasures in the world, it remains one of the Mediterranean's hidden gems

We all love secrets. And part of the fun of travelling lies in unearthing new and exciting destinations to tell our family and friends about.

Authenticity is a key aspect of Gozo's charm. While neighbouring Malta has made the move towards a very cosmopolitan lifestyle, Gozo still retains the age-old charms that make it so special. This is the Mediterranean where you really can experience the wonderful traditions that this region has to offer. Nevertheless, visitors here have everything they need, with plenty of quality hotels, restaurants and other amenities to help them feel at home.

Gozo is the second largest of the islands that make up the Maltese archipelago. Sitting just north of Malta, it is far less built-up and commercial than its neighbour, and still has sprawls of beautiful, open countryside.

Gozo's pretty villages are dotted through its rugged terrain, separated by stretches of countryside. You will find history around every corner, including baroque parish churches with beautiful open piazzas, and the world-famous UNESCO world heritage Ggantija temples that have certainly helped to put the island on the map internationally.

Just like many places in the Mediterranean, Gozo enjoys a mild climate with rainy winters and hot, dry summers. We recommend the shoulder months (October to March) if you want to enjoy hiking, biking and trekking round the island, while the 35°C summer is ideal for complete relaxation on the beach or by the pool. This weather also makes it ideal for year-round scuba diving around its spectacular coastline, and Gozo is often celebrated as being amongst the three top diving destinations in the world. The waters here offer endless opportunities for sailing, windsurfing, snorkelling and kayaking.



The island with everything to offer

If you've chosen Gozo for your holiday, then you can look forward to being immersed in history, culture and a vibrant island lifestyle

Gozo may be one of the smallest inhabited islands in the Mediterranean, but that doesn't stop it from giving its visitors a little bit of everything. In fact, from its beautiful landscape to its luxury accommodation and unique farmhouses, Gozo has become a beloved favourite among both individual and group travellers.

The capital city, Victoria, is very much the centre of activity on the island. It is recommended to spend a day here, exploring the backstreets, visiting the museums and shopping in the market square. Also known as Rabat, visitors can discover the fortified medieval citadel here. This is the city's main attraction, commanding spectacular 360° views of the entire island from its bastions. The town itself has a thriving cultural life with some surprising attractions including two opera houses on the same street.

Gozo is very easy to explore, and you can quickly travel between different sites and villages. This is an ideal way to pack plenty into your day, as you combine the island's natural attractions, such as the coastal salt pans or the Dwejra Inland Sea, to its many historical highlights, including the Ggantija Temples.

Each town or village has a landmark to be proud of – whether that's a parish church or an archaeological remain. As a Catholic country, religion plays a prominent role in every day life, and regular activities make up the vibrant religious calendars, including festas and holy days. You will discover churches to visit across the island, but one particular one is the Ta' Pinu Shrine, which welcomes hundreds of visitors every week and showcases thousands of gifts and letters that have been sent in as thanks to the Virgin Mary.

Gozo is an island that now blends old and new. Traditional crafts are still produced with pride, and sold side-by-side with high street items found in other European hotspots. It is this pleasing amalgamation that makes Gozo such a fantastic place to visit – you will have all the mod cons you are used to, as well as the charming nuances that make this destination stand out among so many others.

Of course, nothing completes Gozo's list of advantages more than its beautiful beaches and bays. Whether you're here for one day or 20, completing your stay with a stint at one of the beautiful beaches such as San Blas or Ramla Bay... Bliss!



7,000 years of history

Go back in time to discover the many eras that shaped Gozo's past and present.

It was around 5000BC that the island was first inhabited, by people believed to have travelled from Sicily. This is when Gozo's magnificent Neolithic temples were built. In the millennia since, Gozo has been home to everyone from agrarian and temple-building societies, to the Phoenicians who arrived in 700BC.

Roman rule brought prosperity and Christianity to the island and, at the time, Gozo was run by a separate governing body to Malta. This period left its mark on the island, as did Arab rule centuries later; to this day, Ghawdex (the Maltese word for Gozo) harks back to this era in its history.

In 1530, both Malta and Gozo were given to the Knights of St John, who built several key buildings and eventually fortified it against attack. British rule, between 1800 and 1964, marked the islands' last chapter before they were granted independence.

Today Gozo, as part of the Maltese archipelago, is a member of the EU.

