

# Destination GOZO

October 2016

## GOZO TOURISM ASSOCIATION NEWS LETTER

“Results are the fruit of a sustained and continued promotional campaign to market Gozo both with the local and foreign markets”

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### Santa Marija Week

The Gozo Tourism Association would like to express its satisfaction for the number of visitors both local and foreign who crossed over to Gozo during the Santa Marija week.

The GTA believes that these numbers contributed substantially to the Gozitan Economy and proved once again that the synergized efforts by all stakeholders concerned continue to reap the desired results.

These results are the fruit of a sustained and continued promotional campaign to market Gozo both with the local and foreign markets. However the GTA, representing the majority of the Gozitan touristic establishments, is concerned that these efforts can easily be marred by irrational decisions.

The GTA is all out for law and order, and support all decisions taken in this regard. However as a constituted body, GTA do not agree with the way how traffic contravention fines were issued during the Public Holiday, on Santa Marija especially in Victoria. It is a known fact that the Gozitan Capital lacks enough parking spaces to cater for the needs of the Gozitan Community. Therefore more common sense was expected from the Local Wardens on the busiest day of the year, when the Island was hosting such an additional number of guests with their vehicles.

In the prevailing circumstances, it is expected that the Local Wardens should

have adapted a preventive approach rather than resorting to the issuing of fines

The Gozo Tourism association would like to take this opportunity to thank Gozo Channel Co Ltd and its employees for the ferry service offered during these days of the peak season.



Finally the Gozo Tourism Association encourage the Ministry for Gozo and all competent authorities to continue seeking the common good in favour of our island.....GOZO.

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## The Medical School

The Gozo Tourism Association welcomes the signing of the Memorandum of understanding signed earlier this year, between the Government of Malta, the Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry of Queen Mary University for the setting up of a campus hosting a medical and dental school on the site of the Gozo General Hospital.

The set up of such a medical training teaching institution is considered by the Gozo Tourism Association, as an encouraging step forward to stimulate the socio and economic development on the island of Gozo.



The Gozo Tourism Association representing the various sectors of the Gozitan tourism industry, firmly believes that such a medical school, will not only elevate the status of the Gozo General Hospital, but it will also brand Gozo internationally in the medical sector. Furthermore, the proposed public private partnership plan in health care for Gozo, dovetails perfectly with health tourism, one of the niches that we are striving to establish, develop and promote for Destination Gozo.

We are confident, that the setting up of the medical school and the medical hub on our island will open up new horizons, not only in the medical sector, but their multiplier effect will be most beneficial to the whole tourism industry on Gozo. It will definitely support the tourism sector on Gozo in mitigating its seasonality element, whilst creating new job opportunities.

To this end the GTA not only underlines the importance of such developments, but insists that the opening of these facilities are an obligation towards the socio-economic growth for the benefit of the Gozitan Island.

## GTA meets MEP Dr. Roberta Metsola



Recently the Gozo Tourism Association representatives met MEP Dr. Roberta Metsola while she was on one of her frequent visits to Gozo

During this meeting the GTA representatives led by Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna brought up various tourism issues of concern which the tourist trade on Gozo is encountering. The topics raised included the effect of Brexit on tourism to Gozo, reduction of VAT rate, state aid, connectivity and immigration.

Dr. Metsola informed the Gozo Tourism representatives about the various initiatives being taken at the EU that are of interest to Islands in general and Gozo in particular. These cover specific budget lines for Islands, the European year of Islands as well as a specific DG for Islands.

Dr Metsola whilst auguring a good season for the Gozitan Tourism industry, assured her full support towards the Gozo Tourism Association objectives.

## Collective Accommodation Performance January to June 2016

Following the release of the collective accommodation statistics compiled by the National Office of Statistics for the month of June 2016, the GTA notes the decrease in tourist arrivals and bednights during June. The decreases of 4.5% in arrivals and 10.5% in bednights have to be analysed objectively in order to have a more comprehensible picture of the tourism scenario on Gozo. However these decreases should be looked into and taken seriously, since this is the second consecutive month that the Gozitan hotels registered a decrease, after double digit growths in the preceding winter 2016 months.

