



Gozo Tourism Awards 2022

On Thursday 19th January, 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association, organised the 13th edition of the Gozo Tourism Awards.

These Awards were bestowed to **the Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year, the Gozo Young Tourism Worker of the Year, the Gozo Tourism Investment and Entrepreneurship Award and the Gozo Niche 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.

Mr. Andrew Portelli won the Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year Award 2022, whilst the Gozo Young Tourism Worker of the Year Award 2022 was won by Ms. Giorgia Attard. This year's Gozo Tourism Entrepreneurship Award 2022, was won by Mr. & Mrs. Mario and Irene Grech of the Santa Lucia Boutique Hotel, whilst the winner of the Gozo Niche Achievement Tourism Award was awarded to the 'Kite and Wind Festival' organised by the Gharb Local Council.

The winners were officially announced by Notary Public Dr. Paul G Pisani MIM., MA., LLD. Chairman of the adjudicating board, which also included, Mr. Godfrey Swain, Ms Christine Scerri and Ms. Christine Vella.

Finally, the Gozo Tourism Association Council awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award in Tourism to the late Mr. Joe Baldacchino of the Kempinski San Lawrenz, for his investment and achievements in the tourism sector along the years, which contributed towards job creation and economic growth on Gozo.



Gozo Tourism Awards 2022



The Special Recognition Award in Tourism was awarded to Mr. Alvin Scicluna of CVC Media, whilst the Gozo Tourism Commitment Award this year was awarded to Gozo Channel Co Ltd.

These awards were presented to the respective winners by the Hon Clint Camilleri, Minister for Goz; Dr. Gavin Gulia, Chairman of the Malta Tourism Authority; Mr. Carlo Micallef, CEO of MTA and Mr. Paul Scicluna, Chairman of the GTA.

The Minister for Gozo, Hon. Clint Camilleri, in his concluding address mentioned the importance of the human resources in the tourism sector, whilst emphasising the commitment of his Ministry for the enhancement of the Gozitan touristic offer with the ongoing projects, as well as with the all-year-round cultural calendar. Whilst congratulating all the winners and nominees, he thanked all the workers and the Entrepreneurs in the Gozitan Tourism Industry.

The numerous guests present were also addressed by Dr. Gavin Gulia, Chairman of the MTA and Mr. Paul Scicluna, Chairman of the Gozo Tourism Association.

Annual General Meeting 2023



The Gozo Tourism Association held its 24th Annual General Meeting on Friday, 3rd March, 2023. This event was held at the Queen Mary University of London, Gozo Campus in Victoria, Gozo.

In his opening address, the GTA Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna highlighted that the recovery of tourism was also registered in Gozo with increases coming both from the foreign and domestic markets. GTA Chairman stated that although 2023 tourism in Gozo is expected to reach, and even exceed, the pre-pandemic arrivals, yet the sector still faces challenges that need to be addressed. The Chairman noted that the touristic sector feels that the over development in Gozo is killing the goose that lay the golden egg. Furthermore, Mr. Scicluna also stressed the need to maintain the authenticity of the Gozitan touristic product, especially through a trained and skilled labour force.

The GTA's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Joe Muscat, then delivered an audio-visual presentation on the performance of the Association during 2022. He gave an overview of the Gozitan touristic performance during the last year, as well as the work and initiatives undertaken by the Association during the course of the past year 2022.

Annual General Meeting 2023



The Annual General Meeting was also addressed by the Opposition Spokesperson Dr. Chris Said, who whilst thanking GTA for its attainments, explained several tourism related issues including the touristic product, human resources, connectivity and more support to the Gozitan constituted bodies.

In his address, the Minister for Tourism, Hon Clayton Barotlo, referred to the increases of the tourist arrivals both foreign and domestic to Gozo. He also stressed that Gozo can be a destination that can excel in tourism niches like, wellness, faith and sports tourism. Hon. Bartolo also stated that connectivity to Malta remains a priority to the tourism industry and this will continue to increase during this year.



