

REALISING THE POTENTIAL OF ONLINE BOOKING

“The thing about tourism is that the reality of a place is quite different from the mythology of it”

On Thursday 16th November 2017, the Gozo Tourism Association in collaboration with the Malta Tourism Authority and Booking.com organised a half day conference entitled ‘*Realising the Potential of Online Bookings.*’ This conference which was held at the Grand Hall of the Grand Hotel, Mgarr Gozo was open for the members of the Gozo Tourism Association owning and or operating accommodation establishments.

The conference was addressed by the Chairman of the Gozo Tourism Association, Mr Paul Scicluna. In his address the GTA Chairman tackled the increasing awareness of the tourism establishments in online bookings.

Mr Leslie Vella, Chief Officer Strategic Planning and Deputy to the CEO at the Malta Tourism Authority, then gave a detailed and comprehensive presentation of the trends, patterns and behaviours of the foreign visitors to Gozo. This was followed by another presentation by Ms Alessandra Blanck, Booking.com Manager Malta who together with Ms Elisa Giringhelli, Partner Content Specialist and Mr Marco Giardina Booking.com Home Partner delivered a presentation entitled ‘*Focus—Gozo Trends Booking.com.*’ During their presentation, these Booking.com representatives gave an overview on Booking.com patterns to Gozo.

After these presentations those present were given the opportunity to put forward their questions and comments both to Booking.com and the Malta Tourism Authority officials on the panel.

The conference was brought to an end by the concluding message from Mr Paul Bugeja, CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority, who stressed the relevance of online bookings and the commitment of MTA to curb down the unlicensed accommodation establishments.

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GOZO TOURISM ASSOCIATION'S REACTION TO THE BUDGET 2018

The Gozo Tourism Association believes that overall the 2018 Budget is a positive one, which reflects the economical growth environment in various sectors, including the tourism industry. It is also a progressive and forward looking budget that continues to create the right climate for a sustainable stronger economic future for the Maltese Islands.

The Gozo Tourism Association welcomed the announced scheme for the refurbishment and upgrading of the Gozitan Tourism Establishments, which will improve the quality of the Island's tourism product. This was one of the proposed measures by the Gozo Tourism Association.

This year's budget is once again mentioning that works will commence during 2018 on a fibre optic link and a second fibre optic cable, between Malta & Gozo. While the related technical and geological studies of the underseabed tunnel, will continue during the course of next year.

The Gozo Tourism Association positively noted the number of infrastructural projects contemplated in the 2018 Budget. These includes a desalination plant at Hondoq ir-Rummien, the ICT and Research hub in Xewkija, investment in the Gozo General Hospital and the holistic embellishment master plan for both Xlendi and Marsalforn. These are all projects contemplated in this budget aimed towards a better quality of life, as well as improvement of the touristic product and service.

There are other initiatives in this budget aimed at improving the touristic offer on Gozo, including thematic cultural festivals, the restoration of the Ta' Gordan Lighthouse, as well as the reorganisation of the Mgarr Yacht Marina.

The Budget 2018 includes also fiscal measures that will continue to stimulate economic growth on Gozo. These include the extension for another year of the reduction from 5% to 2% of the stamp duty on property purchased on Gozo, the increase in assistance up to €70,000 in the Micro invest scheme for businesses on Gozo and the refund of 30% of the minimum wage capped at €6000 for every new employee engaged on a three year contract.

On another note the Gozo Tourism Association observed that there is no mention, what so ever in this year's budget speech on the green airfield, that previous budgets contemplated also an environmental impact study on a green airfield on Gozo.

Although there were other several budget measures proposed by the Gozo Tourism Association, and that were not catered for especially those targeted to mitigate seasonality, and connectivity, however the Association acknowledged that overall this budget promotes further economic growth also on the sister island.

TOURISM TRAILS 2018

The Gozo Tourism Association since its inception way back in 1999 always held high on its agenda the human resources within the Gozitan Tourism Industry. Along the years the GTA has taken numerous initiatives with the specific aim to entice youngsters pursue a career in Tourism within the Gozitan tourism establishments.



