

The best places to visit in Malta

By means of this online travel guide "Explore and visit the Isle of Malta". We would like to introduce you to this one-of-a-kind island, whose honey-coloured limestone makes beautiful and enchanting.

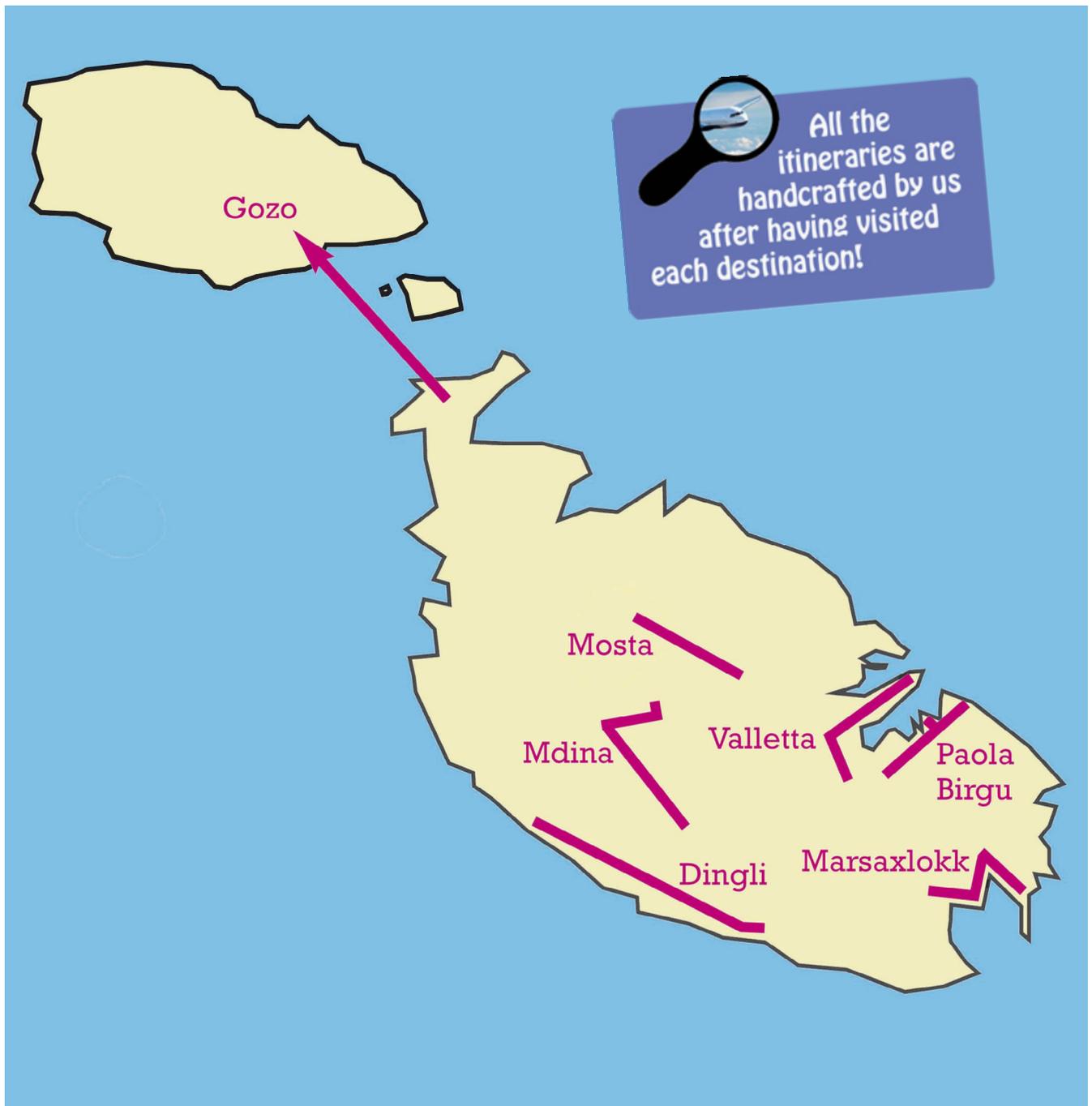
This wonderful place we visited for the first time three years ago: we were so fascinated that we

decided to go back to visit the places still unknown to us. We all present them to you! Valletta airport authority in Malta provides the most reliable weather forecasts.

www.maltairport.com/weather

Are you ready?

