

Gozo

experience arts & crafts



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I | Glass blowing

*Love of beauty is taste. The creation of beauty is art.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)*

The technique of glass blowing has been around since antiquity. Syrians are generally credited with the discovery that glass could be blown from the end of a hollow tube into bewilderingly myriad shapes. In Malta and Gozo glassware is thought to date back to Phoenician times. It is enduringly fascinating how the fusion of so many disparate components can create such heart-warming, mind-exciting objects of lambent beauty. It takes years to master the art of blowing glass. The glass is moulded, cut and formed into exquisite works of art which offer the customer genuine handmade products from paperweights to finely wrought, detail-rich vases, to which colours and complex patterns are applied. These timeless original designs, are inspired by the breathtaking and spectacular local scenery and the colours of the Mediterranean Sea, the sand at Ramla Bay and the inspiring sunsets. In glassblowers' workshops at Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village in Għarb, Gozo one can follow these highly skilled craftsmen at work. So why don't you pop in at these workshops and treat yourself to some of these masterpieces?



2 | Filigree and jewellery

'A thing of beauty is a joy forever.' (John Keats).

Indeed, there are few things more aesthetically ravishing and visually stunning than the delicate, creatively designed and intricately wrought hand made Maltese filigree products. Look out for pendants, necklaces, brooches, earrings, bracelets and rings, designed and hand made by local silversmiths and jewellers, whose art and craft beggar description. Thankfully, the tradition is still vibrant as Gozitan filigree jewellery is very much in demand among both local consumers and visitors, keen on buying a special gift or a self-gratifying treat, that is redolent with Gozitan culture and traditions. Filigree jewellery is still made in the traditional way. However, to give a contemporary twist to an ancient craft, new modern, innovative methods have been fused with age-old methods to produce a wide array of original, genuine products, that appeal to a wider market. Indeed the consummate skills evident in the enormous variety of patterns, materials and motifs used by artists in producing craft jewellery, reflect the enduring ingenuity and devotion to cultural roots, of craftsmen and artists who make creativity a way of life.



Photo by Chris Migeon

3 | Food

Gozitan cuisine reflects the succession of foreign rulers and their cultures. For so long condescendingly dismissed as poor man's food, Gozitan cuisine is now lauded for the benefits gained from a simple, healthy and nutritious Mediterranean diet (the Mediterranean diet was inscribed in 2013 on the Unesco List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity). Seasonal produce makes for a wide range of delicious, moreish dishes. Gozo's small size ensures zero kilometre food that guarantees freshness. There's nothing that can delight the palate better than a delectable local platter comprising fresh and sundried tomatoes (photo left), gbejniet (cheeselets), a few slices of Gozitan sausage enriched with undertones of garlic and coriander seeds, fried lampuki served in a tomato and caper sauce, some crusty fresh bread or a ftira spread with kunserva (tomato paste), drizzled with local olive oil and accompanied by local olives and wild capers! Rounding off such delicacies with typical Gozitan desserts such as freshly fried imqaret (date-filled pastries), is a marriage made in heaven.

4 | Lace

The Maltese word for lace-making 'il-bizzilla' is also metaphorically used to describe a brilliantly conceived and expertly executed task. This is exactly the feeling you get as you observe with admiration, an experienced lacemaker deftly and expertly winding and weaving almost effortlessly, as if in a trance, the bobbins on a straw-stuffed pillow (trajbu in Maltese). The production of wonderfully intricate patterns and exquisitely crafted items defies description. The variety of products is wide, from tablecloths, bookmarks, to pictures turned into a lace pattern, bridal veils, church vestments, and couture. Art, craft and design converge in Gozitan lace-making. Interestingly, the Maltese word 'trajbu' is derived from the word Maltese 'tarbija' a baby, suggesting that working on it to produce lace was and is still primarily a labour of love. This derivation speaks volumes about the important role lacemaking, practised almost in every household in the past, played in women's lives as an important source of revenue and as a social encounter. Lacemaking is the quintessence of the Gozitan character, an intriguing mixture of down-to-earth practicality, infinite patience, loyalty to traditions, resourcefulness and innovative spirit. Lace-making is here to stay.