Visitors to the island can experience this amazing history reflected in the cuisine, architecture and language.

Archaeology

Gozo's exciting history is literally set in stone thanks to the plethora of archaeological treasures that have been found here over the centuries. It is understood that the Island's first residents made Gozo their home around 5,000BC, when they travelled here from Sicily to settle in caves in the northwest. Remnants from this era include the mammoth Ggantija Temples, which are renowned as the world's oldest freestanding structures. Today you can visit the site of these temples to walk round them and learn their story at the Visitors' Centre.

And if the temples pique your interest, then other archaeological sites might interest you too, such as the Archaeological Museum in the Citadel (in Victoria) and the Xaghra Stone Circle. The impressive fortifications around the Citadel also deserve a visit as they were built in the 17th century to ensure the safety of the town's residents.



In and out of the water a Gozitan adventure

The crystal clear waters around Gozo make it the ideal spot for water activities, including scuba diving, kayaking and boat tours.

Diving

Gozo is world-famous when it comes to diving. The island has frequently been voted among the top places to dive at, and there are tours and wrecks to satisfy everyone from novices to diving professionals.

In fact, the island is a great place to come if you're hoping to start your diving training. There are a variety of schools to choose from and most are certified by the international Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI).

The weather is also ideal almost all year round, and the sea temperature rarely dips below 15°C – even in winter! This means that you don't have to stick to the high season to dive here, but can instead opt for the shoulder months (October to March) when tourist numbers are lower and the beaches are less crowded.

Gozo's popular dive sites include Fungus Rock in Dwejra Bay, which drops down to 45 metres, and the wildlife-abundant Reqqa Point in the north. For an unbeatable land-meets-sea experience, you can't top the Inland Sea in Dwejra, which has a stunning 35-metre tunnel leading out to the open sea and Dwejra is also home to an underwater

limestone cave known as the Blue Hole.

Water Sports

Of course you don't have to go below the water to enjoy Gozo's beautiful sea – the surface can be just as fun! Water-sport companies are set up at most beaches here, offering facilities for sailing, angling, water skiing and jet skiing. Most also provide speedboats and pedalos if you want to head off to explore the coast on your own steam.

Kayaking

Kayaking really gives you the chance to get to know Gozo's coast – up close and personal – while still enjoying the beauty of the sea at the same time. The clear waters and mild currents make Gozo the ideal spot for kayaking, and you can choose to go out on your own or to join a group with a guide.

Boat Trips

Whether you want speed or comfort, hopping aboard one of the many commercial boats in Gozo will give you the chance to see the island from a completely different vantage point. Tours are available from several, separate bays, and some will even take you across to Comino to see the world-famous Blue Grotto.

Beaches & Bays

Gozo's coastline is magnificent, and home to a plethora of both sandy and rocky beaches. Ramla Bay, is famed for its stretch of red sand and the picturesque landscape that surrounds it. This unspoilt haven is popular with families and, while it can get very busy during the peak months, it remains a relaxing place to while away a day. Other sandy beaches include San Blas Bay, Xlendi Bay and Marsalforn Bay.

If you prefer to have rocks underfoot, then you will be spoilt for choice too. Xatt l-Ahmar is ideal for snorkelling with wildlife, while Hondoq ir-Rummien provides unparalleled views across the sea to Comino. If you are coming into Gozo by private boat, ask to stop by Mgarr ix-Xini, a small bay set within a stunning creek.



Sense of adventure

Gozo may be known for its sense of relaxation, but that doesn't mean you can't get an adrenaline buzz too!

There is no doubt that long, lazy days on the beach or in the countryside are wonderful but, sometimes, we all want a little excitement too. And Gozo promises plenty of opportunity for adventure, whatever the weather and time of year.

The island's rocky landscape presents the ideal terrain for outdoor pursuits, including mountain biking, cycling, trekking and climbing. Paths here are generally good, though it is important to pack the right footwear and equipment, and to inform someone about where you are going. Guided adventure tours can also be arranged if you prefer to join a group.

Depending on your abilities and preferences, other popular adventure activities include abseiling, climbing, kayaking, paragliding, off-roading and snorkelling. All of these can be organised for individual travellers as well as groups.

Walking and Trekking

The Gozitan terrain is ideal for walking and trekking tours, and this can be enjoyed all year round, especially during the shoulder months when the weather isn't quite as hot.