Our journey is about to start!



Must knows



Everybody speaks English as a second language and many speak Italian, too.

Left-hand traffic and truly chaotic roads are a good reason to travel by bus. The "Tallinja Card Explore" allows unlimited travel for seven days on any bus line for € 21.



The plug and socket system is British so those of you who do not live in the UK ought to buy an adaptor, which you can get hold of in hardware stores.

Most museums are closed on Sundays so you'd better enquire beforehand.



The central bus station is in Valletta, just outside the City Gate: you can find the buses for closer destinations near the fountain; those reaching more distant places are just round the corner.

That's the reason why we advise you to find an accommodation not far from the capital.

Some Maltese dishes you must try: Il-Stuffat tal-Fenek (stewed wild rabbit) is by all means Malta's national dish. Bigilla is a fava beans or beans cream to be savoured as a snack. Pastizz, instead - a crunchy phyllo dough crescent - is the ultimate street food: you can choose either a ricotta cheese or pea purée stuffing or even a filling of minced pork meat.



What you can't miss in Valletta

National Museum of Archeology

The Museum tells the story of Malta from Prehistory to the Phoenicians. It's rich with archeological finds dating back to the Neolithic, pottery, jewellery, coins, statues of all dimensions and beautifully modelled figurines, among which the most precious is by far "The Sleeping Lady", a 12-centimetre artifact of a recumbent woman. The museum is really worth a visit.



Upper Barrakka Gardens

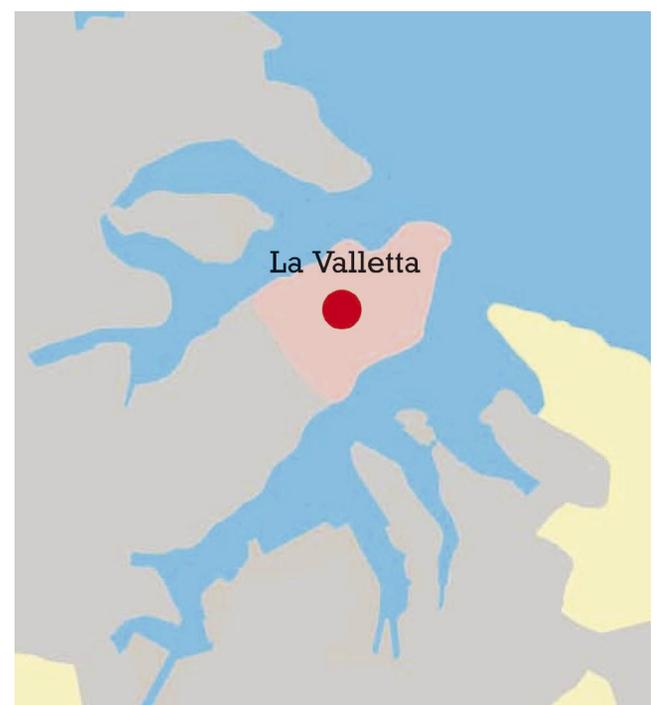
If you need a short rest, they are a small paradise, with their well-kept gardens, their fountain and (plenty of) benches. There's a kiosk selling soft drinks and ice-creams. If you move towards the terrace overlooking the sea, still in Valletta (Malta), you can enjoy the daily gun salute ceremonial at midday and at 4:00 p.m. on the "Saluting Battery" (the terrace below).