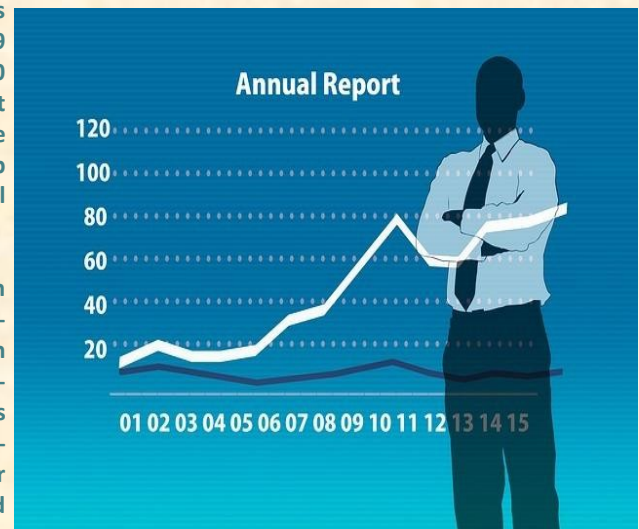
It is of utmost importance to state that the aforementioned statistics relate to the collective accommodation in Gozo, which includes the 9 hotels, guesthouses and tourist villages representing just over 2000 beds or 28% of the licensed beds in Gozo. These same statistics do not cover the non-collective accommodation that includes mostly, the farmhouses and the apartments. This accommodation segment group approximately 5000 licensed beds in Gozo or 72% of the island's total bedstock.

There are several reasons which need to be taken into consideration when faced with these statistics. On analysing further the tourist bednights, there are indications of changes in the tourism accommodation sector. It is evident that lately there has been a shift from the collective accommodation to the non-collective accommodation. This was corroborated by various indicators. The main accommodation providers in the self catering sector confirmed that they registered better occupancies both in May and in June when compared to same period of last year.

The decreases in the collective accommodation were higher in lower categories i.e. the three star hotels, guesthouses and tourist villages. In fact these two categories registered a decrease of 17% and 15% respectively. Here it is worth pointing out that presently one can find 60 accommodation units in Gozo operating under the Bed & Breakfast trade name. Since this type of accommodation property falls under the non-collective accommodation, these units are not obliged to furnish NSO with their occupancies. A rough calculation of these units will add up to approximately 360 more beds in direct competition with the hotels sector. Furthermore one cannot exclude to mention those properties that are not licensed, yet are featured and bookable on several online booking engines. These are also increasing the bed supply on Gozo, while offering unfair competition to the licensed accommodation units.

In the circumstances the GTA calls for a concentrated effort to tackle the issues mentioned above. In this respect in its Budget 2017 proposals the GTA will be suggesting measures to strengthen the Gozitan Hotels sector, and if taken on board these measures will entice the Hotel owners to invest in the upgrading and refurbishment of their accommodation offer. The Gozo Tourism Association recommends that the time has come to have a more comprehensive Gozitan accommodation data that covers and includes all type of units. Only through these statistics one can really measure the Gozitan tourism achievements or otherwise.

Finally the GTA augurs that all those involved in the tourist industry persist in doing their utmost to continue enhancing better prospects in the Gozitan Tourism industry. The GTA, believes that more has to be done by all stakeholders involved in order to maintain the numbers registered during these last years.



## Budget 2017 Proposals by GTA

As is now customary around end September the Gozo Tourism Association prepares a set of proposed measures aimed to enhance the tourism sector in Gozo. These proposals are then presented to the Minister for Finance, the Minister for Gozo, the Minister for Tourism and the Opposition Shadow Minister for Gozo. For the benefit of our members we are listing hereunder the salient measures listed in the aforementioned proposals.

