



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT FOR YEAR 2023

Every year the Gozo Tourism Association is obliged by its statute that the yearly performance of the Association should be documented annually in a report which is to be submitted for the approval of its members during the Annual General Meeting. In observance of this regulation this is the 25th Administrative Report that is being compiled since the inception of the Gozo Tourism Association.

In this regard it is opportune to mention that it was during the last weeks of 1998, that on the initiative of the then Minister for Gozo, following the advice of some hoteliers, a process to amalgamate all the Gozitan operators under a tourism Association for Gozo was initiated. The 11th of February, 1999, was the day on which a general meeting was summoned for all the tourism operators on Gozo. During this meeting, apart from the approval of the statute, the first council of this Association was elected. It was thus that the Gozo Tourism Association, more commonly known as the GTA, was incepted.

During the current year the Association has prepared a number of initiatives that will commemorate this milestone for the Gozitan tourism and which will be dealt with extensively in Next year's Annual General Meeting.

However, and as reported in the minutes, the last Annual General Meeting, was held at the on the 3rd March, 2023, at the Auditorium of the Queen Mary University of London at the Gozo Campus. During this AGM, the following members were nominated to sit on the Gozo Tourism Association Council for the year 2023:

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

The officials elected from amongst the aforementioned members during the first council meeting after the Annual General Meeting were:

Chairman: Paul Scicluna
Vice-Chairman: Mario Loporto
Secretary: Mark Busuttil

Treasurer: Joe Muscat Sammut

Vice Secretary Ms. Pauline Spiteri

Vice Treasurer Ms. Charlene Xerri Gatt

During last year, the Gozo Tourism Association council was convened 16 times to discuss many issues related to the tourism sector on Gozo. The agenda for these meetings was the safeguarding, enhancement and wellbeing of the tourism industry on Gozo, and how to assist the Gozitan tourism establishments in their respective operations. Moreover, the Executive council of the GTA meet another eight times to discuss in more detail various topics before brought up for debate at the Council. Furthermore, during the course of 2023 several GTA council members participated in numerous meetings held by the various working groups set up adoc to tackle several topics.

In November of last year, the Association Office staff compliment was further strengthened with the addition of another employee, which was made possible with the support of the Ministry for Gozo.

Gozitan Tourism Performance 2023

It is relevant to highlight the touristic scenario in which GTA was operating, by sharing with you a general overview of the Gozitan Tourism Performance for 2023.

At time of writing this report, the available data by NSO covers statistics issued for the first nine months of 2023 (January to September) for collective accommodation. These confirm, that the past year was for truly the recovery year. During the first nine months, Gozo experienced more foreign arrivals than the previous year 2022.

In fact, Gozitan hotels and guesthouses registered an increase of 11459 more foreign tourists or 29% more during the first nine months of 2023, when compared with same period of 2022. Even the bed nights spent on Gozo by foreign guests, increased by 37,988 between January and September 2023or 26% more on the same months of 2022.

During the first nine months of 2023, the Gozitan hotels and guesthouses continued to attract domestic visitors to overnight in their accommodation. Along the period January to September, an increase of 4,753 more domestic visitors were reported in Gozitan hotels and guesthouses or 11% more than same period of 2022. This increase translated into 2995 more bed nights or 3% on 2022.

Cumulatively, the Gozitan collective accommodation units registered 16,212 more arrivals from the foreign and the domestic visitors in hotels and guesthouses during the period January to September 2023, an encouraging increase of 19%. This

increase was translated into 40,983 more bed nights in the January to September period of 2023 on same months of 2022 an increase of 17% in cumulative bednights. This positive performance of the Gozitan tourism is very much in line with that experienced in mainland Malta and played a part in the recording breaking of foreign arrivals in 2023 that surpassed the 3 million mark.

Meetings with Minister for Gozo

During 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association Council held numerous meetings with different Authorities and various entities. During the past year, the GTA Council met several times with the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Clint Camilleri. Various issues relating to tourism on Gozo were discussed between GTA and the Minister, and included, over views of the performance of the tourism sector on Gozo, the GTA Budget 2023 Proposals, sports tourism, additional human resources at GTA and the continued collaboration between GTA and Ministry for Gozo.

Other matters relating to the inter-island connectivity were also discussed and included the Fast Ferry Service, the Fourth vessel for Gozo Channel, the airlink as well as the development and environment on Gozo.

These structured ongoing meetings between the Minister for Gozo and the GTA Council are essential for GTA, as the Association can plan its initiatives based on the ongoing policies of the Ministry for Gozo. We are confident that collaboration and co-operation between the Ministry for Gozo and the GTA will be further intensified for the benefit of the tourism sector on Gozo.