Valletta City Gate

Once you get to the central bus station, right at the entrance of the City Gate, the large square (opening in front of you) exhibits (in all its beauty) the impressive "Triton Fountain". Beautiful in daylight, even more at night, since it's cleverly lit.

The monumental entrance to the city has been created by the world-famous Genoese architect Renzo Piano in contemporary style. Also the alleys and gardens below are part of his project.



St John's Cathedral

In the very heart of the capital, it appears to the viewer with a simple facade but it holds its unique treasures in the stunning, extremely ornate interior, which is reputed to be one of the finest examples of high Baroque architecture in Europe.

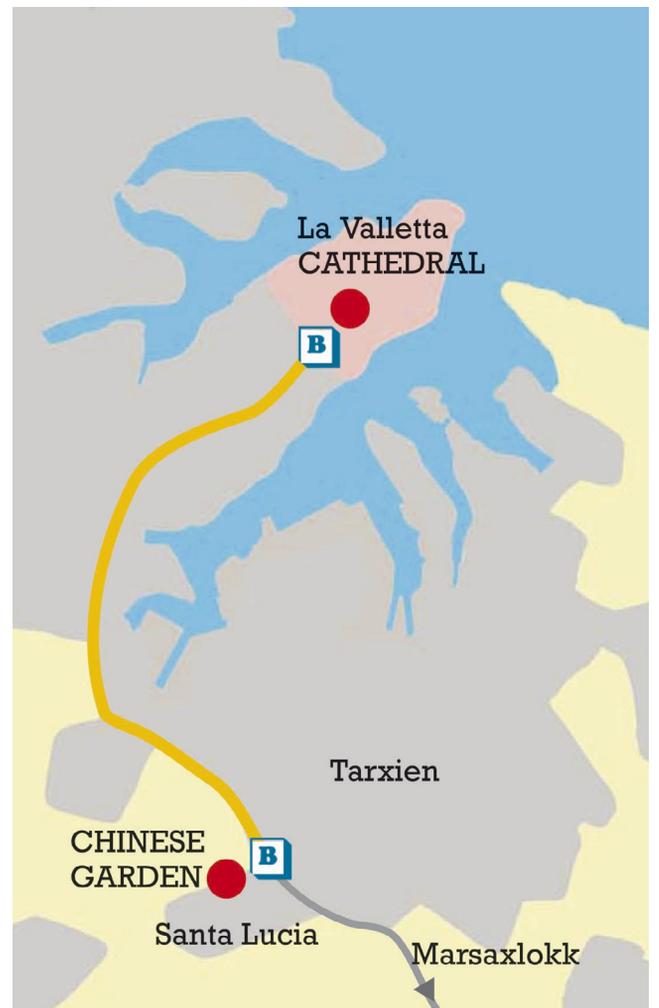
The huge central nave, the two side naves and the Maltese limestone walls, richly decorated and extensively inlaid, are painted in gold. A barrel ceiling is a masterpiece of frescoes and the floor is covered with marble tombstones belonging to the famous Knights of Malta. The oratory holds two real gems: The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist and Saint Jerome Writing, both by Caravaggio.



Chinese Garden of Serenity

The Chinese Garden of Serenity is in Santa Luċija. Rocks, water and vegetation make up this little Chinese world. The extremely well kept and orderly gardens interspersed with statues representing moments of daily life in China, together with the pond and the small waterfall, convey peace and serenity.

For a while, you feel like being on the other side of the planet – it's the ideal place to take a break from chaotic Malta.



From Dingli along the cliffs of Malta



Today, we will take a trip from Dingli to Ħaġar Qim walking along the cliffs of Malta. We reach Dingli Cliffs by bus and we start our walk alongside the sea: a breathtaking view not to be missed. The vegetation surrounding us on our way is unique- The air caresses our face and the scent of flowers fills us with joy. The excursion lasts 2 and a half hours (10 km).

The Blue Grotto

The Blue Grotto (Il-Hnejja) is thirty minutes away on foot. Walking down the hill towards the sea, you reach a small inlet with its charm. Blue Grotto The visit to these wonderful grottoes lasts 30 minutes.