The Annual General Meeting came to an end with the address of the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Clint Camilleri, who also mentioned the initiatives his ministry is taking to sustain this important sector for Gozo. Minister Camilleri referred to the jampacked cultural calendar, as well as the infrastructural works that are in progress and the development of the airfield in Gozo, which will enhance the Gozitan touristic offer.

Present for this meeting were also the MTA Chairman, Dr. Gavin Gulia; MTA CEO, Mr. Carlo Micallef; the Permanent Secretary at MGOZ, Mr. John Borg; officials from the MTA Gozo Office, other distinguished guests and GTA members.

World Tourism Day

Launch of New Website

The World Tourism Day is commemorated annually by the UNWTO, every 27th September, of each year. Along the years, the Gozo Tourism Association took several initiatives to observe this day. To mark this year's World Tourism Day 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association held a half day conference entitled Business to Button.

The focus of this event was the enhancement and adaptability of the Gozitan tourism operators in the versatile and constantly evolving touristic sector. During this event the Gozo Tourism Association launched another section on its website: **www.islandofgozo.org**, fully dedicated to its members, as well as to the other stakeholders in tourism. This part of the website was presented to the participants by the GTA Council Member Mr. Konrad Scicluna, who was behind the design and compiling of this section. This compendium of touristic information at a touch of a button, is intended to assist and facilitate Gozitan tourism operators in their marketing and promotional efforts, as well as their respective daily operations.





Those present for this event were also given a wealth of information on the habits, trends and profile of the foreign tourists who visit Gozo, zooming on the 2019-2022 period. This detailed presentation was delivered by Mr. Leslie Vella, Chief Officer Strategic Development and Deputy CEO of the Malta Tourism Authority. In his presentation, Mr. Vella gave an insight through various statistics on the behaviour of the visitors to Gozo, as well as to their motivations and expectations to visit Gozo.

At the end of the conference, participants were addressed by the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Clint Camilleri. In this concluding speech, Minister Camilleri highlighted the importance of the touristic sector to the Gozitan economy, as well as the touristic vision for Gozo as spelled out in the recently launched strategy by the GRDA. Minister Camilleri also underlined the several projects that are presently in hand in Gozo to continue upgrading the Gozitan touristic offer, whilst thanking all those present for their efforts and endeavours in Gozitan Tourism.

This conference was also addressed by the Gozo Tourism Association Chairman, Mr. Paul Scicluna, who in his welcoming speech stressed the need of the Gozitan operators to adopt and upgrade the quality of their services, whilst advising participants that in order to maintain and sustain tourism growth on Gozo, tourism operators need to up and improve their capabilities to be more competitive.

Extended Stays Scheme



Over the past 25 years, concentrated efforts were deployed to establish Gozo into a year-round destination. However, seasonality always remains a challenge for an island tourist destination. Gozo is still experiencing fluctuations during the year, with high numbers of foreign tourist arrivals during the summer months, and less arrivals during the winter months. Thus, to this end in its Budget 2023 proposals, the GTA included a measure in the form of a scheme, aimed specifically to mitigate seasonality.

This scheme, which was launched this week by the Ministry for Gozo through its Directorate for Tourism and Economic Development, incentives foreign tourists that come to Gozo during the winter season from 15th October 2023 till 15th March 2024. However, in order to benefit from this scheme, the foreign tourists staying in Gozitan licensed accommodation in the aforementioned period should spend 10 days or more.



The objectives of such a scheme are to increase the number of foreign tourists to Gozo during the winter months, as well as to increase the average length of stay during the same period, and which is decreasing year on year.

Furthermore, through this scheme, an additional marketing opportunity was created. Since both the Ministry for Gozo website www.visitgozo.com, as well as the individual websites of the participating accommodation establishments, will be promoting this extended stay initiative accordingly.

The GTA believes that this synergized effort between the Directorate of Tourism within the Ministry for Gozo and the Gozo Tourism Association will further mitigate the seasonality on Gozo.