### CONNECTIVITY

- That funds are allocated for another study to identify an alternative site for the construction of the airstrip other than the earmarked one at Ta' Lambert
- The GTA is proposing a change in the ferry fare structure, with the introduction of a seasonal ticketing systems by Gozo Channel as details below:

Low Season Fare  
January, February, November and December

Mid Season Fare  
March, April and May

High Season Fare  
June, July, August, September and October

- The GTA is once again proposing that during the low and mid seasons all passenger and vehicle crossings during the weekends are to be changed at rates relative to the Gozitan residents fare. GTA is therefore proposing an increase on the current estimates of €200,000 allocated for such a scheme to the Gozo Ministry, since this sum covers only four weekends.
- GTA is proposing once again the introduction of a Ferry Guaranteed boarding, a scheme intended to facilitate tourists connecting with incoming and outgoing flights, thus saving on lost overnights in the Gozitan accommodation.
- In order to make up for the termination of the Sa Maison Cargo Service the GTA is proposing that heavy transport vehicles who crosses over to Malta with the night ferries will do so Free of Charge
- Provide redundancy in addition to three existing ferries, as a contingency for any breakdown to the present ferries, as well as to meet heavy demands during peak periods.
- Fast track the study and the PSO issue to introduce a fast ferry service to Valletta
- The setting up of a Shuttle service between MIA and Cirkewwa with the prime objective to minimize the transfer costs of the MIA—Cirkewwa Sector.
- The GTA is proposing the necessary infrastructural investment in a cruise berthing buoy off Xlendi Bay, a new buoy off Mgarr Terminal and Marsalforn in order to offer alternative berthing facilities around the West, North West and South coast of Gozo.



## Cont. Budget 2017 Proposals by GTA

### THE PRODUCT

- GTA urges Government to fast forward the amendments to the Tourist Act as soon as possible preferably by the end of this summer season 2016
- Amend the present accommodation VAT rate on Gozo as follows:
 

November to March	3%
April to October	7%

- An accelerated depreciation on tourism accommodation upgrading and refurbishment including product development and operational infrastructure as well as energy generation/efficiency to cater for replacement every 5-7 years
- All types of accommodation having a swimming pool and which are covered by an operating license issued by the Malta Tourism Authority will be exempted from this 15% increase on the swimming pool license.
- A tailor-made Tourism Investment Support Scheme (TISS) to entice local entrepreneurs to upgrade their Gozitan Tourist Establishments. Such scheme can be financed and piloted by the Ministry for Gozo and in collaboration with the Ministry for Tourism together with the active participation of the GTA
- The upkeep on regular basis of the rural roads leading to self catering accommodation for easier access, especially during winter time.
- The setting up of a Tourist Upkeep Unit which will own, maintain and manage several tourist spots like: Qbajjar Promenade, Three Hills Garden in Marsalforn, The Villa Rundle Gardens, Zewwieqa Waterfront, country walk paths, dive sites etc.
- The development of sports facilities including an athletics track and training camp facilities that can be incorporated in the Ta' Xhajma Race Track
- A Subvention is allocated to the Cittadella Management Committee to continue with the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the newly restored Cittadella until such time this same Management Committee finds alternative funds to sustain its remits.

### NICHE MARKETS

- A financial subvention is to be made available for the implementation of several actions advised in a three year marketing plan commissioned by GTA in 2016
- The small conferences sponsored and/or organised by Government are to be held in Gozo
- A Public Private Partnership (PPP) project should be piloted and taken in hand by Government for the development of a centralized, well equipped Conference Centre on Gozo.
- The GTA urges all parties involved to reach an agreement between Government, the two Gozitan Opera Theatres and other stakeholders to establish an official opera season



## Cont. Budget 2017 Proposals by GTA

### NICHE MARKETS

- The implementation of the Diving Master Plan by the Ministry for Gozo which was carried out through EU co-financing way back in 2006 and up date the actions proposed in this plan which plans were never activated due to lack of funds.
- The drafting of Rural Tourism Policy and including Agri-Tourism
- The GTA is proposing the setting up of a fund to enforce and manage the established Marine Protected Areas in and around Gozo in order to increase marine life. This fund can be managed by the already established Management Committee of specific touristic resorts.