Furthermore, during 2023 GTA officials held meetings with the Permanent Secretary within the Ministry for Gozo Mr. John Borg to discuss matters relating to upcoming events in Gozo as well as human resources at the Gozo Tourism Association.

GTA attends Press calls by various Ministers

During the past year GTA representatives participated in various press calls organised in Gozo by various Ministries. These included the following:

- The launch of the Extended Stays Scheme for winter tourism by the Minister for Gozo
- The launch of the Munxar Local Project entitled Enhancing the locality's environmental cultural and artistic value in which GTA is a partner
- A site visit to the Natatorium in Victoria together with Minister for Gozo
- The launch of the Regional Strategy for Gozo by the Gozo Regional Development Authority.

GTA at the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Gozo Affairs

Since the setting up of the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Gozo Affairs, the Gozo Tourism Association was invited regularly to participate in several meetings of this committee.

Even during the past year, the Gozo Tourism Association was invited to address a meeting of this committee. During this session the GTA representative delivered a presentation when the Parliamentary Committee was discussing Tourism in Gozo during the Festive period of 2023.

During his intervention, GTA CEO shared the results of an online survey carried out by the Gozo Tourism Association to assess the performance of the Gozitan Tourism establishments during the festive season. Furthermore, during this presentation GTA CEO highlighted the seasonality element whilst emphasising that the main motivation for visitors to Gozo was definitely based on the vast and extensive Christmas events and activities being held in Gozo during the Christmas period.

Gozo Regional Development Authority

Since the inception of the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) in September 2020, the Gozo Tourism Association always supported this entity and collaborated with all initiatives taken by this Authority.

During the past year GTA representatives attended various meetings called by GRDA to discuss mobility, tourism survey, Urban Development in Gozo and Circular economy on Gozo.

GTA representatives attended the opening of the new offices of GRDA in February of last year, while GTA CEO was invited by GRDA as a panelist during a conference in which a Gozitan tourism survey was launched. In September 2023 during the launch of the GRDA strategy for Gozo GTA CEO made an intervention on the way forward for tourism in Gozo in line with the newly launched strategy.

Up to December of last the GTA CEO sat on the Audit committee of the GRDA, and attended the respective meetings. Furthermore, the Association is represented on various GRDA Stakeholder Consultative Group which meetings are held on regular basis.

Presently GRDA and GTA are in discussion how to collaborate further a synergized approach.

GTA at MTA Board Meetings

For consecutive years, respective Ministers for Tourism have nominated a GTA representative to sit on the Board of Directors of the Malta Tourism Authority. This practice also continued under the present Minister for Tourism and the GTA CEO attends regularly to the MTA board meetings. During 2023 at these monthly meetings, the views of the Gozitan tourism sector were included for discussion within the main body that promotes and regulates tourism. Furthermore, the Gozitan island's dimension was brought to the attention, whenever tourism decisions are being taken on National level. To this end, one of the MTA board meetings was totally dedicated to Gozo and during which GTA CEO delivered a presentation on how the Gozitan Touristic sector represented by the Association can collaborate and co-operate with MTA in order to strengthen the Authority's presence on Gozo. GTA CEO had also regular one to one meeting with MTA Chairman Dr Gavin Gulia to discuss specific current topics affecting the tourism sector both on national and regional level.

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Furthermore, during the past year GTA and MTA continued their collaboration and consultations in various occasions. This collaboration covered exchange of information and statistics, marketing and promotion support and hosting of journalists and influencers. During the past year GTA council also held meetings with the MTA CEO Mr. Carlo Micallef. During these meetings GTA proposed a pathway how the two entities can collaborate further to enhance tourism performance on Gozo. These discussions between MTA and GTA were concretised by the signing of an agreement to enhance the existing synergy between the two entities. Further collaboration between MTA and GTA is ongoing with MTA overseas office namely that in London and Paris aiming to attract niche tourism to Gozo through various initiatives.

GTA Meets Director for Tourism MGOZ

In 2023, the GTA Executive Council held also meetings with various Ministerial officials and representatives of different entities. A series of 15 meetings were held with the Director for Tourism and Economic Development within the Ministry for Gozo, Mr. Ronald Sultana. During these regular meetings several topics were discussed and included synergized collaboration, the marketing of the destination, marketing schemes for the Gozitan tourism establishments, the scheme for long stays during low season, participation in tourism fairs and the Pop in the City event scheduled for September 2024. Moreover, on regular basis during these meetings between Director for Tourism and GTA both parties briefed each other of their respective current initiatives.