You board a small boat, put on your life-jacket and set off to explore these coves of extraordinary beauty, framed by the mighty cliffs above. Once inside the grottoes, you can enjoy the blue seabed - with the help of sunrays, the impact is even more impressive. At the end of the tour, not far from the departure jetty, there's plenty of cafés and restaurants with a view.

Megalithic temples of Ħaġar Qim

You get at Ħaġar Qim where you can explore two archeological sites of extraordinary value. Prior to your visit, at the visitors centre, you are shown a 3D film describing the museum's artefacts as well as the story and the discovery of the sites.

Both are covered by a huge protective dome open to the sides. They look impressive because of their imposing structure and the spectacular, stark, isolated landscape surrounding them, high up on the cliffs overlooking the sea.

These enormous stone blocks, dating back to 3600 BC (thus older than the Pyramids and Stonehenge) are, it goes without saying, on the UNESCO World Heritage list. It is said that a boulder protruding from the ground led to the discovery of these wonders.

One of the boulders, weighing a good 20 tons, is 3 metres high and 6.40 metres wide.



At Marsaxlokk fish market

Marsaxlokk fish market is particularly popular for its fish stalls on Sundays.

A long, uninterrupted row of fishing boats lines up along the quayside of this picturesque village while, in the middle of the sheltered bay, a myriad beautifully coloured boats (luzzu) floats peacefully.



If you take a stroll along the seaside promenade, you can admire the fishermen repairing their nets and laying them out in the sun to dry. The Marsaxlokk market stalls display their goods of every sort daily. Cafés and restaurants can be found all along the seafront.

Parish church

On the small square of Marsaxlokk, facing the sea, is the Church of "Our Lady of Pompeii". Though with a simple facade, the church harmoniously combines colour and style with the surrounding buildings. The single-nave interior, embellished with a Carrara marble altar, preserves the icon of "Our Lady of the Rosary". Charmingly lit at night.

St Peter's Pool

St Peter's Pool is one of Malta's pearls.

You can reach it by car or in 20 minutes on foot. You follow a well-marked itinerary in the middle of an agreeable landscape.

What appears before your eyes upon reaching the bay is of great visual impact. The overhanging cliffs, the surrounding vegetation and the powerful waves smashing powerfully against the rocks leave you breathless. When the sea is quiet, you can dive into the water from different places.



Discover Mdina and the typical limestone of Malta



Today, we will discover two emblems of Malta: the historical walls of Mdina and a quarry of Malta's typical limestone.

Mdina defensive walls

Mdina, a very beautiful high-walled medieval citadel, entirely made of the typical local yellow-ocher limestone, is in the middle of the present urban nucleus of Rabat, which has gradually grown around it in the centuries.

The old capital of Malta preserves its ancient past perfectly intact: that's why it's a tourist attraction visited by tourists from all over the world. The ancient gateway to the city leads you to the discovery of this extraordinary jewel. Its narrow streets converge in St Paul's Square, where the Cathedral is; elegant buildings stand out against the sky. A great number of small shops; cafés and restaurants at every corner.

How to get to the next stop: the main bus stop is located near the entrance of the Mdina (and is divided into two sectors).

