



ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT FOR YEAR 2025

In 2024 the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) celebrated its 25th anniversary, marking a quarter century since its founding in 1999. In accordance with its statute, the Association is now convening its 27th Annual General Meeting.

The previous Annual General Meeting took place on Thursday, 27 February 2025, at the Cesca Boutique Hotel, Xlendi, Gozo. The following members were elected to serve on the GTA Council for 2025:

Council members: Borg Marvic; Busuttill Mark; Farrugia Daniela; Gatt Ludgard; Grech Ryan; Kisling Ana; Loporto Mario; Magro Chris; Meilaq Leanne; Mercieca Joe; Mifsud Ivan; Scicluna Konrad; Scicluna Paul; Spiteri Pauline; Veranneman Amand.

At the first council meeting following the AGM, the Council elected the following officials from among its members:

- Chairman: Paul Scicluna
- Vice-Chairman: Mario Loporto
- Secretary: Mark Busuttill
- Treasurer: Konrad Scicluna
- Vice Secretary: Pauline Spiteri
- Vice Treasurer: Ryan Grech

Throughout 2025 the Council met 16 times to address matters affecting Gozo's tourism sector. Meetings consistently focused on safeguarding, enhancing, and promoting the island's tourism wellbeing and on supporting Gozitan tourism establishments. In addition to full Council meetings, executive sessions and working-group discussions were held during the year.

Overview Gozitan Tourism Performance

Before reviewing GTA's activities, it is useful to set the context by summarising Gozo's tourism performance for 2025. At the time of writing, National Statistics Office (NSO) data are available

for inbound foreign tourists through December 2025 and for collective accommodation for January–September 2025. These data confirm that the upward trend in tourist arrivals continued during the year.

Inbound foreign tourists to Gozo increased by 22,693 visitors, a 14.3% rise compared with the same period in 2024. Foreign tourist arrivals in Gozitan collective accommodation (January–November 2025) rose by 304,429, an 18% increase over the same period in 2024.

Gozitan hotels and guesthouses recorded 3,343 additional foreign tourists (an 8.5% increase) for January–September 2025 versus January–September 2024.

Bed nights by foreign guests in Gozo increased by 15,918 between January and September 2025, an 11% rise on the same months in 2024.

Domestic guests in Gozitan hotels and guesthouses rose modestly during January–September 2025, with 1,447 more domestic visitors (+3%) compared with the same period in 2024, yielding 771 additional bed nights.

Cumulatively, Gozitan collective accommodation units recorded 4,790 more arrivals (foreign and domestic) in hotels and guesthouses for January–September 2025, a 6% increase, which translated into 16,689 additional bed nights (+7%) over the same months in 2024.

Overall, Gozo’s 2025 performance aligns closely with trends observed across mainland Malta.

GTA 25th Anniversary Initiatives

To continue with its commemoration of its 25th anniversary in 2025, the GTA Council undertook two lasting initiatives:

The GTA Council commissioned Dr. Mons Joe Bezzina to author a commemorative volume titled *Beyond the Three Hills: The Timeless Journey of Tourism in Gozo*. The book is currently being bound and will be officially launched in the coming weeks.

The Council initiated a long-planned search for new offices in the heart of Victoria, close to the Association’s previous location on Gorg Borg Olivier Street. After viewing several properties, the Council selected an office on Santa Martha Street. The premises measure approximately 150 square metres and include:

- a spacious office area for three employees;
- a reception area;
- a kitchenette and bathroom;
- a flexible multipurpose boardroom that converts into a meeting hall with theatre-style seating for around 50 persons;

- two garage spaces, one of which will serve as storage for promotional materials.

The new premises are currently being furnished and in the coming weeks an official opening date will be announced in the coming weeks.

Meetings with the Minister for Gozo

In June 2025, the Gozo Tourism Association council had a meeting with the Minister for Gozo and Planning Hon. Clint Camilleri. At the start of the meeting with the Minister for Gozo and Planning, the GTA provided an overview of tourism performance, highlighting positive year-on-year trends and the increases recorded in early 2025 compared with the same months in 2024. Discussion topics included connectivity, the Mġarr harbour enlargement, alternative port and landing sites, and an alternative access road to Mġarr.