Budget 2024 Proposals



Like in previous years, the Gozo Tourism Association prepared and send to the respective Ministries a set of proposals for Budget 2024, under the caption of Upholding and supporting the Distinctiveness of the Destination Gozo.

Connectivity

- Retain, improve and sustain the fast ferry service which can also assist in attracting to Gozo other niche tourists.
- Build a new fourth ferry identical to the existing ones to replace the Nikolaus.
- Commence the development of the Airfield for the fixed wing airlink between Gozo and Malta.
- Introduce an integrated ticketing system which allows persons to commute on different transport modes with a single common ticket.



Marketing

- Re-introduce the extended stays scheme and broaden it to incentivise also tour operators specialising in winter breaks and longer stays to market and sell Gozo for the October to April period.
- Assist and incentivise small touristic establishments to set up their respective website.
- Create, offer, support and entice new niches like adventure, activity, sports, walking, digital nomads and well-being.

Budget 2024 Proposals



Environment

- Develop new regional plan and policies, specifically designed for Gozo, to preserve it as an island of villages within a modern world.
 - Remove all fiscal incentives on sale of buildings and land for development into apartments.
 - Retain the existing incentives on sale and purchase of properties in UCA where the purchaser signs a guarantee to restore the property without subdivision.
- Extend the incentives in all vernacular and postwar properties including UCA where buyer undertakes to preserve the integrity of the property, respecting and not exceeding the surrounding traditional village heights.
 - Introduce a fiscal incentive scheme to encourage the restoration and conversion of existing traditional properties and bring them back to life as residential homes, boutique hotels.



Tourism Product

- Ringfence the ECO contribution collected from Gozitan accommodation units to be invested in product upgrading like, kitting up areas for the diving community.
- Ensure and enforce the right of access to the diving sector for the shoreline on the North and North west of Gozo.
- Fast track the amendments to the Tourism Act 1999 to reflect the new trends in tourism establishments.
- Allocate enough funds to finish the Gozo Natatorium and the Gozo Museum
- Commence the rebuilding of the Marsalforn Road which, incorporates part of the Victoria ring road, which will eventually ease traffic flow through the capital's core.

Budget 2024 Proposals



Human Resources

- Introduce a grant scheme for local students who opt to work during the weekends or their holidays in Gozitan tourism establishments.
- Organise courses targeting foreign employees to learn the basics of the Maltese and English Language, as well the history and culture of the Maltese Islands.
- Set up a scheme to assist employers and employees to attend a comprehensive list of training courses prepared by the ITS training School, covering a wide range of topics tailore-made for Gozitan touristic needs.
- Develop the ITS Gozo Campus into a specialised vocational tourism institution that caters not only for Gozitans, but also for Maltese and foreign students, who opt to follow specific courses.
- Ensure that the Public Sector is no longer in competition with the Private Sector for the recruitment of employees, by offering favourable and unmatched working conditions.



Gta's position on development on Gozo



For Gozo, tourism is undoubtedly one of its main economic pillars. The strength of the sector's economic impact and contribution are undeniable. The achievements of this sector are rooted in the island's uniqueness. Hence, Gozo has always been projected, marketed and promoted as a different destination, based on its singular characteristics, natural and rural landscapes, and its particular chequered history.

The Malta Tourism Strategy's (2021-2030) main objective relating to Gozo is directed at "consciously sustaining the development of Gozo as a separate and distinct Mediterranean Island Destination. The formal recognition of Gozo's component characteristics, their preservation and the rejection of elements, which go contrary to them, are considered to be paramount for this objective to be reached".

Nonetheless, during recent years, we have seen the foundation of Gozo's unique selling propositions being eroded. The accelerated rate of development being experienced on Gozo is also of concern, for the touristic sector. This apprehension was evidently expressed in a recent survey carried out amongst the members of the Gozo Tourism Association. Gozo's tourism cannot afford to lose what was the backbone of the island's distinctiveness, and thus its touristic offer.



