

DESTINATION



Gozo Tourism Association Newsletter

March 2020

Editorial

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented decline in business for the tourism industry worldwide. However, companies big and small continue to strive to make the best of a bad situation.

With much of the world under lockdown, demand for vacations will be high once restrictions are lifted and the public feel safe to travel once again. Therefore tourism analysts are urging tourism establishments and businesses to continue to be proactive and prepared for a sharp increase in holiday-makers once the COVID-19 is over.

Inevitably, most of the tourism establishments resources are being deployed into helping them survive these turbulent times. However tourism establishments need also to keep an eye on the future, while remaining optimistic and be ready when restrictions are lifted and demand for holidays returns.

Tourism has the potential to recover and once again establish itself as a key part of the national and regional economies and of the wider sustainable development agenda. This crisis may also offer a unique opportunity to shape the sector to ensure it not only grows, but it grows better, with inclusivity, sustainability and responsibility prioritised. Furthermore, to build for the future, special attention should be placed on building resilience and on promoting sustainability at all levels.

Tourism is known for its historic resilience and capacity to create jobs after crisis situations.... it will do it again.



**TOGETHER WE
WILL
OVERCOME
THIS
CHALLENGE**

In This Issue

- Gozo Tourism Awards 2019
- Welcome & Thankyou
- Transport Malta Directives
- GTA Annual General Meeting 2020
- Chauffeur driven services during Carnival weekend
- Post COVID-19 Considerations
- COVID-19 Support by Govt
- Financial measures to mitigate impact of COVID-19
- GTA during the COVID-19 Scenario

Gozo Tourism Awards 2019



For the 12th consecutive year the Gozo Tourism Association, organised the Gozo Tourism Awards 2019. This years' awards were bestowed to the Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year, the Gozo Young Tourism Worker of the Year, the Gozo Tourism Entrepreneurship Award and the Gozo Cultural/ Social Tourism Achievement Award. The main objectives of these awards are to acknowledge, commend, encourage and thank all the workers, entrepreneurs and entities who distinguish themselves in the performance of their duties and activities in the vital touristic industry in Gozo.

Ms Charlayne Galea won the Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year Awards 2019, whilst the Gozo Young Tourism Worker of the Year Award 2019 was won by Ms Megan Cauchi. This year's Gozo Tourism Entrepreneurship Award 2019 was won by Mr Francis Azopardi of Calypso Trackless Trains whilst the winner of the Gozo Cultural/ Social Achievement Tourism Award was awarded to the Dwejra Environmental Educational Centre.



Gozo Tourism Awards 2019



The winners were officially announced by the Notary Public Dr Paul G Pisani, Chairman of the adjudicating board which also included Mr John Busuttill, Mr Francesco Pio Attard and Ms Silvana Sultana.

The Gozo Tourism Association Council awarded the **Lifetime Achievement Award** in tourism to the Said brothers, Joe and George Said for their investment and achievements in the tourism sector along the years, which contributed towards job creation and economic growth on Gozo. **The Special Recognition Award in Tourism** was awarded to Mr Daniel Cilia whilst the **Gozo Tourism Commitment Award** introduced for the first time this year was awarded to Mr Ivan Mifsud of Mifsud Bros Ltd.



These awards were presented to the respective winners by the Hon. Julia Farrugia Portelli, Minister for Tourism, Dr Gavin Gulia Chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority and Mr Paul Scicluna, Chairman GTA.

The guests present were addressed by the Minister for Gozo, Dr Justyne Caruana as well as by the Minister for Tourism Ms Julia Farrugia Portelli, Dr Gavin Gulia and Mr Johann Buttigieg, Malta Tourism Authority Chairman and CEO respectively and Mr Paul Scicluna Chairman of the Gozo Tourism Association.



Welcome

The Gozo Tourism Association Council congratulated the Hon Prime Minister Dr Robert Abela on his election as the new leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister of Malta. The new Prime Minister was sworn in on 13th January 2020.

The Gozo Tourism Association augured the new Prime Minister in these challenging times and believes that under his premiership the Maltese Islands will continue to achieve economically and socially.

The Gozitan Tourism sector represented by the Gozo Tourism Association expressed its confidence that under the leadership of Dr Robert Abela, a serene, calm and stable political environment, that is so essential for the tourism sector, will be ensured for the Maltese Islands.

The Association believes that the new Prime Minister will give his attention and support to the Gozitan Island and together with the Minister for Gozo will continue implementing the ongoing initiatives for the benefit of all Gozitans.