5 | Pottery and Ceramics

Both pottery and ceramics have been an important part of human culture since the earliest of times. They rank among the most ancient of Maltese crafts and form a significant part of the cultural and artistic identity of the Maltese islands. Many pieces unearthed from temples of the Megalithic period are veritable works of art, the most precious of which is 'The Sleeping Lady' found at the Hypogeum. Pottery has been produced for thousands of years. It still attracts a lot of enthusiastic art and craft lovers in Malta and Gozo, who practise it assiduously. Tourists can visit studios and kilns and watch local craftspeople at work, producing a wide array of exquisitely designed, brightly coloured objects such as household ceramics, kitchenware, plaques, souvenirs of Malta, hand-painted plates and vases used both functionally and decoratively. These artists are inspired by the captivating beauty and amazing variety of the Gozitan landscape and its myriad colours which change with every season. Their versatility and creativity help them produce objects which reflect changing customs, personal feelings and clients' wishes and specifications. Check the Gozo cultural calendar for the annual ceramics festival at Xlendi bay.



Photo by Ted Attard

6 | Sea Salt Harvesting

*Salt is born of the purest of parents: the sun and the sea.
(Pythagoras, 5th century B.C.)*

The much sought after quality of the crunchy, sun-kissed, purest-of-white salt crystals harvested from the Mediterranean Sea stems from the abundance of these two natural elements. Sea salt has always been a highly valued commodity because of its preservative attributes. In Gozo, sea salt harvesting has a time-honoured history, dating back to Roman times. There was a time when high demand encouraged enterprising Gozitans to dig out rock-hewn pans to supplement natural rock-pools. These salt pans can be seen in various parts of the coastline on Gozo, most prominently at Qbajjar, Marsalforn. The advent of mined salt could have sounded the death knell of harvested sea salt, had it not been for the single-minded resolve, entrepreneurial aspiration and passion for an age-old tradition of a handful of expert sea salt harvesters like various generations of the Cini family in Gozo, working in 350-year-old salt pans at Qbajjar Marsalforn. The tradition has been thankfully kept vibrant by marketing sea salt as a gourmet product.

7 | Stone-carving

Over the centuries, stone, has been worked by countless generations of stone craftsmen in a bewildering number of remarkably ingenious ways and for a wide range of purposes. The small exquisitely crafted Xagħra Circle figurines, the honey-coloured majestic limestone temple of Ta' Pinu, Għarb and the exquisitely carved house facades and balconies bear witness to the Gozitan people's enduring love affair with stone carving. The creativity and sophisticated skills of Gozitan stonemasons and stone sculptors are etched ubiquitously throughout the island. The friable nature of globigerina limestone has made it possible for endless generations of stone artisans to cut, carve and shape this sedimentary rock to produce tools, such as mallets, and decorative, ornamental work such as elaborately carved balustrades, make rock-cut tombs, shape harbours, build monumental prehistoric temples, powerful fortifications, awe-inspiring palaces, and majestic churches, together with appealing farmhouses and terraced fields. The variety of architectural styles in which the malleable Maltese rock has been shaped and the innumerable motifs and patterns carved into it reflect the fusion of timelessness and eclecticism embodied in the Gozitan intimate relationship with and creative use of stone.



8 | Art in metal

Blacksmiths' workshops, where in the past wrought iron was forged into intricate works, are nowadays numbered in Gozo villages. Workshops and coal smitten rooms, the dormant forges and original tools, now lay idle, covered with decades of dust, yet still, the remarkable results of intensive labour and skilled hands marked by the harshness of the trade, lingers with us. Time may have surpassed the trade to a great extent, but not the works of art that embellish our village cores with lace-like wrought iron works on old town houses, among others. Other artists working on metals and creating unique pieces, including jewellery, can be found at Ta' Dbiegi Crafts Village and in private workshops around the island, providing the visitor an exciting choice of artistic creations.



9 | Weaving

Weaving enjoys a time-hallowed tradition in Maltese history. This ancient, noble craft, that was largely made obsolete by the advent of synthetic fibres and electrical weaving machines, is still being kept alive in the Maltese islands by a handful of accomplished, devoted artisans. Their passion for and dedication to their craft, and the consummate skills passed on from generation to generation, imbued them with the motivation and resolve to keep this old tradition vibrantly alive. The lasting, magical appeal and value of hand woven custom-built articles in a homogenised world can help preserve this craft. Gozitan weavers have always been held in high repute. Cotton linen produced in Gozo was highly esteemed all over Europe during the rule of the Knights of St John. Weaving on traditional wooden looms was also an essential source of income for countless families, giving rise to a cottage industry that engaged the whole family at home and out in the fields. In spite of technological advances nothing compares to handwoven, custom-made articles made of natural fibres, such as wool and cotton, that display original designs, be they traditional mats or blankets or more modern, sophisticated articles such as wall hangings, throw overs and design clothing.