Gta's position on development on Gozo



We believe that tourism on Gozo has a great future, but only if significant measures are taken. The Gozo Tourism Association is not against development. On the contrary, the touristic sector yearns for improvements and upgrading of our touristic product. However, there is the urgent and immediate need to tweak, correct and adjust the present development, in order to reduce the environmental impact, whilst improving our infrastructure, enhancing the visitors' services and facilities, so as to attract higher quality tourism and higher spending tourists.

That is why the Gozo Tourism Association has joined forces with other Gozitan business entities and eNGOs under the "Ghal Ghawdex" umbrella. We strongly believe in development that adds value to Gozo's touristic offer, augments our commerce and industry sectors, and in the long term, improves the quality of life of all Gozitan inhabitants and all visitors.

In this respect, along the years, the Gozitan touristic sector gave clear examples and invested in developments that created new types of accommodation, that offered added value to the island's touristic offer. The Gozitan touristic entrepreneurs were, and still are, aware and proud of their island's characteristics. The investments in the farmhouse concept and the number of boutique hotels and houses of character, nowadays spread within our towns and village cores, is a testimony of sound and sustainable touristic development. Yet, Gozo's present unrelenting development cannot only be driven by socialising the costs and privatising the benefits.

Tourism, construction and real estate are sectors that collectively form a significant part of the overall economic value chain of Gozo. However, these segments need to be guided by common development goals, designed and integrated into a regional development plan, that advocates responsible architecture, whilst respecting the village cores and skylines. Only through such policies, tailor made specifically for Gozo, one can ensure sustainable development, conducive towards the prosperity of the Island and its inhabitants.



Gta's position on development on Gozo



We need to change our present model of development, into one that not only respects all the attributes that Gozo is endowed with, but into a type of development that showcases the genuine character of the Island. The majority of the visitors to Gozo come to explore something different and fresh, they overstay repeatedly in their thousands to experience and relish an authentic island holiday and not more of the same found on the mainland. Destination Gozo's authenticity should remain embedded and firmly anchored on the Island's quaintness, natural characteristics, rural environment and its rich cultural heritage. The authenticity of Gozo should be a means by which the visitor may reach the goal of such an experience and hence it needs to be protected and enriched.



Motivated by Gozo's natural mission of a distinct quality destination, and by the objectives and goals entrenched within the Malta Tourism Strategy, the Gozo Tourism Association felt the need to act and with great responsibility merged with "Ghal Ghawdex" together with other Gozitan social partners and eNGOs.

This Gozitan united front is not a forum to chatter and criticize, but an opportunity to act together and put forward to policy makers concrete proposals for sound and sustainable development on Gozo. Coming together was the beginning and working together will surely bear success.

Gozo Tourism Awards 2023



For the fourteenth year, the Gozo Tourism Association is organising 'The Gozo Tourism Awards - 2023'. These Annual awards will be bestowed to the Tourism Worker in the tourism sector on Gozo, and the Young Tourism Worker who distinguished themselves in the performance of their duties in the touristic sector in Gozo.

Furthermore, for the ninth year, the Investment and Entrepreneurship in Tourism Award is being also bestowed to the Gozitan Entrepreneur, who has achieved outstanding accomplishments, that have had significant impact on the tourism sector on Gozo.

This year's Award will include as well for the fourth time another category, that of the Niche Tourism Achievement Award. The main objective of this award is to acknowledge any individual or any organisation that promoted the cultural diversity and authenticity of Gozo, through a cultural activity and or project in 2023, which was instrumental in attracting both domestic and foreign visitors to Gozo.

These awards will be conferred to the winners during a special event which will be held on Thursday, 25th January 2024. Nominations for these awards close on Friday 29th December, 2023. Nomination forms, conditions and regulations can be obtained from the offices of the Gozo Tourism Association.

Skills Cards Initiative



During the month of October, 2023, Government announced that as from January 2024, all new third-country nationals (TCNs) applying to relocate to Malta for employment within the tourism and hospitality industry will now require a skills card, which can be obtained after the prospective employee sits for a number of courses before coming to Malta.