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These all proved to be an opportunity to strengthen the excellent working relationship between the Directorate and GTA. We are confident that the existing working rapport between GTA and this Directorate for tourism and economic development will continue and strengthened further.

Support for GTA Members

The strength of the Gozo Tourism Association comes from its members. As the membership base continues to grow, GTA feels even more the responsibility and commitment towards the concerns, demands and proposals of its members. During the past year, GTA continued with its constant contact with its members through different channels.

In 2023 GTA issued 60 Circulars covering a wide range of topics and subjects that were of interest to our members.

GTA held also a sectoral meeting of the Gozitan restaurants to discuss the issues that arose during the ongoing DIER inspections. In this regard GTA is a Liaoning both with its members and other entities to tackle these issues. In this regard, GTA Chairman and CEO met the Chairman and CEO of the Association of Catering Establishments to discuss a way forward to tackle these issues.

The Association also intervened on behalf of its members of the Transport Section and through its lobby the Directive for light passenger transport services and vehicle hire services was extended by another 24 months and up to September 2024.

GTA kept its members regularly and minutely informed on all developments on the Beverage Container Refund Scheme (BCRS). To this end a GTA delegation made up of GTA Chairman, CEO and council member Joseph Mercieca met the BCSR Directors and management to discuss issues that are being encountered by GTA members.

GTA representatives held several one-to-one meetings with its members and even visited member's establishment to discuss specific topics and issues encountered by the respective members.

During the course of 2023 GTA held two meetings for its members at the ITS Qala Campus to discuss and disseminate information on the introduction of the Skills Card during the course of the current year.

GTA on behalf of its members is presently discussing with ERA issues and concerns that will crop up with the introduction of the Plastic Single Use directive.

At the end of July, GTA in collaboration with Visnetmed held an information session on the YETI project. This project is focusing on the acknowledgement and support towards young entrepreneurs in eco-tourism structures and initiatives.

In the meantime, GTA continued with its reach out towards its members requesting them to send in content relating to their respective establishment to be uploaded free of charge on the GTA website.

Internally the GTA has set up a membership working group that through its reach out has managed to garner more members within the GTA fold.

GTA at GRC meetings

The Gozo Tourism Association is also founder member of the Gozo Regional Committee, set up within the MCESD. The GTA chairman, CEO and council member Konrad Scicluna, sit on the Gozo Regional Committee and participated in all the meetings held every month, to discuss so many varied topics related to the Island's socio-economic development. During the course of 2023, and up to the present date, the Gozo Tourism Association holds the Vice-Chair of the Gozo Regional Committee in the person of its Chief Executive Officer. Apart from the monthly meetings, GTA CEO also attended all meetings of the GRC management committee.

Furthermore, the GRC Vice-Chairman, ipso facto holds a seat on the MCESD. In this regards the GTA CEO attended the monthly MCESD meetings, during which the Gozitan concerns are also aired and discussed.

GTA at Gozo Action Group Foundation Meetings

The Gozo Tourism Association is also founder member of the Gozo Action Group Foundation. The GTA Chairman is the association representative on this Foundation and presently holds the seat of Secretary of GAGF. During the past year GTA chairman and attended all the 12 GAGF regular meetings. Moreover during 2023, GTA Chairman chaired a number of adjudications with regards to other EU funded projects.

Furthermore, GTA representatives attended a number of workshops that were organised by GAGF related to its new Strategy

A number of GTA council members also attended a conference organised by GAGF as part of an EU funded project promoting Well-being from Nature. The scope is to develop a common strategy for the promotion and attraction of rural tourism at a trans-national level, which allows the exchange of skills, knowledge and practices. Also, as part of this project, a number of video clips promoting this tourism niche in Gozo were uploaded on the GTA website between February and March of 2023.

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International Tourism Fairs

The Gozo Tourism Association continued to contribute towards one of its main objectives that of promoting and marketing Gozo as an all-year-round distinct tourist destination. This contribution is always possible through the full support and financial backing of the Directorate for Tourism within the Ministry for Gozo and the continuous collaboration of the Malta Tourism Authority. During 2023, having no restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic the participation in the international tourism fairs was back to normal. In fact, during 2023 GTA representatives managed to attend the following international tourism fairs: Destinations Manchester, World Holiday Show in Dublin, Destinations in London, ITB Berlin, Top Resa in Paris, TTTG in Rimini and the World Travel Market in London.

During such events apart from promoting Gozo as a touristic destination, the GTA representatives made and established contacts with operators and other stakeholders in the tourism trade. These contacts were disseminated to all GTA members for the necessary follow ups.