10 | Wine and Beer

Though Gozitans have always indulged their love of wine since Roman times, Gozo started to take the art of wine-making seriously in the last 20 years. Grapes are rigorously inspected and the authenticity of wines produced is tested in Italy before they are accredited and granted a DOC label, the highest quality level for Maltese and Gozitan wines. Wine production in this short period has been an unmitigated success. Helped by incentives to plant new vineyards, various wineries have produced a wide array of award-winning native wines, fit to satisfy every taste, from top quality artisanal wines to more pocket-friendly labels. Tourists visiting Gozo are advised to sample some of the excellent fare on offer at wineries or vineyards. Why not raise a glass of full-bodied red wine and give a toast to the sun, the soil, and to all those who revere the culture of the vine and who have toiled in its production! Beer lovers also have an embarrassment of riches as they can also choose from among locally produced, award winning craft beer. Craft beer is brewed meticulously with the finest ingredients and a laborious process. The end product is free of preservatives and craft beer is smooth, creamy and thirst quenching. Saħħiet (Cheers)!

Photo by Daniel Cilia

Other Events

January

1st Jan: New Year's Toast, The Gaulitanus Choir, at Kempinski Hotel, San Lawrenz

15th Jan: Traditional Feast of St Anthony Abbot, Xaghra
Traditional blessing of animals, dog show, cat show, races for children and other activities organised by Saint Anthony Church in collaboration with Xaghra Local Council

29th Jan: Feast of St John Bosco, Victoria

February

1st Feb: The Best of the Gozo Youth Wind Band - Don Bosco Grand Concert, Victoria

Carnival is a colourful and fun celebration in Gozo and this year it will fall between the 5th and 9th February. For five consecutive days, the island's intense, natural Mediterranean blue and green is rivaled by the multi colours of carnival costumes and floats that meander the main towns and villages in upbeat mood.

19th Feb: Organised Carnival, Nadur

20th Feb: Organised Carnival, Għarb

24th Feb: Organised Carnival Qala, San Lawrenz

24th – 28th Feb: Carnival Activities in Victoria

24th -28th Feb: Spontaneous Carnival in Nadur

Sunset invites a multitude of masked and hooded creatures to through the streets of Nadur. The creativity of those taking part and the many visitors have earned it other names such as the grotesque carnival. A unique experience, not to be missed.

25th Feb: Carnival Activities, Nazzarenu Square, Xaghra
A varied Carnival programme including competitions and

dance by local companies. The traditional kukkanja will entertain visitors in the main village square.

26th Feb: Organised Carnival in Xaghra, Żebbuġ and Xewkija

27th Feb: Organised Carnival in Sannat

March

11th & 12th Mar: FMVA Vintage Motors Festival

25th Feb – 2nd April: Gaulitana, a Festival of Music

25th & 31st Mar: Evita, a musical at the Astra Theatre, Victoria

April

1st Apr: Opera Madama Butterfly, Gaulitana Festival

1st April: L-Imsallab fi Triqatna, Victoria, a re-enactment of the passion of Jesus through the streets of Victoria

***1st April – 16th April:** Two weeks of activities to celebrate the Easter season

25th Feb – 2nd April: Gaulitana, a Festival of Music

2nd April: Via Crucis at Ta' Ghammar Hill, Għarb with meditations based on the teachings of Pope Francis.

2nd April: Evita, a musical at the Astra Theatre, Victoria

7th April: Our Lady of Sorrows. An open air mass and religious, traditional procession in Victoria. Xewkija village organises an animated pageant along the old streets of the village.

8th April: Via Crucis at The Citadel Victoria with meditations based on the teachings of Pope Francis.

9th April: Good Friday Procession organised in Qala

13th April: Good Friday Procession organised in Victoria

14th April: Good Friday Procession organised in Nadur, Victoria, Xaghra and Żebbuġ.