Self-guided walking will give you the opportunity to see the island at your own pace, whether you are an experienced trekker, or simply want a leisurely stroll. You will also happen across all sorts of sites as you explore, from cultural attractions to historic treasures and completely unspoilt areas of natural beauty.

While there are various routes to choose from, the popular ones include the Dahlet Qorrot walk, which starts and ends in Nadur, and the Ramla walk, which starts in Marsalforn and ends in Ramla Bay. The Gozo Coastal route is also very picturesque and is ideal if you have the time to really get to know the island. This route is split into four sections of around five hours each.



Experience Village Life

Gozo promises a truly authentic experience, and you will be able to immerse yourself in the local way of life – from traditional farmhouses to bocci games.

Beyond the crystal clear waters and the stunning Gozitan coast, you will find the true heart of the island – its villages.

Dotted through the landscape these villages promise a true reflection of the way of life here they are simultaneously peaceful and busy; teeming with life while also providing a haven away from the island's larger towns.

These villages take pride in their produce – whether that's local cheese, honey, fruit or vegetables. This give you the chance to buy local and eat local, and visitors are always welcomed into the community even if only for a few hours or days.

You'll find that the heart of each village is its parish church and square (or pjazza). This is where locals come to meet, chat and shop, and, if you want to mingle, this is a great place to start. You can also pop into one of the village bars, to nibble on local snacks and sample a drink or two.

If you'd really like to immerse yourself in village life, then you can also choose to stay local. Each village offers a variety of traditional farmhouses for rent, which are ideal for couples, families and groups of friends. Once you're settled, you may even find yourself wandering along to watch a game of bocci (boules) being played at the village club!



Eat, drink and be merry!

With various wines and foods for you to taste while on the island, it's time to tuck in.

Gozitan wine

It's hard to believe that the roots of Gozitan wine-making can be traced back over 2,000 years... But it's true! In fact, the Island's love affair with wine began during Roman rule, and was strengthened in the centuries that followed, both during medieval times and while the Knights of St John were based here. Since then, the islanders haven't looked back, and wine has always remained a part of our culture.

If you are a wine enthusiast (or are simply interested in learning more about wine production on the island), then you may wish to join a wine tasting tour at one of the wine estates. This will give you the chance to really experience Gozitan viticulture, and to pair our wonderful wines with a selection of other local delicacies, including goat's cheese, olive oil and crusty bread – the perfect accompaniments!

Gozitan food

Every nation has its food specialities and Gozo is no exception. Seasonal fresh produce is at the core of everything made here – and that's what makes it so delicious. Freshly-picked vegetables make up the base of the platters diners enjoy with a glass of wine, while fruit and pure Gozitan honey are the cornerstones of most desserts.

Many of the popular products here are still made by hand as they have been for generations. Take the tasty gbejniet for instance; these little, round cheeselets are made from goat's milk by the same farmers whose parents and grandparents made them decades before. More importantly, however, they are delicious, and are served fresh or dried, and flavoured with pepper and salt.

Pastizzi are another must-try for your time on the island. These delicate filo-pastry parcels are stuffed with either peas or ricotta cheese, and they are incredibly moreish.

If you do find yourself in a Gozitan bakery, then pick up a loaf of fresh bread or typical Gozitan ftira (pizza) to take back to your accommodation.

Naturally, most dishes here start with wonderful, fresh produce. Gozitan chefs have put their focus on being 'local' so, whenever possible, they turn straight to the Island's resources for their inspiration. As a result, Gozitan cuisine is famed for its scrumptious simplicity and it is served everywhere from wine bars and fine dining restaurants, to simple seaside eateries.



A place to meet

Gozo is a MICE destination in its own right, with excellent team-building opportunities and a range of venues for your events

As a destination in its own right, Gozo is also ideal for meetings, incentives, conferences and events.

Whether your delegates want an adrenaline-packed teambuilding weekend of hiking, rock-climbing and abseiling, or a tranquil location for a high-powered meeting or conference, Gozo has the personality and facilities to match. In fact, you will find that the Island's unique character can also be incorporated into your programme, with plenty of authentic Mediterranean activities to choose – from cooking with a local chef to learning the ropes with a Gozitan farmer to entertain your guests.