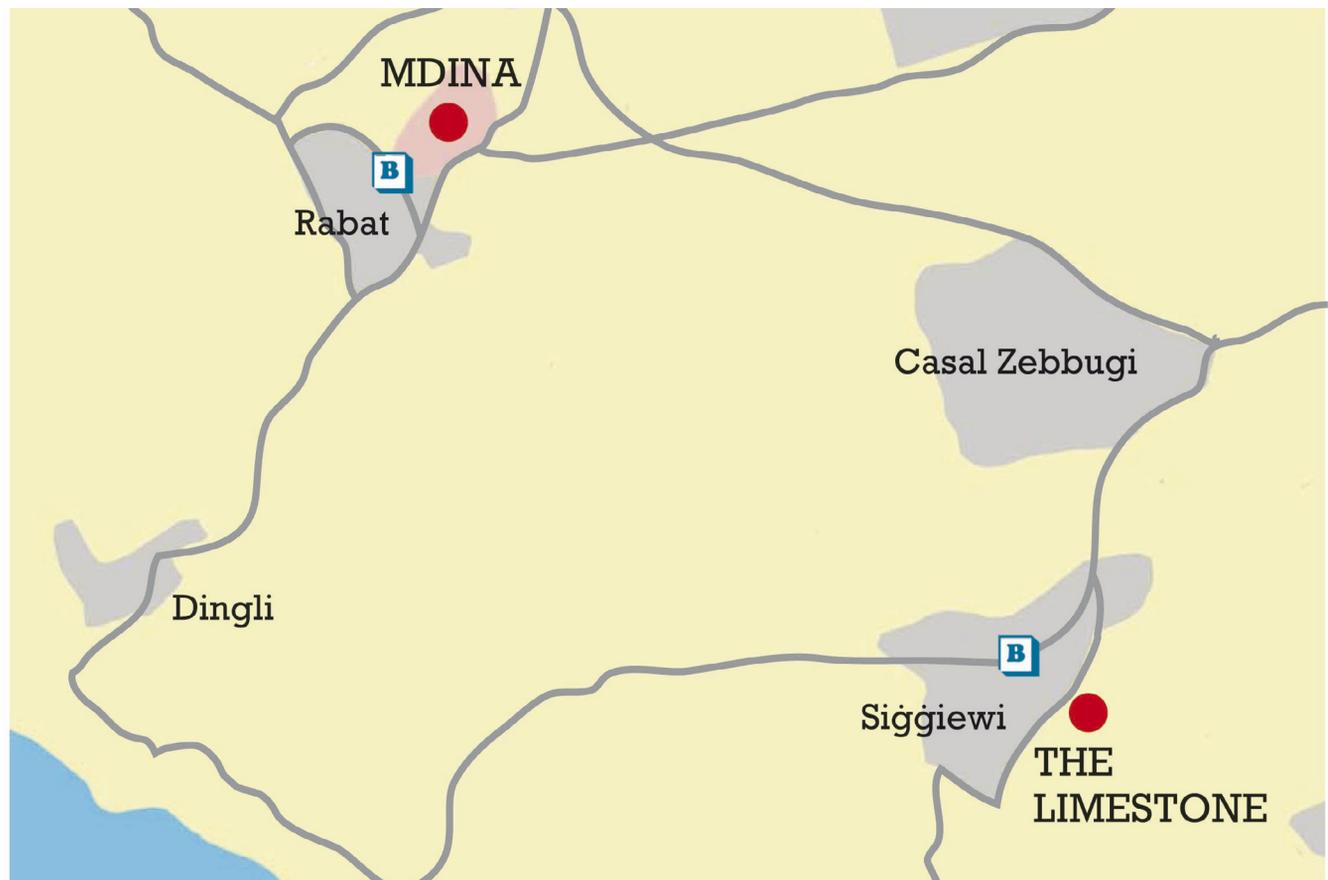
The Limestone Heritage Park & Gardens

"The Limestone Heritage Park & Gardens" is in Siggiewi, not far from Valletta.

An introductory film in different languages tells the story of this kind of stone. Then, an outdoor itinerary with audioguide explains the techniques and the tools miners made use of in the past decades to extract the local limestone. Houses, churches cathedrals and palaces were built with this honey-coloured limestone that strikes the onlooker for its simple beauty. A small park with a waterfall and some farm animals end the visit.

Inside the park, a café sells souvenirs.

To go back to Valletta, which departs from the centre of the village, is the fastest.