16th April: Christ the Risen. Processions held in Victoria, Kerċem, Nadur, Xewkija, Żebbuġ, Qala, Xaghra, Fontana and Għarb

30th Apr: Gozo Half Marathon. Run for it! The 42nd edition of the Gozo Half Marathon

The Gozo Half Marathon was organised for the first time in Xaghra, Gozo on the 6th of February, 1977. Back then about 35 competitors took part but this number has increased dramatically over the years with locals and visitors from other European countries now joining this annual event. Apart from the half marathon, the event hosts an 8 mile (12.9 km) run, and a 4 km and 2km races for younger athletes, making it an ideal event for the whole family. The half marathon route is of varying elevation and takes the participants through various Gozitan villages and breathtaking views of the island's landscape.

May

6th May: The Gozo Ultra Trail, the most scenic route in the Mediterranean returns on Saturday the 6th May 2017.

The event will consist of a 55km trail run, 55km MTB challenge and a 21km trail run. The course is a gorgeous circumnavigation of the island which covers cliff edge single tracks, lush valleys and water courses, seaside salt pans, sandy beaches and rocky terrain – in short, you will experience the whole of the Mediterranean in one race!

7th May: Dwejra Fair at San Lawrenz village. Mingle with the locals in this traditional village fair and experience local life in a colourful way.

June

6th June – 10th July - Victoria International Arts Festival featuring concerts, exhibitions, master classes and specialised talks.

10th Jun: Bis-Saħħa Wine Festival in Santa Luċija Square. A festival of wine, live music and local food. Entrance is free.

10th Jun: RockAstra - The fifth edition of RockAstra, Victoria. Join this upbeat concert and enjoy Gozo under a festive summer sky. Unmissable.

*** Jun - Leone Goes Pop:** Independence Square (It-Tokk), Victoria. Swing, rock, pop to the 10th edition of Leone Goes Pop, which is set to entertain the heart of Gozo's town – the central square, It-Tokk. The Leone Band returns for another year round with a night of pop, rock and swing music, that keeps a crowded square entertained for hours.

18th June: Swejjaq – A traditional artisan and farmer's market at the main square of San Lawrenz village, highlighting the best of local produce.

24th – 25th Jun: Agricultural Fair, Nadur

17th – 18th Jun: Farm to Fork, Gozitano Complex, Xewkija

*** Jun:** Oasi Weekend Celebrations

*** Jun:** 8th Edition of the Figs Festival, Xaghra

*** Jun:** Festival "Fiori d'Argenta", Xewkija; A festival of culture, music, and traditions, culminating in a horse parade through the village streets.

July

2nd Jul: Infiorata, Għarb

An intricate carpet of fresh flowers arranged in thematic designs. The Infiorata is an old Italian tradition, the oldest one originating in 'Gerano' the twinned village of Għarb which is found in the outskirts of Rome Italy and which Għarb adopted as an annual event since 2003.

22nd July: Marsalmozajk – Mosaic Festival, Marsalforn. A colourful event and a unique experience of this beautiful art that fascinates old and young, along the Marsalforn port area.

24th – 27th July: Festival at San Lawrenz

31st July: Opera Vs Pop Under The Stars 10th Edition, Victoria

Following the nine previous successful editions of Opera vs Pop Under the Stars, The Gozo Youth Orchestra in collaboration with The Ministry for Gozo and Embassy of the United States of America presents: “Opera vs Pop Under the Stars – 10th Edition” by the Gozo Youth Orchestra. Programme will include classical and operatic songs and arias, followed by an array of lighter pop arrangements from soundtracks and musicals.

Info and Reservation: gozowindbandorchestra@yahoo.co.uk

August

5th Aug: Gozo Ceramics Festival, Xlendi Gozo

Presentation of ceramic artefacts by local artists who will be working live, demonstrating different techniques such as throwing, coiling, modelling, slab building and firing.

5th Aug: Riflessi Sajfin

An open-air festival organised by Oasi Foundation’s primary prevention team, Marsalforn

18th – 19th Aug: Festa ta’ Kemmuna

18th – 20th Aug: The Delicata Classic Wine Festival, Council Gardens, Nadur

29th Aug: Feast of St John Martyr, Xewkija. A traditional village square dinner gathers a whole village in a celebration that is animated by music and dance at St. John’s square, culminating in a traditional bonfire.

* Throughout August, activities forming part of Summer Nights programme are organised with the participation of local musical bands

September

2nd Sep: Jazz Do Festival, Mgarr Harbour. An eclectic mix of jazz styles that entertains an ever growing crowd against the unique setting of Mgarr Harbour. Dine out or mingle in a local bar in the area, while bands jazz up the atmosphere!