One such initiative was the tourism trails which is held annually with the full support of the Malta Tourism Authority and the consistent collaboration of all the Gozitan Secondary Schools. It was way back in 2008 that the Gozo Tourism Association joined forces with the Malta Tourism Authority and with the full co operation of the aforementioned schools started this experience, which the tourism trade deems so important.

Thus this year's edition was the tenth tourism trails organised by the Association. Basically this event is an opportunity for the Gozitan schools' students to follow a full day trail that takes them around several tourism establishments as well as places of interest that are generally frequented by tourists.



This year's edition was held in two parts, one between the 24th and the 26th April 2018 and another one between the 16th and 17th May 2018 both days included. In all 267 Year 9 (Form 3) students participated in the 6 trails which the GTA organised and co ordinated. The places visited during these trails included the following: Cittadella Interpretation Centre, The Cittadella Museums, Ggantija Temples, Dwejra Interpretation Centre, Dwejra Watch Tower, ITS Campus in Qala and boat trips through the Dwerja Inland Sea.

Furthermore these students visited the following Gozitan tourism Establishments: Cornucopia Hotel, Grand Hotel, Quaint Boutique Hotels, Casa Gemelli, St Andrews Divers Cove, Nautic Team Dive Centre, Ta Frenc Restaurant, Country Terrace Restaurant, Magro Food Village and Alda's Gozo Weaving.

These trails were all accompanied by school teachers and were guided by professional MTA approved guides. The Gozo Tourism Association would like to thank the Gozo College Secondary School, the Bishops Conservatory Secondary School and the Sacred Heart Seminary School for their full support and co—operation in realising once more these trails. The Association would also like to thank the sixteen Gozitan tourism establishments who accepted our invitation to show around and explain their respective roles to the visiting students.

These trails are an opportunity to bring together the main stakeholders (educators, students and tourism operators) in a collective synergised effort to mitigate the shortage of Gozitan youngsters pursuing a career in the Gozitan Tourism industry.





MTA STAR AWARDS



The Gozo Tourism Association congratulated the Gozitan workers who together with their Maltese counterparts were awarded the Star Awards by the Malta Tourism Authority. These STAR Awards are an acknowledgement by the Malta Tourism Authority for the sterling efforts made by many workers in the tourism sector. It is a way of recognising outstanding individuals who have been nominated by tourists themselves.

The Star Awards and certificates were distributed by the Minister for Tourism Dr Konrad Mizzi, MTA Chairman Dr Gavin Gulia and MTA CEO Mr Paul Bugeja during a special event organised by the Malta Tourism Authority on Thursday 8th February 2018 in one of the leading hotels in Malta.

The Gozitan workers who claimed these awards were the following:

1. Mr Christian Teuma—Casa Gemelli Boutique Hotel
2. Mr Joseph Mercieca—Country Terrace Restaurant
3. Mr Manuel Pace—Taxi Driver



Furthermore during this event the Malta Tourism Authority awarded the STAR Certification to the two winners of the Gozo Tourism Awards organised by the Gozo Tourism Association. These STAR Certificates were given to:

4. Mr Manuel Sultana—Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year Award 2017
5. Mr Richard Galea—Gozo Young Tourism Worker of the Year Award 2017

Whilst auguring the above workers, the Gozo Tourism Association, thanks all the workers in the tourism sector for their active part in this successful industry



STATISTICS

FOREIGN TOURISTS VISITING GOZO 2011—2017

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Arrivals	114433	135047	166513	152945	165581	189858	215184
Hotel Arrivals	34798	37046	43137	44978	46808	50833	50984
Self Catering Arrivals	79635	98001	123376	107967	118773	139025	164200
Day Visitors	614961	673719	714488	791345	848711	958606	1065473
Cruise Passengers	1021	3537	2482	648	9868	6930	14503

STATISTICS

These above statistics relate to all foreign tourists staying on Gozo for one night or more. These foreign tourists include even those staying in non-collective accommodation including apartments, farmhouses and villas.

Furthermore the overnight tourists are also split between those staying in Hotels and others staying in the self catering sector. It is worth mentioning that these statistics include also the day trippers that come to Gozo for the day without over-nighting as well as the cruise passengers that visit Gozo for a few hours while their liner is berthed off Mgarr or Xlendi harbours



STATISTICS

BOOKING.COM SEMINARS

Booking.com



The Gozo Tourism Association in collaboration with Booking.com organised four workshops for Gozitan Accommodation providers. These seminars were held at the Downtown Hotel in Victoria on the 9th & 10th May 2018 and covered various topics as shown below.

