

Tourism continues to be one of the sectors hardest hit by the Coronavirus pandemic and the outlook remains highly uncertain at least as of these first weeks of 2021.

It is known that international tourism dropped by approximately 80% in 2020 when compared to 2019. Destinations that rely heavily on international business and events tourism are particularly struggling with coastal, regional and rural areas faring better.

However encouraging news with the advent of the vaccines has boosted hope for recovery, but challenges remain, with the tourism industry expected to remain in survival mode well into 2021. Domestic tourism has restarted in Gozo since the lifting off of travel restrictions between Malta and Gozo and is helping to mitigate the impact on jobs and Gozitan touristic establishments.

Yet real recovery will only be possible when international tourism returns. This requires global co-operation and evidence based solutions, so travel restrictions can be safely lifted. The survival of tourism establishments is at great risk without the continued Government support and although the Maltese Government has taken impressive action to cushion the blow to tourism, to minimise job losses and to built recovery in 2021 and beyond, yet more needs to be done in a more co-ordinated way

Key priorities in this regard include: restoring traveller confidence, supporting tourism businesses to adapt and survive, promote domestic tourism, provide clear information to travellers and build more resilient and sustainable tourism.

While flexible solutions are needed to enable the tourism sector to live alongside the virus in the short and medium term, it is important to look beyond this and take steps to learn from the crisis.

The Covid-19 experience is an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future. Tourism is at a crossroads and the measures put in place today will shape the tourism of tomorrow. The long-term implications of COVID-19 need to be considered while capitalising on digitalisation and promoting the transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and resilient tourism sector.

***“The Greatest lesson that COVID-19 can teach Humanity is that We Are All In This Together”***

***- Kiran Muzumdar-Shaw***

***“The COVID-19 experience is an opportunity to rethink tourism for the future”***

## Visit to Ta' Menzja Farmhouse

On Sunday 31st May 2020, the Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli and the Minister for Gozo Hon Clint Camilleri paid a courtesy visit to a number of tourism establishments in Gozo, with one of these visits being to Ta' Menzja Farmhouse in Xaghra. This visit was held a few days after the lift off of COVID-19m travelling restrictions between Malta and Gozo.

During this visit both Minister Farrugia Portelli and Minister Camilleri were accompanied by GTA Chairman, Vice Chairman and CEO, Mr Paul Scicluna, Mr Mario Loporto and Mr Joe Muscat respectively as well as officials from MTA and the Ministry for Tourism and Consumer Protection.

Whilst at Ta' Menzja Farmhouse both ministers were shown around by the operators of this accommodation unit. At the end of this visit during a comment to the press GTA CEO expressed the Association satisfaction that even though in these tough times of the pandemic Gozo remained a favoured destination with the domestic visitor attracting substantial amounts of people since the lifting off of travel restrictions between the two Islands.



## Visit to Amchara

On the 13th June 2020, the Minister for Tourism Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli and the Minister for Gozo Hon Clint Camilleri made a courtesy visit to the Amchara premises in Gharb. During this visit which was co-ordinated by GTA, the Ministers were accompanied by the Directors of Amchara and GTA Vice Chairman Mr Mario Loporto and GTA CEO Mr Joe Muscat.

Both Ministers were shown around the premises which operated as Detox Health Retreat offering a personalised health experience in the quaint village of Gharb. This establishment caters for those who wish to improve their physical health, emotional wellbeing and lifestyle in a positive and sustainable way. This retreat establishment includes a number of individual accommodation units together with a large communal swimming pool and spa facilities and also a Yoga studio.



At the end of this visit, both Ministers thanked the Directors of Amchara and congratulated them for this unique investment which is mapping Gozo also as a Wellness destination.



## **GTA attends Cabinet meeting in Gozo**

On Tuesday 15th September, 2020, the weekly cabinet of Ministers meeting was held here on Gozo at the Innovation Hub in Xewkija. The Gozo Tourism Association was invited to attend this meeting and to deliver a short intervention.

During the allotted time, the Gozo Tourism Association represented by its CEO, Mr Joe Muscat focused on the present tourism situation in Gozo and how this is effecting the Gozitan tourism establishments as expressed during the last online survey answered by the GTA members. GTA also stressed that the survival of the tourism establishments during the coming winter depend totally on further assistance by the Government. To this end the following measures were proposed by the Gozo Tourism Association to be considered as assistance to mitigate the COVID-19 impact.

- ⇒ The waiving off of all licences for 2020 and 2021 payable by tourist establishments to the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), The Regulator Energy & Water Services (REWS) and the Lands Department encroachment fees.
- ⇒ The deferral of the NIC, VAT and other taxes up to April 2021
- ⇒ The extension of the Wage Supplement for the tourism sector up to at least March 2021
- ⇒ The Wage Supplement to be payable also to employees engaged after the 9th March 2020.