### HUMAN RESOURCES

- Training schemes (practical and Theoretical) during the winter months aimed at improving knowledge and skills in the tourism industry, including training in soft skills and languages while encouraging retention of employees during off-peak months, sustained through grants coupled with employer and employee full NI credit.
- Scheme targeted toward new employees with MQF Level 5 and upwards residing in Gozo in micro touristic units, subject to credits on employers and employee NI for a period of three years.
- More synergy between the ITS Gozo and the Gozo Tourism Association.
- The NSO office in Gozo should have an allocation of funds for the Gozo Specific Statistics including tourism and commuting patterns. This data should include tourism related figures together with other relevant data that constitutes the whole Gozitan tourism product.

### Budget proposals discussed at MCESD

Since the Gozo Tourism Association is founder member of the Gozo Regional Committee a representative of which sits on the MCESD, some of the above proposals were included in the Budget Proposals put forward by the Gozo Regional Committee. During a full day meeting between the MCESD members and the Minister for Finance held on 12th September 2016 the aforementioned proposals were brought for the attention of the Minister concerned and discussed at length.

We are positive that in the long run some of these proposals will by time gain the necessary support and will be implemented for both the benefit of the Gozitan Tourism Industry, in particular and for the Gozitan economy.

*Note: Presently the Gozo Tourism Association hold the Chair of the Gozo Regional Committee (GRC)*



### Half Day Conference: "Maximising on Online Bookings" Thursday 17th November 2016



The Online travel industry have grown over the past few years. Online sales value of air travel, hotels and online Travel Agents are all expected to grow by at least six percent in 2016. It is being estimated that during the current year, online travel sales cumulatively generated 533.52 billion US Dollars. This figure is forecasted to grow to 762 billion US Dollars by 2019.

Online Travel booking has been increasing all over the world. Between spring of 2008 and spring of 2015, the number of internet users who booked travel reservations online increased from around 40.6 million to 59.8 million. Travellers are also relying more on travel review sites when booking.

In this scenario the Gozo Tourism Association in collaboration with Booking.com is organising a half day conference entitled "Maximising on Online Bookings". This event is being held on **Thursday 17th November 2016, between 09.30hrs till 12.00hrs at the Grand Hotel, Mgarr Gozo**. The conference will be addressed by Mr Leslie Vella, Chief Officer Strategic Planning/ Deputy to CEO at the Malta Tourism Authority and Mr Andrea D'Amico, Regional Directors of Hotel—Booking.com

Participation for this conference is Free of Charge, however booking is required via email to [gtagozo@onvol.net](mailto:gtagozo@onvol.net) or by telephone on 21565171.

## The Gozo Tourism Awards 2016

For the ninth consecutive year the Gozo Tourism Association is organizing 'The Gozo Tourism Awards - 2016'. These Annual awards will be bestowed to the worker in the tourism sector on Gozo, and the Young tourism worker who distinguish themselves in the performance of their duties in the touristic sector.

The objectives of these Awards are:

- To acknowledge the service given by the employee during the performance of his/her duties in the Gozitan Tourism Sector.
- To acknowledge the employee who with his/her performance and his/her qualities was a role model to his colleagues.
- To acknowledge the employee who through his/her performance was not only enhancing his/her place of work, but was also instrumental in improving the touristic industry on Gozo.
- To acknowledge the employee who with the performance of his/her duties, was enticing confidence in a career in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, for the fourth consecutive year the Entrepreneurship Award is being also bestowed to the Gozitan Entrepreneur. The aims of this award are:

- To provide recognition to individual/partners or businesses who have achieved outstanding accomplishments that have had significant impact on the tourism sector on Gozo.
- To create greater awareness of the entrepreneur role in the Gozitan tourism sector.
- To encourage and motivate other Gozitan entrepreneurs

These awards will be conferred to the winners during a special event which will be held during the first week of January 2017. Nomination forms can be obtained from the offices of the Gozo Tourism Association at 4 Mliet Court, George Borg Olivier Street Victoria Gozo. More details will be circulated at a later stage.