Furthermore by October 2024, all employees seeking renewal for their work permit will also be required to sit for these courses. Additionally by 2025, all tourism and hospitality workers will require a skills card to work in the industry. In this regard a consultation process was initiated for the feedback of the stakeholders as well as from the general public.



Skills Cards Initiative



In order to explain better this skills card as well as its implications and impact on the tourism sector especially on Gozo, the Gozo Tourism Association in collaboration with ITS Malta held an information session on the subject on Wednesday 8th November, 2023 at the ITS Campus in Qala Gozo. This information session was open for GTA members.

During this session, a presentation on the skills card process was delivered by ITS officials, after which enough time was allocated for questions from the floor. The discussion was a lively one, with a number of interventions from the participants present who aired their concerns about the introduction of the skills card. At the end of this session ITS officials informed those present the concerns that were brought up during this event will be discussed internally in order to lessen the harm to the tourism sector.

The information session was introduced by GTA Chairman Mr. Paul Scicluna who was followed by Dr. Frank Fabri who delivered a detailed presentation. Mr. Pierre Fenech, CEO of the ITS, also took part later in the discussion and answered and clarified a number of issues raised.

International Tourism Fairs



Since 1999 the Gozo Tourism Association played its part and role in the promotion and marketing of Gozo as a tourism destination. In fact, all along these past 25 years, representatives from the Gozo Tourism Association attend the Gozo section within the Malta Tourism Authority stand in various fairs across Europe.

These fairs cater for both the trade, as well as to the consumer, and are mainly concentrated in the core markets for the Maltese Islands. Presently the Gozo Tourism Association sends its representatives to the following tourism fairs:

January	Destinations	Manchester
January	FITUR	Madrid
January	World Travel Show	Dubai
February	Destinations	London
March	ITB	Berlin
September	Top Resa	Paris
October	TTG	Rimini
November	World Travel Market	London



International Tourism Fairs



This representation and participation in the above fairs can only be made possible by the continuous support of the Directorate for Tourism and Economic Development, as well as the support and collaboration of the Malta Tourism Authority.

During the duration of these fairs, GTA representatives not only give information and handout promotional material about Gozo as a tourism destination, but make various contacts with tour operators, travel agents, DMC's and other stakeholders in the tourism sector.

With such participation the Gozo Tourism Association is fulfilling one of its main objectives in its mission statement, that of promoting Gozo as an all year round tourist destination!



Gozo Tourism Association Council Meetings



The Gozo Tourism Association is run by a Council elected during every General Meeting of the Association. This council is made of sixteen members coming from the various sections of the tourism composite on Gozo.

During the course of every calendar year this council meets regularly not only to run the Association, but also to discuss issues and matters that directly or indirectly affect the tourism sector on Gozo. During year 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association council met basically every fortnight and tackled various topics including the skills card, the overdevelopment on Gozo, inter-island connectivity, the Budget 2024 proposals, proposals for EU funded projects, DIER issues, the touristic product on Gozo, and participation in tourism fairs.

The following are the council members of the Gozo Tourism Association as elected during the last Annual General Meeting:

Mr. Borg Marvic, Mr. Busuttil Mark, Ms. Farrugia Daniela, Mr. Gatt Ludgard, Mr. Grech Ryan, Mr. Loporto Mario, Mr. Magro Chris, Mr. Mercieca Joe, Mr. Mifsud Ivan, Mr. Muscat Sammut Joe, Mr. Scicluna Konrad, Mr. Scicluna Paul, Mr. Sillato Samuel, Ms. Spiteri Pauline, Mr. Verraneman Amand and Ms. Xerri Gatt Charlene.

From amongst the above council members, the following members were elected to hold the following posts:

Chairman: Mr. Paul Scicluna

Vice Chairman: Mr. Mario Loporto

Secretary: Mr. Mark Busuttil

Vice-Secretary: Ms. Pauline Spiteri

Treasurer: Mr. Joe Muscat Sammut

Vice-Treasurer: Ms. Charlene Xerri Gatt