7th Sep: Commemoration of the Two Sieges, Xaghra

9th Sep: Stage And Proms On The Sea – 3rd edition, Mgarr Marina

The Gozo Youth Wind Band (GYWB) will present the 3rd Edition of this successful spectacular evening. Staged on a large floating platform at Mgarr Harbour, this concert offers a unique Mediterranean setting where music can be enjoyed against a backdrop of seacraft and a moonlit sky.

Info and Reservation: gozowindbandorchestra@yahoo.co.uk

10th Sep: Rock Concert by The Travellers at Marsalforn

17th Sep: Swejjaq – A traditional artisan and farmer’s market at the main square of San Lawrenz village, highlighting the best of local produce

22nd – 24th Sep: 12th edition of the Qala International Folk Festival

October

1st Oct: OASI Cup run, 4th edition. Run, walk Gozo and say yes to a healthy lifestyle! oasi.org.mt

8th Oct: A Celebration of Light, the locally known fjakkolata. A spectacle of thousands of burning lanterns lit over Ghar Ilma hill, overlooking the village of Sta Lucija, Kerċem. Worth a visit!

14th Oct: Opera, Tejtru Aurora, presents Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana and Leoncavallo’s I Pagliacci

20th Oct: Symphony of Lights, a musical concert at Sta Lucija, Kerċem

26th & 28th Oct: Opera, Tejtru Astra, Lucija di Lammermoor, Astra Theatre, Victoria

28th Oct: Halloween, a local adaptation of this western celebration, falling on All Saints’ Eve, Nadur

29th Oct – 18th Nov: 12th edition of the Festival Mediterranea

December

2nd Dec – 7th Jan: Christmas, an island of Joy – a full programme of events spanning five weeks, through December to the 7th January, to celebrate Christmas

3rd Dec: Swejjaq – open market Christmas Edition at San Lawrenz village

8th Dec: Feast of the Immaculate Conception – Victoria & Qala

16th Dec: Festival of Light organised by Fondazzjoni ta’ Klula to celebrate the patron saint, Santa Lucija. Santa Lucija square is decorated with flaming lanterns, bonfire and animated by children carrying candles in a traditional procession

17th Dec: Feast of Santa Lucija, at the Santa Lucija hamlet

9th & 10th Dec: Carols by Candlelight, a choral concert by the Schola Cantorum Jubilate.

19th Dec: Christmas Concert at St George’s Basilica, Victoria by Chorus Urbanus

24th Dec: Christmas pageant at San Lawrenz

25th Dec: Twas the Night Before Christmas – St George’s Square, Victoria

’Twas the Night Before Christmas - Christmas Eve concert from 01:30-02:30hrs at St George’s Square by The Gozo Youth Wind Band & Orchestra presents a spectacular concert including guest pop singers with evergreen Christmas songs, carols, arrangements, medleys amongst others.