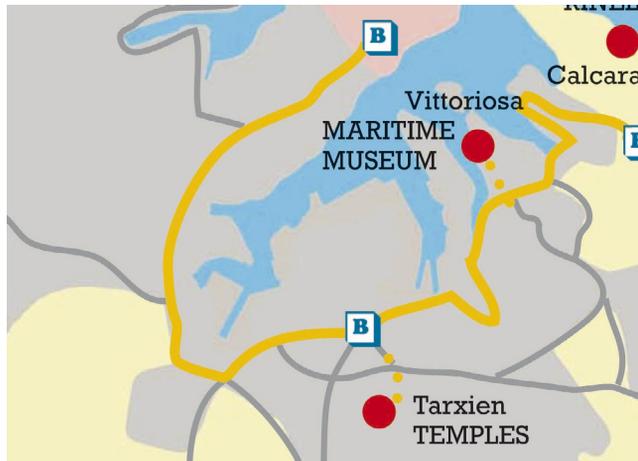


What to do in the immediate surroundings of Valletta?

Fort Rinella

What else is there to see? Rinella is another tourist attraction near Valletta. This Victorian battery is located in Kalkara. You will take a step back in time and plunge into history. Walk-ons, dressed up as 19th century British soldiers, take tourists on a guided tour and fire blanks with ancient rifles. Within the fort, there's a well preserved 100-ton cannon; once outside, visitors can enjoy a re-enactment of historic cavalry. Get information on the visit:

www.fortrinella.com



Maritime Museum in Birgu

It traces the history of Malta's glorious naval past. The collections are housed in the large building that was formerly Malta's Royal Naval Bakery. It produced bread and biscuits for the entire British Mediterranean Fleet using the first steam-powered machinery for that particular purpose, thus strongly characterizing the island's Industrial Revolution.

More than 20,000 artifacts are on display, among which boats (both life-size and miniature reproductions), anchors, Roman amphorae, weapons, cannons, paintings and uniforms. The splendid figurehead that belonged to a Napoleonic vessel together with a 4-ton Roman amphora are no doubt the most remarkable pieces housed in the museum.

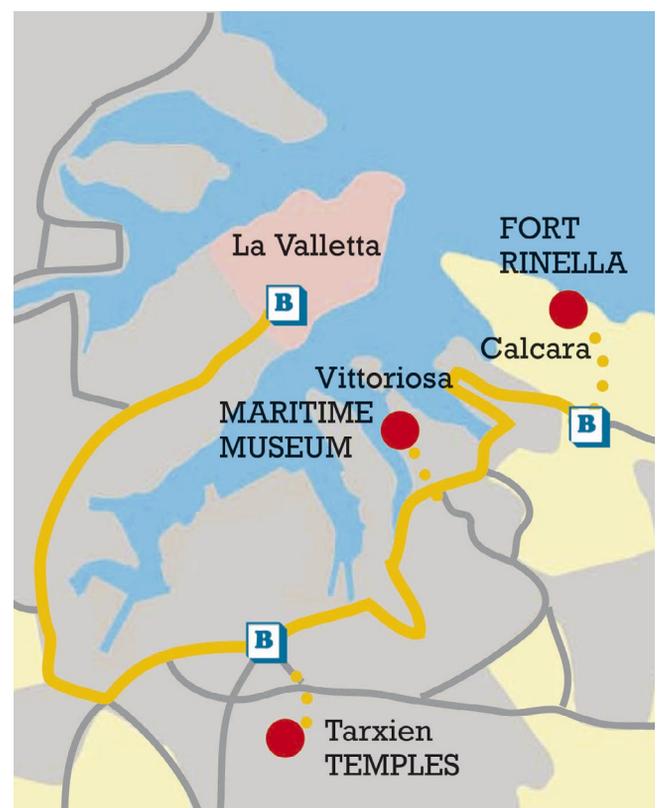
Open every day from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Tarxien Temples

They are in Paola, at a mere 15-min bus ride from the centre of Valletta.

It's a well-preserved archeological site; though not that large, it is extremely interesting.

The complex is not well signposted so you'd better ask for directions when in Paola.