The Minister provided updates on several projects, notably the Gozo Aquatic Sports Centre, the Gozo Museum, and the Rural Airfield, and explained the rationale for carrying out extensive road works during the summer months.

Ongoing dialogue between the Ministry for Gozo and the GTA is essential for aligning the Association's initiatives with Ministry policy. The GTA expects collaboration to be further intensified for the benefit of Gozo's tourism sector.

Meeting with the Leader of the Opposition

On Friday 24 October 2025 the GTA presented its Budget 2026 proposals to the newly elected Leader of the Opposition, Dr Alex Borg, at the PN headquarters in Pietà. The GTA delegation, led by Chairman Paul Scicluna, included CEO Joe Muscat, Treasurer Konrad Scicluna, Vice-Secretary Pauline Spiteri, Vice-Treasurer Ryan Mercieca, and restaurant-sector council member Joseph Mercieca. Dr Borg was accompanied by the Opposition Shadow Minister for Tourism Dr Mario DeMarco and his assistant Damien Spiteri.

The GTA outlined a vision for Gozo centred on a distinct, sustainable, and value-led tourism product, organised around five themes: connectivity, touristic offer, environment, destination promotion, and human capital. Dr Alex Borg described his party's strategy for Gozo, which closely aligned with the GTA's proposals. Topics discussed included the Mġarr port enlargement, the four-day work week, ring-fencing of ECO contributions collected from Gozitan accommodation, and local ownership of the tourism sector.

At the meeting's close, the GTA Chairman presented copies of the Budget 2026 proposals to Dr Alex Borg and Dr Mario DeMarco.

Meetings with Members of the European Parliament

On 27 May 2025 the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) had a meeting with a delegation from the Transport and Tourism Committee (TRAN) of the European Parliament at il-Ħaġar Museum, Victoria. The TRAN delegation was led by Vice-Chair Virginijus Sinkevičius (Lithuania) and included Nina Carberry (Ireland, EPP), Elena Nevado Del Campo (Spain, EPP), Sérgio Gonçalves (Portugal, S&D), Daniel Attard (Malta, S&D), and Arash Saeidi (France, The Left). The GTA delegation was led by Chairman Paul Scicluna and included CEO Joe Muscat and Council member Ludgard Gatt.

The GTA opened with a concise overview of Gozo's tourism profile and visitor mix. The key issues raised by the GTA included:

- Inter-island connectivity, including additional and alternative porting facilities in Gozo and Ċirkewwa, construction of a fourth ferry, and road improvements to Mġarr harbour.
- Seasonality and unbalanced tourism, and strategies to address these through sustainable, niche-led development.
- The “one size fits all” effect of some EU policies on small island destinations.
- Fair competition on accommodation booking platforms and human resources shortages within the Gozitan tourism sector.

Both delegations exchanged views on sustainable tourism approaches to reduce seasonality and on policy measures tailored to Gozo's specific needs.

During the year the GTA CEO also attended a working lunch with MEP Dr Thomas Bajada, focusing on connectivity, EU funding, and the impact of uniform EU policies on small island contexts.

GTA and the Comino Project

In early 2025 the GTA welcomed 45 Comino boat operators as members within the Association fold in response to proposed management measures for Comino and the Blue Lagoon. Acting on behalf of these operators, the GTA entered consultations with stakeholders involved in the Comino Project, whose terms of reference include:

- Capping the number of people on Comino
- Improved garbage management
- Enlargement of the swimming zone in the Blue Lagoon
- Enhancement of facilities on Comino

Following extensive and sometimes difficult negotiations, a cap on visitor numbers was introduced on 1 May 2025. After initial teething problems, the measure achieved its objective of

managing visitor flows without jeopardising excursion operators' activities. The GTA will continue to represent its members in subsequent stages of the Comino Project.