It is hoped that during the course of 2024, GTA will continue with its ongoing participation for these last twenty-five years in these fairs, and will be seeking to include new tourism fairs to spread the promotion of Gozo as a touristic destination.

Gozo Tourism Awards

At the beginning of 2023, and after an absence of two years, the Gozo Tourism Association organised once again the annual Gozo Tourism Awards for 2022. These Awards are bestowed yearly 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 initiatives in the vital touristic industry in Gozo.

However, the Gozo Tourism Association council was adamant to garner all its efforts to upgrade the 13th edition of the Gozo Tourism Awards for 2023. To this effect, this edition was held under a very different and professional format on 19th January 2023. The Gozo Tourism Awards event was live streamed on social media, while it was also televised on one of the stations of Television Malta in a recorded format a few days later. During this event the Gozo Tourism Association also conferred the lifetime achievement Award, the recognition award and the commitment award. This upgraded format of the Awards was made possible through the assistance of the Directorate for Tourism within the Ministry for Gozo and the collaboration of the Cultural heritage directorate.

Obviously to organise such an event, several meetings were held both of the working group as well as with other stakeholders involved in the organization of the Gozo Tourism Awards 2023.

Human Resources

The issue of human resources has always been high on the GTA's agenda. To this effect during 2023, GTA continued with its efforts to promote careers in the Gozitan tourism, as well as in mitigating the issue of lack employees in this sector. During the past year GTA participated in two half day seminars organised by Jobsplus to tackle issues related to employment in the touristic sector on Gozo.

During 2023, GTA officials met twice with the General Manager of ITS Training school to discuss the courses that are being made available to workers already in employment in tourism establishments. GTA representatives also participated in an information session organised by Jobsplus and Identity Malta with regards to the work permits for foreign employees.

GTA CEO also participated during a consultation meeting organised by the interministerial committee to discuss the new National education strategy. and gave its views of the tourism sector employment and skills needs in Gozo.

From time to time along 2023 GTA representatives were invited to deliver presentations to a number of students both foreign and local, following University and vocational courses on tourism careers opportunities and the tourism sector on Gozo. Furthermore, several University and ITS students interviewed GTA officials for their respective dissertations.

As customary every December GTA sponsors a trophy to the best Gozitan student during the annual ITS graduation ceremony always presented on behalf of GTA by council member Marvik Borg.

GTA participation in consultation meetings and other events

During the past year 2023 GTA representatives attended several consultations events and other activities held by various ministries and entities. These included the following:

1. GTA officials met informally with Prime Minister Dr. Robert Abela during an event for the Gozitan stakeholders
2. GTA executives met with Infrastructure Malta CEO to discuss the single lane road of Ghadira
3. GTA chairman and CEO met with UHM CEO and Secretary to seek mutual collaboration between both entities.

4. GTA CEO met Prof. Godfrey Baldacchino to discuss collaboration to organise a 150 strong conference in Gozo in June 2028.
5. GTA representatives attended several meetings organised by Regjun Ghawdex in preparation for the bid of Gozo as the European Region of Gastronomy in 2026
6. GTA CEO participated during a Business Breakfast organised by the Nationalist Party in Gozo to commemorate the Workers Day.
7. GTA representatives attended the launch of the ITS Training School
8. GTA Secretary and CEO attended a meeting with Director ECO Gozo to discuss issues related to the Diving product on Gozo.
9. GTA Secretary and CEO delivered two presentations on tourism on Gozo and diving respectively to a group of Tour Operators from Ireland.
10. GTA CEO and council member Konrad Scicluna met CEO of Sky Tink Tank Alexander Esslinger regarding air connectivity between Malta and Gozo
11. GTA CEO delivered a presentation on tourism and the Crib during a seminar organised by the Ghaqda Hbieb tal-Presepju Ghajnsielem.
12. GTA CEO met Mro Colin Attard to discuss further collaboration to entice foreigners for Opera productions in Gozo.
13. GTA Vice Chairman and CEO met Quest Travel to discuss travel and accommodation arrangements for two Dutch female football teams.
14. GTA representative attended a meeting on Sustainable mobility organised by the Transport Foundation
15. GTA representative attended several meetings of the Co-ordinating Committee for Sustainable Urban Development entrusted with the allocation of Urban funds to Gozo.
16. GTA representative attended a business breakfast by MTA on the presentation of the first quarter 2023 results.
17. GTA CEO attended and participated as a panelist during the MTA conference on Tourism.
18. GTA Chairman attended a meeting held at the Gozo Ministry regarding the reform of the Public Transport.