Catacombs and parks in Malta

Today, we will visit two places in the centre of Malta: a 4th century rural catacombs complex and the best park in Malta.

San Anton Gardens in Attard

San Anton Palace and Gardens are the official Residence of the President of Malta. The Gardens surrounding the Palace, open to the public since 1882, are reputed to be the richest and the most luxuriant on the island. Take your time and wander at your ease along the alleys in the shade of tall, centuries-old trees from all latitudes.

Walk among statues and fountains and watch black swans, ducks and goldfish swimming in the small lake, far from the humming of the traffic: that's totally reinvigorating.

During the summer, San Anton Gardens host the long-standing tradition (since 1950) of the Malta Amateur Dramatic Club: the outdoor night performance of a Shakespearean play in English.

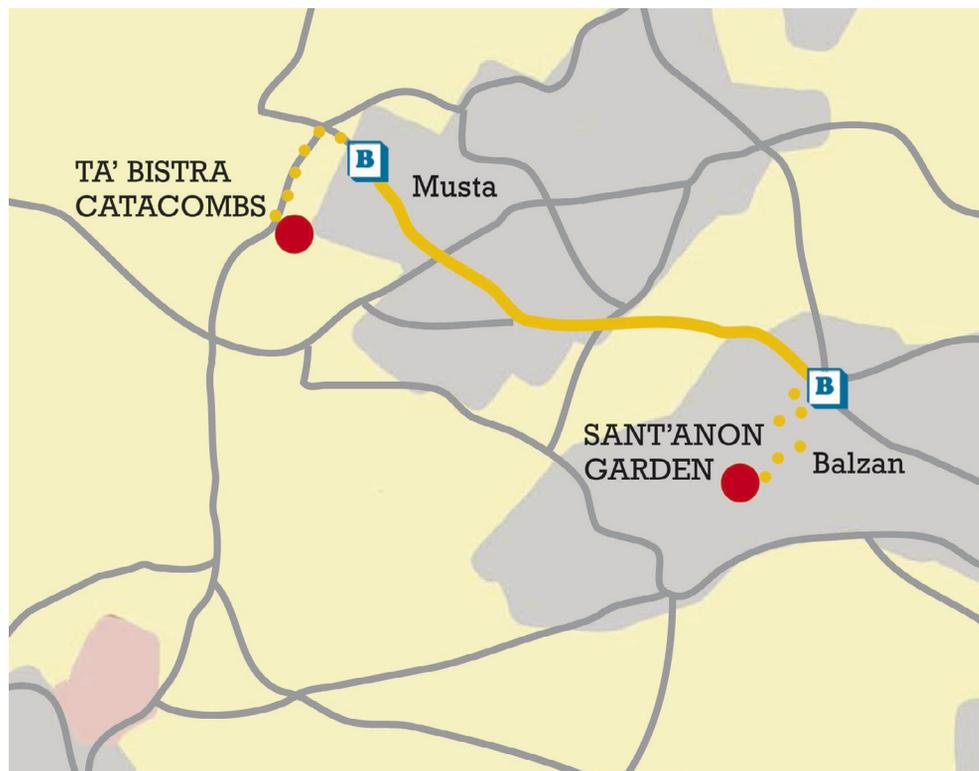


Ta' Bistra Catacombs

"Ta' Bistra Catacombs" are located in Mosta. (200 meters to the left of the roundabout north of Mosta.)

In ancient times, they were used as burial places but, unlike the catacombs that we all know, which were excavated underground, those in Ta' Bistra were obtained as a series of tunnels on the face of the mountain. In more recent times, they were used as animal shelters.

After a short introductory video, you enter some narrow and low-vaulted tunnels so... "mind your head!" during the visit. Next, you will follow a corridor where a railing separates you from other catacombs, embedded in the vertical wall. On the island, other catacombs can be visited: Saint Paul's in Rabat are the most famous. The site is open to the public on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.





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places to visit the island