During the first fortnight of 2020 the Gozo Tourism Association welcomed the Hon Clint Camilleri who was sworn in as the new Minister for Gozo on the 19th January 2020. In a congratulatory welcome to Hon Clint Camilleri, the GTA expressed its commitment of collaboration and co-operation towards the wellbeing of the tourism sector on Gozo. Since his appointment as Minister for Gozo, the Gozo Tourism Association has met the Hon Clint Camilleri three times, during which several important issues were discussed and obviously the present COVID-19 situation.

The Gozo Tourism Association also welcomed the Hon Ms Julia Farrugia Portelli who on the 15th January 2020, was appointed Minister for Tourism & Consumer Protection in the cabinet of the new Prime Minister Dr Robert Abela. In its congratulatory letter to Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli, the Gozo Tourism Association pledged its full co-operation and commitment in order to sustain the tourism growth on the Maltese Islands. Since her appointment as Minister for Tourism, the Gozo Tourism Association met twice with the Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli. In fact one of her first public appointments was when two days after her appointment she presided over the 12th Edition of the Gozo Tourism Awards on 17th January 2020. Later on Thursday 27th February 2020 she attended and delivered her message during the 21st Annual General Meeting of GTA. Afterwards on the same day she met the newly appointed council of the Gozo Tourism Association.



On 19th January 2020, the Hon Justyne Caruana resigned from her position of Minister for Gozo. The day after the Gozo Tourism Association wrote a letter to Dr Caruana thanking her for the support and collaboration that she extended to the association during her tenure as Minister for Gozo. The GTA also thanked Dr Caruana for her incessant work that she carried out in order to upgrade the tourist product and for sustaining a jam-packed calendar of culture events, that contributed towards an authentic touristic experience.

Thank you

TRANSPORT MALTA DIRECTIVES THAT EFFECTED SEVERAL GTA MEMBERS

In late January 2020 the Gozo Tourism Association solicited Transport Malta to reconsider the directives as listed in its Port Notice No 01/2020 issued to the Commercial Vessels owners and operators in connection with the call for the provision of scheduled passenger ferry services between Malta and Comino.



Through these directives as listed in the port notice Transport Malta is creating a monopoly and thus discriminating with commercial vessels owners and operators many of which are Gozo based.

- Furthermore, as specified in this aforementioned Port Notice, the operator who will be providing the scheduled passenger ferry service between Malta and Comino is being allocated the entirety of all landing quays in Cirkewwa, Marfa and around Comino.



These landing quays as stated in the Port Notice are being declared “ Priority Landing Places” for the use of the chosen operator. This condition will be hindering the normal operation of the unscheduled sea transport services offered by the operators and owners, who up to now offered their boat transport services to a wide range of clientele including divers, conference and incentive groups and other leisure services.

Moreover , the Gozo Tourism Association is concerned that if the landing quays of Marfa and Cirkewwa are not available at any time, Gozo might lose on incentives and conferences groups that mostly cross to the sister island through these landing places.

GTA Annual General Meeting 2020

The Gozo Tourism Association held its 21st Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 27th February 2020, at Vini e Capricci Xewkija Gozo.

The agenda of the Annual General Meeting included an address by the Chairman of the Association, Mr Paul Scicluna, the Administrative Report by the Chief Executive Officer, Mr Joe Muscat and the Financial report by the Treasurer, Mr Joe Muscat Sammut. The meeting was also addressed by the Minister for Gozo, Hon Clint Camilleri, the Minister for Tourism Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli and the Gozitan MEP Dr Josianne Cutajar.

In his opening address the GTA Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna emphasized the need to keep on improving every type of connectivity to the island and he stated that GTA is in favour of more connectivity especially by the introduction of an airlink. Mr Scicluna stated that tourist arrivals on Gozo are increasing however a noticeable shift in the type of accommodation is being noted year on year. Finally, he also stressed the need of upgrading the tourism establishments product in order to keep maintaining a sustainable tourism industry on Gozo

The GTA's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Joe Muscat then delivered an audio-visual presentation on the performance of the Association during 2019. He gave an overview of the Gozitan touristic performance during last year. During his presentation Mr Muscat gave a detailed report of the work and initiatives undertaken by the Association during the course of the past year 2019, during which the Association was also marking its 20th Anniversary.

During her address to members present the Minister for Tourism mentioned the positive tourism performance of Gozo during these last years, while stressing the need of a sustainable growth. Hon Julia Farrugia Portelli informed the attentive audience how the Ministry for Tourism and Consumer Protection is continuously monitoring the latest developments in relation to the spread of COVID 19. Minister Farrugia Portelli also announced that a high level working committee within the Ministry will start meeting regularly as deemed necessary and invited GTA to nominate its representative. Finally, whilst thanking GTA for its endeavours, augured more synergised efforts between the Ministry for Tourism and the Gozo Tourism Association.