GTA Website

In early 2022 the Gozo Tourism Association embarked on a process to revamp its present website www.islandofgozo.org. This work was carried out by a working group from GTA council members, who met regularly to discuss and prepare an extensive website plan that was eventually discussed with the web designer. This process was followed by several meetings with the web designers to ensure that the desired website plan will be executed accordingly.

In October, 2022 the www.islandofgozo.org went live again and GTA is now proud that its web site is already resonating with the market, and provoking an intellectual connection with consumers and operators alike. This lengthy process,

involved weeks of preparatory work, including collating information, photos and other relevant material to be included on the website. GTA's aim that of creating and providing prospective visitors to Gozo, a feel of a great experience once they visit destination Gozo was finally realised. However, this was part one of the revamp Programme, as last September the GTA website was uploaded with another platform within the website that incorporates a section dedicated entirely for the Association itself, giving attention to the corporate image of GTA, whilst offering further information and additional services to its loyal membership base.

The launch of this part of the website was done on 27th September, 2023, during an event which also commemorated World Tourism Day. On this occasion council member Konrad Scicluna gave a detailed overview of the new platform. Those present were also delivered by a presentation 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 behavior of the visitors to Gozo as well as on their motivations and expectations to visit Gozo.

Those present were addressed by Professor Geoffrey Lipman President of SUNx Malta and past Assistant Secretary General of UNWTO. During his address Professor Lipman urged the tourism stakeholders present to give attention to climate friendly tourism, whilst reminding those present that tourism cannot be taken for granted, especially with the global climate change that is being experienced.

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.

Ghal Ghawdex Forum

During 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association was active as a member of the Ghal Ghawdex Forum together with another six entities, which was set up to advocate development that embellishes the Gozitan characteristics. GTA representatives attended several meetings held by Ghal Ghawdex. Furthermore, GTA Chairman and CEO represented the Gozo Tourism Association during various meetings with the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Gozo, the Minister for Planning and the Leader of the Opposition. Furthermore, both GTA representatives took part in meetings with and discussions even on Radio and TV to explain the 8-point plan as presented by the Ghal Ghawdex Forum.

GTA in the Media -TV/Radio/Newspapers

During 2022 the Gozo Tourism Association also aired its views, and the vision of the Gozitan establishments on numerous occasions. These were done through various interviews and interventions on different national media and included:

- Ghawdex Illum
- Interviews during TVM news
- Interviews during Net News
- Interviews during One News
- Extra on TVM
- Popolin TVM
- Net Live on Net TV
- Sibt il- punt One Radio
- 103 Ghawdex jitkellem
- Il-Polz tac-Cittadin Radio Malta
- Il-Hajja f'Ghawdex
- Interviews and articles on the local and foreign newspapers

Furthermore, during 2023, the Gozo Tourism Association issued twelve Media Releases covering various touristic topics. Especially those related to Gozitan Tourism, including amongst others, the interisland connectivity, the Extended Stays Scheme, World Tourism Day, Budget reactions, Development near Ggantija Temples, the GTA online surveys, and the Gozo Tourism Awards

This was a brief account of what the Gozo Tourism Association managed to contribute towards Tourism on Gozo. Of course, one can argue that more could have been attained, but given the limited human and financial resources, the GTA outgoing council is satisfied with the achievements of the Association.

A Thank you note

On a personal note, I would like to thank the Chairman and all members of the outgoing council, as well as the skeleton office staff, which recently was beefed up by another employee, for the professional work and commitment towards the GTA.

Thanks to the Minister for Tourism Hon. Clayton Bartolo, who is always available to listen, discuss and evaluate the GTA's proposals to enhance the touristic sector.

Thanks to all at MTA, the Chairman Dr. Gavin Gulia, CEO Mr. Carlo Micallef, and Mr. Leslie Vella and their respective staff, for their outstanding backing, support, assistance and encouragement.

Thanks to the Permanent Secretary at Ministry for Gozo Mr. John Borg and Mr. Ronald Sultana Director for Tourism and Economic Development for their continued understanding, collaboration and support.

Last but not least a special thanks goes to the Minister for Gozo Hon. Clint Camilleri for his continuous support, collaboration and availability to and with GTA. Honourable Minister, GTA is here to back you, and encourage you in your genuine endeavours for the tourism sector on Gozo.

A big thank you, to all of you GTA members who along the past year supported us and encouraged us to continue with our efforts towards the well-being of the tourism sector on Gozo. Finally, thank you, distinguished guests for your presence and support not only today but along the past years.

At the end Happy Anniversary Gozo Tourism Association

Thank you

Joe Muscat
CEO
Gozo Tourism Association

29th February, 2024