The main objective of these workshops was to help the accommodation operators and owners to get to know better and optimise more from Booking.com

These workshops were spread over four sessions on two different dates with two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. This was done in order to offer accommodation providers the opportunity to find their convenient time and attend any slot that were made available. The subjects treated were the following:

- ◆ *Availability & Ranking*
- ◆ *News from Booking.com Payment Systems*
- ◆ *Content & Market Strategies*
- ◆ *Statistics & Opportunities*

Over 40 Gozitan Accommodation establishments participated in this event which was offered Free of Charge by the Gozo Tourism Association.



Booking.com

GTA Participation at International Tourism Fairs

During the course of the past winter Gozo was represented by representatives from the Gozo Tourism Association at several important International tourism fairs. Following are the list of fairs in which Gozo Tourism Association was present:

- ◆ Fitur in Madrid 17th—21st January 2018
- ◆ Destinations Manchester 18th—21st January 2018
- ◆ Dublin Holiday World Show 26th—28th January 2018
- ◆ Destinations London Show 1st—4th February 2018



The participation of the Gozo Tourism Association in the above listed tourism fairs was possible through the collaboration with the Ministry for Gozo through its Directorate for Tourism & Economic Development and the Malta Tourism Authority, whom the latter is offering a very good space for Gozo on its main stands.

The continued participation in these events clearly indicates that Gozo's presence within the Malta Tourism Authority stand is very important for the promotion of the island, especially within the European cities, which are still our main core touristic markets. This year Gozo was again well exposed and promoted as a distinct destination yet complimentary to destination Malta. This line of promotion is giving Gozo an opportunity to promote itself within the Maltese archipelago that can offer a holiday with diversity.



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TOURISM AREAS EXEMPT FROM EXCAVATION & DEMOLITION WORKS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

Demolition and excavation will not be permitted within tourism areas during the coming three months of summer. The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) in collaboration with the Building Regulation Office (BRO) and the Planning Authority have identified the localities and streets where such works will not be permitted between the 15th June and the 30th September 2018.

Conscious that the demolition and excavation phase at a construction site is by far the greatest inconvenience for the surrounding neighbourhood, the legal notice (LN295/07) mitigates the nuisance that such sites have on both the tourism industry and the number of Maltese families who move to their summer residences. Any illegal excavation and demolition works carried out during this period in the identified localities and streets, may be reported to the Building Regulation Office on telephone number **22927608** (during office hours) or **99637508** (after office hours)

The full list of localities and streets where demolition or excavation works are prohibited during the summer months may be viewed on the Planning Authority's website <http://www.pa.org.mt/summer-breaktime>.

The Malta Tourism Authority is the competent Authority to identify the localities and streets where demolition or excavation works cannot be carried out . MTA reserves the right to change or amend the list of streets as it deems necessary.



RAS IL-HOBZ DIVE SITE

Following the numerous and constant complaints received during these past weeks with regards to the prevailing situation at the Ras il-Hobz diving site, the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) requested a meeting with the Minister for Gozo to discuss this issue.

During this meeting, which was held on Thursday 26th April 2018, GTA on passed its concerns about the reputational damage that Destination Gozo is suffering due to the Ras il-Hobz issue. On its part Minister Justyne Caruana updated the GTA delegation with the concrete steps that the Ministry for Gozo has taken and will be taking in the coming weeks in order to find a permanent and long term solution at the Waste Water Treatment plant at Ras-il-Hobz.

Following this meeting the GTA has also written a letter to the Minister for Gozo Dr Justyne Caruana in which further explanation was given and documentation was additionally attached. After this update with the latest developments we feel that the Ras il-Hobz issue is in hand and it is hoped that if all goes according to plan, a long term solution should be in place in the near future.

GTA would like to thank its Secretary Mr Mark Busuttill and GTA representative of the diving sector on Gozo as well as Mr Brian Azzopardi Vice Chairman PDSA who found time in their busy schedule to attend the meeting with the Minister for Gozo and gave a detailed overview from the divers perspective.