Accommodation is also varied enough to suit every occasion. There

is a selection of well-appointed four and five-star hotels, with professional amenities including naturally-lit meeting rooms, space for conferences, excellent banqueting facilities and audio-visual equipment. Alternatively, you may prefer a more traditional approach, and centuries-old farmhouses are available for rent with their own particular facilities, including mod cons such as luxury indoor-outdoor pools, air conditioning and Wi-Fi.

The Malta Tourism Authority runs a voluntary Quality Assured seal scheme for Destination Management Companies (DMCs), which offer a complete package for the meetings, incentives, conferences and events market.



Authentic Gozitan products

Traditional arts and crafts make ideal gifts and souvenirs



If there is one thing Gozo is renowned for, it's its authenticity. Locals here are so proud to still use methods passed down from their ancestors, and this is true of everything from craft-making to cooking.

If you're on the hunt for gifts and souvenirs to take home, then you will find them among the beautiful products made locally. The Island is particularly known for spinning and weaving – practices that can actually be traced back thousands of years. You will find a variety of products to choose from, including mats, wall hangings, lampshades and clothing.

For something daintier (and perhaps easier to pack in your suitcase!) two other practices come to mind – lace and filigree. Gozitan lace-making (known locally as bizzilla) can be

traced back to the 17th century and, although the number of lace makers has dwindled, products are still popular. Look out for beautiful napkins, table clothes and bookmarks. Silver filigree items, meanwhile, are handmade and crafted into beautiful necklaces, bracelets and rings. You can often watch both filigree and lace-makers at work at the Island's Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village in Gharb.

A taste of Gozo

Aside from being a great place to dine at, Gozo has also made a name for itself as a wonderful place to buy local produce. Several suppliers including market traders – retail delicious selections of fresh and dried Gozitan cheese, olive oil, wine, jams, honey, sundried tomato paste, liqueurs (such as limoncello) and more.

A place to relax and rejuvenate

With the gorgeous open landscape as your backdrop, Gozo really is the perfect place to relax. In fact, the island has made its reputation as a destination for top spas and beauty treatments.

If you're in need of a little rest and relaxation, then it is hard to beat Gozo's relaxed approach. As a typical Mediterranean island, life here harks back to a far simpler time, when people had time to focus on themselves and their well-being.

It is for these reasons that Gozo has become a centre for relaxation, and visitors often choose it specifically as their preferred place to unwind.

Aside from the natural amenities for relaxation – pretty bays, untarnished countryside and a quiet atmosphere you will find that your well-being can really be focused on here. Several spas and fitness centres have opened their doors, with a plethora of treatments that make use of the Island's resources and ingredients. Yoga has also become a popular activity on Gozo, with practitioners regularly organising outdoor sessions and yoga retreats

that make the most of the tranquil natural environment.

The top hotels all have spas of their own, with indoor and outdoor swimming pools, whirlpools, saunas, steam rooms and excellent therapists. Many provide state-of-the-art equipment and treatments too, ensuring the results will meet and exceed your expectations.

Due to all this, Gozo has become a top destination for wellness groups that travel here to enjoy the unparalleled combination of the natural landscape, quality service, top facilities and expert professionals. Of course, the fact that all this can be enjoyed within a few short miles makes the Gozitan wellness experience even more effective at ensuring you feel completely relaxed and reinvigorated by the time you head home.



Find the perfect place to stay

Whether you're looking for five-star hotel, a villa with a pool or a traditional farmhouse, Gozo's accommodation won't disappoint.

Gozo attracts people for so many different reasons. Couples looking for a romantic getaway, friends on a fun-filled weekend and companies on business trips all flock here, and their accommodation needs are effortlessly met.

The island can also match any budget. From budget friendly apartments to family homes and sprawling villas with private pools to luxury five-star hotels, you will find it here, as well as good three and four-star hotels and guesthouses and B&Bs.

If you want something that encapsulates Gozo's history, then you may pick a traditional converted farmhouse. These self-

catering homes tick many boxes, as many have private pools and top amenities, while also reflecting the Island's rural heritage and traditional building techniques. While some of these houses have simply been built to honour the island's authentic style, others actually date back hundreds of years, with traditional features that include mill rooms, archways, flagstones, cellars and central courtyards.

Gozo has implemented an 'eco certification programme' to help ensure the environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural sustainability of accommodation on the island. Today you will find a variety of hotels and farmhouses that are eco-certified.



A place to marry

Tie the knot on one of the most romantic islands in the Mediterranean.