Meetings with the Director for Tourism and Economic Development MGOZ

Throughout 2025 the GTA held a series of regular meetings with Mr Ronald Sultana, Director for Tourism and Economic Development (Ministry for Gozo). These meetings strengthened collaboration and provided a forum for mutual briefing on current initiatives. Topics discussed were varied and included:

- Joint marketing and promotion of Gozo as a destination.
- Marketing schemes for Gozitan tourism establishments.
- Long-stay schemes to support low-season occupancy.
- Participation in tourism fairs and events.
- GTA surveys and data sharing to inform policy and promotion.
- Ongoing coordination to ensure GTA initiatives align with Directorate priorities.

These meetings reinforced an excellent working relationship and ensured both parties remained informed of each other's programmes and opportunities for cooperation.

Gozo Tourism Awards

On 30 January 2025 the GTA organised the 15th edition of the Gozo Tourism Awards, recognising outstanding contributions across four categories. The following were the winners:

- Gozo Tourism Worker of the Year 2024: Caroline Veranneman, shift leader at HOG Cafeteria.
- Gozo Tourism Entrepreneurship Award 2024: Alda Bugeja, Gozo Weaving and Creations.
- Gozo Business Niche Tourism Achievement Award 2024: Leanne Meilak, Taste of Gozo.
- Gozo Cultural Niche Tourism Achievement Award 2024: Aurora International Folk Festival, Leone Philharmonic Society.

Winners were announced by Dr Alfred Grech Chairman of the adjudicating board, which also included Naomi Macdonald, Peter DeCourcy, and Godfrey Swain. The awards were conferred to the respective winners by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, Dr. Ian Borg, Minister for Gozo and Planning Clint Camilleri, MTA CEO Carlo Micallef and GTA

Chairman Paul Scicluna. These Awards aim to acknowledge, encourage, and thank workers, entrepreneurs, and organisations that distinguish themselves in Gozo's tourism industry.

International Tourism Fairs

During 2025 the GTA continued its long-standing participation in international tourism fairs, supported by the Directorate for Tourism (Ministry for Gozo) and in collaboration with the Malta Tourism Authority. GTA representatives attended:

Destinations Manchester; World Holiday Show Dublin; Destinations London; ITB Berlin; Top Resa Paris; TTG Rimini; World Travel Market London.

At these events GTA promoted Gozo, established contacts with operators and stakeholders, and circulated leads to members for follow-up. The Association remains committed to sustained international representation.

Support to GTA Members

The GTA's strength derives from its members. In 2025 the Association maintained close, ongoing engagement through multiple channels. Last year GTA issued 60 circulars to its members and published six editions of the newsletter Destination Gozo. During the past year GTA carried out 4 online surveys amongst its members to understand better the needs of the Gozitan sector. Regular meetings were held with Jobsplus to discuss sectoral Human Resources needs and to share information on courses and webinars.

GTA had an ongoing open dialogue with ITS to follow up on the introduction of the Skills Pass and to raise members' awareness and concerns.

The issue of transportation was also tackled during a sectoral meeting held by GTA for transport members addressed space and traffic management at Mġarr harbour and the need for an alternative access road; GTA prepared a position paper and secured representation on the task force for redefining Gozo's port infrastructure.

Numerous One-to-one individual meetings with members and site visits to establishments were held to address members' specific issues.

GTA's Office continued with its outreach inviting members to submit content for free upload to the GTA website.

Gozo Regional Development Authority

The Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) continued to support and collaborate closely with the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) throughout the year. GTA representatives attended GRDA-led meetings, conferences, and seminars, and a GTA member currently serves on the Gozo Culture and Sustainability Board established by GRDA.

Both organisations have agreed the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise a synergised approach to joint activities, with an emphasis on tourism sector surveys and cooperation on the GTA's commemorative publication on the history of Gozitan tourism. The memorandum will be signed shortly.