In his concluding speech, the Minister for Gozo, Hon Clint Camilleri stated that the numbers of tourist arrivals need to be complimented with events on Gozo, something which the Ministry for Gozo is delivering on regular basis. The Minister for Gozo stressed that the tourism industry on Gozo needs to be sustained by the on-going upkeep of the touristic product. While auguring more achievements to the GTA, the Minister stressed that all stakeholders need to continue delivering in a synergised approach for the benefit of the Gozitan tourism.

GTA Annual General Meeting 2020



During this AGM the GTA Council for 2020 was formed and is made up of the following members: Azzopardi Karl (Cesca Boutique Hotel), Borg Marvic (Gozo Breaks Ltd), Busuttill Mark (St Andrews Dive Cove), Gatt Ludgard (Tamarisk Properties), Loporto Mario (Gozo Village Holidays), Magro Frankie (Mariblu Guesthouse), Mercieca Joseph (Country Terrace Restaurant), Muscat Sammut Joseph (Downtown Hotel), Rapa Joe (Ta' Salvina Restaurant), Scicluna Konrad (Links Travel), Scicluna Paul (Gozo Farmhouses), Spiteri Pauline (Mario's Rent a Car), Tonna Adrian (Kempinski San Lawrenz) and Veranneman Amand (Dhalia Real Estate).



Other distinguished guests present for the Annual General Meeting included Dr Chris Said, Opposition Spokesperson for Gozo, MTA Chairman Dr Gavin Gulia, MTA CEO Mr Johann Buttigieg, Mr John Borg, Permanent Secretary at the Gozo Ministry, Mr Ronald Mizzi, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Tourism, Mr Ronald Sultana Director Tourism & Economic Development within the Ministry for Gozo, Mr Paul Bugeja, CEO MedAir, officials from the Ministry for Gozo as well as MTA officials, other guests and GTA members from the various sectors of the Gozitan Tourism Industry.



Chauffeur driven services during the Carnival weekend in Gozo

During the past carnival weekend in Gozo , which indeed was very busy with thousands of visitors from Malta crossing over to the sister island the Gozo Tourism Association noted that the chauffeur driven transport on Gozo, was also serviced by a couple of transport providers based on the mainland.

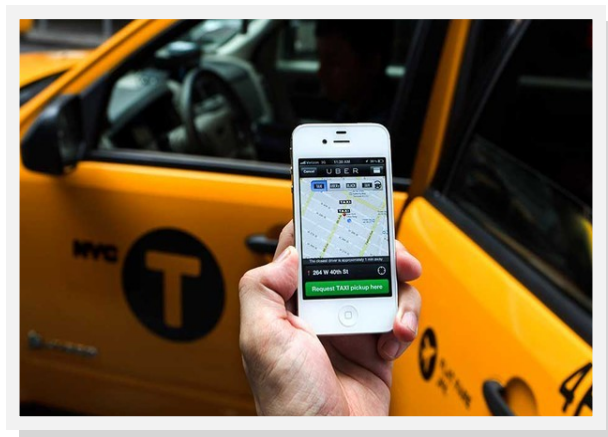
The Gozo Tourism Association also noted that these Malta based transport service providers crosses over to Gozo each time the Island of Gozo experiences an influx from the domestic visitors. In the circumstances, the Gozo Tourism Association called on the competent authorities to guarantee at all times, that a fair level playing field is ensured for all operators in this transport sector.



Furthermore , the Gozo Tourism Association appealed to the competent Authorities to assure that the legislation for the provision of the chauffeur driven services is adhered to, by all service providers without exception.

This in order to safeguard also the interests of the law-abiding chauffeur driven service providers on Gozo.

To this effect a delegation from the Gozo Tourism Association led by its Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna on Friday 6th March 2020 met officials from Transport Malta to discuss further this issue. The officials from Transport Malta were Mr Vince Micallef Pule (Senior Manager Land Transport Directorate), Mr Brian Farrugia (Senior Regularity Unit Land Transport) and Mr Reuben Said (Head Gozo Office). The outcome of this meeting was communicated to the Transport section members of the Gozo Tourism Association through a circular.



Post COVID-19 Considerations



In the post COVID-19 scenario, collective accommodation establishments (hotels, boutique hotels etc) are bound to face stiff competition from private, stand alone units in the self catering sector offered in the peer-to-peer platforms which will position themselves as better suited to guarantee social distancing. The hotel-type accommodation which is designed to host larger numbers of guests needs to prepare itself for such changed demands with adequate responses, imaginative and innovative products and services.