30th Dec: Christmas concert at the Parish Church, San Lawrenz

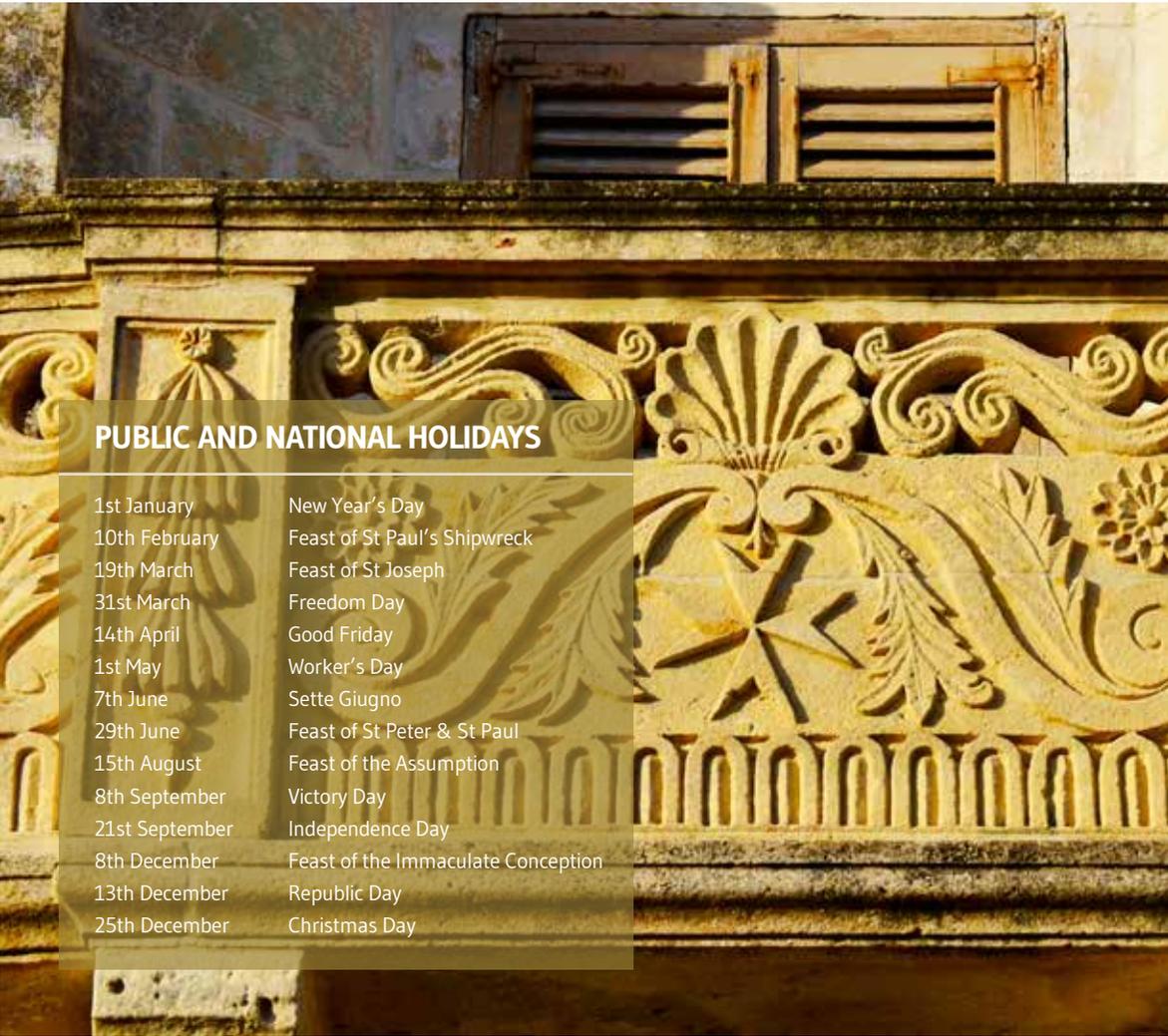
31st Dec: New Year’s Eve in the City, Victoria

The Rabat, Citta’ Victoria Local Council and the town’s commercial community, create a festive celebration of the New Year. The thousands of people who literally flock to Victoria on the day have the opportunity to celebrate together in historic surroundings. Participation is free of charge. Event takes place at Independence Square and at Saint George’s Square.

*** Dec:** Gozitano Christmas Village

The Gozitano Christmas Village will be hosting a series of events and activities. The site of the Gozitano will be transformed by music, illuminations and food stalls offering an impressive selection of wine from 17 different countries and 37 different wine regions. Gozitano attractions include production of traditional Christmas sweets, with the participation of artists, choir singing, local band and father christmas distributing presents.

** Content is indicative of highlights of the Gozo cultural calendar and is not comprehensive of all events. For full details, changes to the original programme and for other unlisted events, please check visitgozo.com*



PUBLIC AND NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

1st January	New Year's Day
10th February	Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck
19th March	Feast of St Joseph
31st March	Freedom Day
14th April	Good Friday
1st May	Worker's Day
7th June	Sette Giugno
29th June	Feast of St Peter & St Paul
15th August	Feast of the Assumption
8th September	Victory Day
21st September	Independence Day
8th December	Feast of the Immaculate Conception
13th December	Republic Day
25th December	Christmas Day

For a full list and contact details of local artisanal producers go to www.visitgozo.com/what-to-do-in-gozo/experience/local-artisanal-products/



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MALTA

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History and culture have carved their own story on this island, symbolised by its prehistoric temples, magnificent churches and the towering Citadel. Blessed with a wonderful countryside, pristine beaches, and unique coastline, Gozo is there for you to discover.

Gozo is connected to over ninety six (96) destinations through the Malta International Airport (www.maltairport.com). Once in Malta, drive to Cirkewwa Harbour (approximately one hour) and take the comfortable Gozo ferry for the scenic 25-minute crossing to Mgarr Harbour, gateway to Gozo.



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