GTA Representation at Malta Tourism Authority Board Meetings

For consecutive years, Ministers for Tourism have nominated a GTA representative to sit on the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) Board of Directors. In 2025 the GTA representative attended monthly Board meetings to ensure that Gozo's perspectives were considered in national tourism policy and regulatory discussions. The island's specific needs and scale were consistently highlighted during deliberations.

On 6 June 2025 the GTA delegation met with MTA CEO Carlo Micallef at the MTA offices in SmartCity. The GTA delegation comprised Chairman Paul Scicluna, Vice-Chairman Mario Loporto, Treasurer Konrad Scicluna, Vice-Treasurer Ryan Grech, and CEO Joe Muscat; MTA was also represented by Ms Sharon Falzon, MTA's Gozo manager for marketing . The Key topics discussed included:

- Marketing Destination Gozo and MTA's strategic approach to positioning Gozo as a distinct destination.
- Emerging niche markets and the target tourist profile for Gozo.
- Summer breaktime directive and the operational impacts of construction activity on visitors and operators.
- Blue Lagoon measures, with GTA offering experience-based recommendations to ease congestion and ensure a fair visitor-capping system.

At the end both parties agreed to maintain and deepen their working relationship and strengthen the existing collaboration between MTA and GTA;

Participation in Committees and Steering Groups

GTA officials continued to represent Gozo on several strategic bodies both regionally as well as on National level, including the Gozo Regional Committee, MCESD, Gozo Action Group Foundation (GAGF), and the Dwejra Steering Committee. Through these forums GTA raised Gozitan concerns and contributed to discussions on socio-economic development and island-specific policy matters.

Human Resources

GTA has always had at heart the human Capital. Addressing workforce shortages remained a top GTA priority, as it is a current issue for all Gozitan tourism operators. In 2025 the Association continued with its efforts to promote careers in Gozo's tourism sector through presentations to university and vocational students, both local and international.

GTA also supported academic research by facilitating interviews with GTA officials for university and ITS Student's dissertations.

As an encouragement for sign apart from organising the Gozo Tourism Awards GTA continued the tradition of sponsoring a trophy for the best Gozitan ITS graduate, presented annually by a GTA council representative.

- Maintained regular engagement with Jobsplus to communicate sector needs and to circulate information on relevant courses and webinars.
- Participated in discussions with ITS regarding the Skills Pass, raising members' concerns and following up on implementation issues.

Media Engagement

Throughout 2025 the GTA actively communicated its positions, proposals, and sector insights via national media. Activities included television and radio interviews, panel discussions, opinion pieces, and multiple media releases addressing topical tourism issues. These interventions aimed to inform public debate and advocate for policies that protect and enhance Gozo's tourism product.

This summary captures the principal contributions and activities of the GTA over the past year. While more could always be achieved, the outgoing Council is satisfied that, given limited human and financial resources, the Association made meaningful progress in representing members, influencing policy, and promoting sustainable tourism for Gozo.

Acknowledgements

At the end I extend sincere thanks to the outgoing Council members and the GTA office staff for their professionalism and commitment. Special appreciation is also due to The Hon. Dr Ian Borg, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism, for his openness to dialogue and support for GTA proposals.

A word of thanks to the Hon. Clint Camilleri, Minister for Gozo and Planning, for his steadfast support and availability; GTA stands ready to back and encourage his initiatives for Gozo's tourism sector.

A thank you to the Malta Tourism Authority leadership and staff, including Dr Charles Mangion (Chairman), Mr Carlo Micallef (CEO), Mr Leslie Vella (Deputy CEO), Arthur Grima, and Ms Christine Vella (Gozo Manager), the overseas Office Directors for their ongoing backing and collaboration.

Thanks to the newly appointed Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for Gozo, Mr Mario Borg, and to the Director for Tourism and Economic Development, Mr Ronald Sultana, for their continued cooperation and collaboration

Finally, heartfelt thanks to all GTA members for their support during the year, and to our guests for their continued presence and encouragement.

Thank you

Joe Muscat

CEO

Gozo Tourism Association

26th February, 2026