A similar situation will prevail in the cruise market which has also developed into a high-volume, high-density operation defying all the requirements posed by new social-distancing realities. This exacerbates the relatively bad reputation of cruise operations in terms of emissions, pollution and inferior working conditions. Such weaknesses can be tactically exploited by land-based tourism operations by offering themselves as safer and cleaner alternatives to cruises.

One also needs to keep a close watch on developments amongst the major traditional and online tour operators and On line Travel Agents (OTAs) as the crisis may cause some major disruptions, failures, takeovers and new developments which the local tourism industry needs to follow to ensure that it remains visible for sale in the seasons to come.



It is important to contemplate a medium-term scenario involving lower-volume operations keeping in mind that airlines will start flying with empty middle seats to less crowded accommodation and catering facilities. One has to consider also the restrictions on group sizes that visit Gozo for the day. These are realities which tourism on Gozo will also face and need to be acted upon.



COVID-19 Support by Government

The Gozitan economy depends majorly on tourism and with the outbreak of the COVID-19 in the Maltese islands, the Gozo Tourism Association appealed to government to announce urgent concrete measures to safeguard the tourism establishments on Gozo and their respective employees.

These establishments that have been contributing towards the economic growth year on year, have no alternative but simply to close down. In these real challenging times, Government has to intervene to mitigate the heavy losses the tourism sector on Gozo has to carry.



The Gozo Tourism Association therefore called on government to announce a specific support package of mitigating measures for the Gozitan tourism sector. To this end the Gozo Tourism Association listed here under tangible and pressing measures to safeguard the Gozitan tourism establishments that are to be included in this package:

- The forfeiting of the licenses for 2020, payable by tourist establishments to the various entities like MTA, MRA, TM, Lands etc.
- The setting up of a Wages fund to be used specifically to retain the present tourism workforce.
- Temporary measures to safeguard the employees' jobs without additional burden on the employer.
- The Government forfeiting of the National Insurance contributions in order to avoid redundancies until the removal of travel restrictions.
- Refund by Government for the quarantine leave that is being burdened on the employer.
- An adequate and extensive marketing campaign for the destination, so as to enable a swift recovery in the medium term, once the travel restrictions are lifted.

Finally, the Gozo Tourism Association understands that these are tiring times, yet in such situations, Government is called to intervene to lessen the real negative impact on the tourism sector on the sister island due to the repercussions of COVID-19. The GTA is available to discuss further these measures and other actions with the competent Authorities.



FINANCIAL MEASURES TO MITIGATE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Gozo Tourism Association noted and welcomed the financial measures announced by the Government on Wednesday 18th March by the Prime Minister Dr Robert Abela, the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Economy, Investment and Small Businesses to mitigate the negative impact on the businesses and especially those in the tourism sector due to the Corona Virus outbreak. The Gozo Tourism Association also noted that the package of €1.8 billion sounds quite generous yet effectively government will be forking out much less than announced.

The Gozo Tourism Association acknowledged that some measures will help in mitigating the difficulties being encountered by the tourism sector. Yet the Association was expecting more assistance to a sector which presently and up to an unknown future, has and will not have any income whatsoever. This due to the closure of basically all the catering and accommodation establishments through the legal notice L.N. 79 of 2020 of 17th March, 2020 and the closure of Malta International Airport in order to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The Gozo Tourism Association also noted that the announced amount of €1.6 billion is being allocated to the deferral of VAT, Tax, Social Security Contributions and bank guarantees. These measures will assist the tourism sector to a certain extent, yet the Gozo Tourism Association was looking for more substantial measures to safeguard the retention of the employees within the tourism establishments.

- The Gozitan Economy depends majorly on tourism, and in the COVID-19 serious scenario, the Gozo Tourism Association has called on Government for more bold and drastic measures that will have an immediate effect and support for the Gozitan tourism establishments.

GTA DURING THE COVID-19 SCENARIO

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 worldwide the Gozo Tourism Association was engaged in discussing with the Government especially with meetings with the Prime Minister, the Minister for Gozo and through its participation at the MCESD. The Association was also engaged in correspondence with several entities including the Malta Tourism Authority, the Regulator for Energy and Water Services (REWS) and Transport Malta asking for the waiving off their respective license fees for 2020.

Furthermore, the Gozo Tourism Association has kept constant contact with its members through correspondence and telephone calls relating to how the situation was developing as well as to queries related to the various schemes that were issued by the Authorities. Furthermore, up to Easter Monday the Gozo Tourism Association has circulated 40 circulars to its members keeping them informed with all the issue developing with regards COVID-19

GOZO TOURISM ASSOCIATION

4, Ta Mliet Court,
Gorg Borg Olivier Street
Victoria Gozo

Tel: 21565171

Email: gtagozo1999@gmail.com
info@islandofgozo.org

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

Website: www.islandofgozo.org