It's easy to understand Gozo's allure as a romantic oasis. Combining history, nature and culture, the island has attracted lovers for centuries – and everyone from the mythological nymph Calypso to international superstars Brad and Angelina have fallen in love with it.

Getting married

If you're considering a destination wedding, then Gozo could tick many of the boxes that are most important to you. With year-round sunshine, beautiful beaches, excellent cuisine and luxurious resorts, you will find everything you need to craft the wedding you have always dreamed of.

The Island can host a variety of wedding ceremonies, including civil and religious weddings, and civil partnerships. There's also a plethora of venues to choose from – from stunning coastal settings to luxurious yachts and lavish five-star hotels.

If you'd like a helping hand, experienced wedding planners are available to assist with the planning of your big day. They can arrange all the little touches that

will make your wedding absolutely perfect. Meanwhile, elements of Gozo can also be incorporated, such as traditional horse-and-cart transportation, popular local dishes and locally-sourced wedding favours.

Romantic honeymoons

Your honeymoon should be one of the most romantic holidays you ever experience, and that's exactly why Gozo is the perfect place for you to start your married life. And you won't be alone in your decision – world-famous superstars Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie recently chose to spend their honeymoon in Gozo, and they whiled their days away exploring the island and enjoying the facilities at their traditional farmhouse accommodation.

From unabashed luxury to uncharted territory, Gozo provides all the ingredients for an unbeatable honeymoon in the Mediterranean. You can combine historic discoveries with adrenaline-boosting adventures, and days by the pool with a sunset cruise around the coast. It will be the perfect you-time for the two of you.





Working Responsibly

Sustainability has become a way of life on Gozo. Local communities – from the government to businesses understand that the island is unique, and that its culture and environment need to be protected for it to continue to thrive.

Several initiatives have already been put in place to support that. They include the implementation of solar panel water heating, the use of photovoltaic panels and the construction of a wastewater treatment plant. Visitors are also encouraged to be aware of their carbon footprint while on Gozo, and to switch to alternative carbon-neutral modes of transport, including walking, cycling, segway tours and kayaking.

Agriculturally, many farmers have adopted an agro-approach, and are using organic methods to grow everything from tomatoes to potatoes and figs to tangerines.

Nicknamed 'the Eco Island' by many, Gozo will certainly continue to encourage green initiatives here in the future. A number of villages on the island have been recognised as European Destinations of Excellence, and Gozo also won the Quality Coast Gold Award for its sustainable practices.

Culture that's truly Mediterranean

You'll never be at a loss for things to do in Gozo. The island is home to numerous annual events, including its popular Carnival.

Gozitans really love theatre, so this art form in its many variants has found its way into their daily lives.

Opera has actually become a Gozitan niche, and the capital city is home to two beautiful theatres that regularly welcome international stars and large audiences to their high-end performances. Aside from opera, the theatres here also feature other music, dance and drama events, while other, smaller village theatres on Gozo also present regular productions.

Gozitan feasts

If you visit Gozo between May and September, then you will definitely happen upon one of the parishes' religious feasts. Held to honour the patron saint of each village, these 'festas' welcome visitors for a long weekend of celebrations, with beautiful decorations adorning the church and streets, processions and, world-renowned firework displays. Some of these festas also mark very particular days in the Gozitan calendar (such as Santa Marija in August), which see thousands of Maltese visiting the island to celebrate too.

Aside from religious festivities, numerous other festivals are held through the year. These vary, and the

themes can range from agriculture and history to music and crafts.

Carnival

Just like in Malta, carnival in Gozo is a long-awaited annual event that both locals and visitors really look forward to. Family celebrations typified by brightly-coloured floats, children dressed in fancy costumes and plenty of merriment are held in the main streets and square of Victoria.

An alternative carnival, though, has also made a name for itself in Gozo. Held simultaneously in the pretty village of Nadur, this 'grotesque' event is a more adult affair, with dark undertones, scary costumes and masked creatures. People travel from far and wide to experience Nadur's eclectic carnival, where a party atmosphere reigns the whole weekend long.

Christmas Time

Gozo's towns and villages all present traditional cribs and choir singing over the festive season, which reveals the true craftsmanship of the Gozitans. You can also roam around Bethlehem's Ghajnsielem, where the entire area known as Tal Passi, is transformed into a nativity village over Christmas and New Year.





Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007-2013



LEADER
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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development:
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