- ⇒ The Electricity Bills Refund Scheme is to be extended to cover 2020 charges, while it should cover more than one property even when establishments employ less than 10 employees
- ⇒ Improve the financial Rent Assistance of €2500 on tourism establishments to cover more adequately the rent expense.
- ⇒ Reduce VAT on accommodation to 5% and other tourism services to 10%.
- ⇒ Re-issue another set of vouchers redeemable at tourist establishments for the coming months.
- ⇒ Reduced Ferry Fares for the domestic tourist during the whole week for the winter period

It is noted that some of the proposed measures were already taken on board by the Government while others are still being discussed.



## Parliamentary Standing Committee for Gozo

### Affairs

In late April 2020, the Gozo Tourism Association welcomed the formal establishments of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Gozo Affairs. To this end, the Gozo Tourism Association augured the Hon Dr Justyne Caruana for her appointment as the first Chairperson of this standing committee. The Association is confident that all the Gozitan Members of Parliament will be genuinely contributing effectively and industriously towards the aims of this Committee.

To this end the Gozo Tourism Association was invited to attend various sessions of this Committee. In fact during 2020, GTA representatives attended seven sessions of this committee. During these sessions GTA representatives delivered presentations and updates on the tourism sector on Gozo, how it is being effected by the COVID-19 pandemic and put forward concrete proposals on how to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19. Furthermore other presentations tackled the way forward in the coming months.

Meanwhile the Gozo Tourism Association augurs the Hon Dr Anton Refalo, Minister for Agriculture & Fisheries who was recently appointed Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee replacing the Hon Dr Justyne Caruana



## **GTA addresses Media together with Minister for Economy and Minister for Gozo**

On Thursday 1st October 2020, the Minister for Economy Hon Silvio Schembri and the Minister for Gozo, Hon Clint Camilleri accompanied by GTA Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna and GTA CEO Mr Joe Muscat visited the resort of Xlendi. This visit offered an opportunity to meet several tourism operators and discuss with them the impact of COVID-19 on their respective establishments. At the end of this visit a press call was held during which both Ministers addressed the effect the government vouchers had on the establishments in Gozo. GTA CEO Mr Joe Muscat addressed this press call and retaliated the positive feedback GTA members reported back on the vouchers scheme, as it proved to be another way how to mitigate the COVID-19 impact.



## **Using Vouchers to Regenerate the Economy – Business B'Fast**

On the 15th October 2020 the Government Agency MIMCOL and the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small businesses organised a business breakfast entitled “Using Vouchers to Regenerate the Economy”. This event was addressed by Minister Silvio Schembri and the Chairman of MIMCOL Mr Adrian Said. During the Business Breakfast it was announced that up to the 14th October, 2020 around 1.8 million vouchers have been redeemed, meaning that 81.2% of all €100 government vouchers have been now used, with a substantial number of these vouchers redeemed in Gozitan establishments. During this same event a panel discussion was held with the participation of various stakeholders coming from the tourism and business sectors. The Gozo

Tourism Association CEO Mr Joe Muscat was also invited to sit as a discussion panellist during which the impact of the vouchers on the Gozitan economy and especially the tourism sector on Gozo was discussed.



## **GTA meets leader of the Opposition**

On Thursday 15th October 2020, members from the GTA Council led by its Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna met the new leader of the Opposition Dr Bernard Grech. During this meeting held in one of the leading hotels in Gozo, GTA presented Dr Bernard Grech with the GTA proposals for the upcoming Budget 2021.

The measures in these proposals opened up a lengthy and healthy discussion between both sides and touched upon topics like connectivity, the effects of COVID-19 on the Gozitan tourism sector, the role of tourism on the Gozitan Economy, the upgrading of the tourism product on Gozo, the Human Resources and Regional Governance.

In his concluding remarks Dr Bernard Grech stated that Gozo should not only be a more productive region but also one that can better maintain and sustain itself.





During these past 11 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic the external activity of the Gozo Tourism Association was restricted and effected. Several annual events during this period had to be postponed. However the work of the Association continued just the same. On the contrary we can say that due to so many changes and happenings both in Malta and overseas, GTA had to be always on the alert and inform its members accordingly, especially through numerous circulars sometimes on daily basis.

Apart from that the GTA office offered support both by email as well as through telephone calls to the many various members who asked so many questions on particular situations, schemes and measures that were being announced on regular basis.

Concurrently GTA continued with its various meetings with different authorities to keep abreast with the COVID-19 situation as well as to lobby in favour of the Gozitan tourism establishments.

We will continue offering our support to all our members coming from the various sectors and will intensity more our efforts as soon as there is a ray of hope out there, that things in our industry start moving again.

**Contact us:**

**Gozo Tourism Association**

**Flat 4, Ta'Millet Court**

**Gorg Borg Olivier Street**


**Victoria, Gozo**

**Tel: 21565171**

**Email: [gtagozo1999@gmail.com](mailto:gtagozo1999@gmail.com)**

**Facebook: [IslandofGozo](https://www.facebook.com/IslandofGozo)**

**Website: [www.islandofgozo.org](http://www.islandofgozo.org)**



**WE DON'T GROW WHEN  
THINGS ARE EASY,  
WE GROW WHEN  
WE FACE CHALLENGES.**