DESTINATION GOZO

Gozo Tourism Association Newsletter
July - August 2026



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GOZO TOURISM ASSOCIATION

ITS Launches Strategic Plan 2026–2030

On 13th July, the Institute of Tourism Studies (ITS) officially launched its Strategic Plan 2026–2030, From Consolidation to Mediterranean Excellence, setting out its vision for the Institute's development over the next five years.

The Gozo Tourism Association attended the launch, represented by GTA CEO Joe Muscat, who participated in a panel discussion on the strategy, together with GTA Council Member Joseph Mercieca from the Restaurants Section. The discussion brought together representatives from key tourism and business organisations and highlighted the importance of continued collaboration between education and industry in developing the skilled workforce required by the tourism sector.

The new strategy provides a roadmap for strengthening academic quality, industry collaboration, research, innovation and internationalisation. It outlines a phased progression from institutional strengthening and capability building to strategic expansion, optimisation and scale, with the aim of reinforcing ITS's role within Malta's tourism ecosystem.

The Strategic Plan also places particular emphasis on ensuring that tourism and hospitality education continues to respond to the evolving needs of the industry, while supporting quality, skills development and long-term resilience across the sector.





EU Funding Opportunities for Tourism SMEs in Gozo

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), in collaboration with the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA), organised an Information Session on EU Funding Opportunities for Tourism SMEs in Gozo on Thursday, 30th July.

Held at the GTA offices, the session attracted Gozitan tourism operators representing various segments of the industry and provided practical information on EU and local funding opportunities available to support business growth and development.

The session covered specific schemes under Invest Gozo, together with other funding opportunities aimed at assisting tourism businesses to upgrade their infrastructure, digitalise their operations and invest in training and skills development.

The initiative formed part of MTA's ongoing efforts to increase awareness of funding opportunities available to tourism SMEs and followed two similar information sessions held in Malta.

Tourism operators interested in obtaining further information on available funding schemes may contact MTA's EU Affairs team at **euaffairs.mta@visitmalta.com**



GTA Meets Opposition Spokesperson for Gozo, Dr Frank Anthony Tabone



On 17th July, the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) Executive Council welcomed Dr Frank Anthony Tabone, Opposition Spokesperson for Gozo, to its offices for a meeting centred on a number of matters concerning Gozo's tourism sector.

The meeting was conducted in a cordial and constructive manner and provided an opportunity to discuss several strategic areas relevant to the sector. These included connectivity, the tourism product, human resources, seasonality and tourism ownership.

The meeting provided a valuable platform to outline current challenges and exchange perspectives on these areas, while reaffirming the Association's commitment to the long-term development of Gozo's tourism sector.

Representing the GTA were Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna, Treasurer Mr Konrad Scicluna and CEO Mr Joe Muscat.

GTA Meets Malta Film Commissioner, Mr Johann Grech



Members of the Gozo Tourism Association Executive Council, including GTA Chairman Paul Scicluna, CEO Joe Muscat and Treasurer Konrad Scicluna, held a meeting with Malta Film Commissioner Johann Grech at the Commission's offices in Kalkara.

Discussions centred on advancing Gozo's position within the national film industry and exploring avenues to attract film-driven tourism to the island.

During the meeting, both parties expressed their commitment to working together towards a unified strategy for screen tourism in Gozo. This synergised approach represents a significant milestone in the long-term development of this sector.

The Gozo Tourism Association also presented a number of proposals aimed at strengthening Gozo's attractiveness as a filming destination and enhancing the island's screen tourism potential. These proposals focused on increasing the visibility of Gozo within international productions, improving support mechanisms for film crews operating on the island, and leveraging film and television exposure to generate greater tourism interest and economic benefits for Gozo.

The meeting concluded with a shared understanding of the opportunities that closer collaboration between stakeholders can bring to further develop both the film industry and screen tourism in Gozo.

GTA Meets MEP Dr Daniel Attard

The Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) welcomed Member of the European Parliament Dr Daniel Attard to its premises for a courtesy visit.

The meeting focused on a number of key topics addressed by Dr Attard in his report on sustainable tourism, recently approved by the European Parliament.

Discussions covered connectivity, short-let accommodation, the establishment of a Destination Management Organisation, upskilling and retention of the tourism workforce, the eco-contribution fund and the EU Ecolabel.

Both parties expressed their commitment to exploring further opportunities to strengthen and enhance the tourism sector in Gozo.

Dr Attard was accompanied by his assistant, Mr Nicholas Borg. Representing the Gozo Tourism Association were Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna, CEO Mr Joe Muscat, GTA Council Member Ms Leanne Meilaq and Office Manager Ms Temida Magrin.



GTA Meets Malta's Ambassador to Poland, Dr Gavin Gulia

The Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) Executive Council held a meeting at its premises with Malta's Ambassador to Poland, H.E. Dr Gavin Gulia.

During the meeting, a number of topics of mutual interest were discussed, including the continued growth in tourist arrivals from Poland to the Maltese Islands. It was noted that Poland represents an important tourism source market for the Maltese islands, supported by strong direct air connectivity between Malta and a significant number of Polish cities.

The discussion explored opportunities to build further on this growing market, including the possibility of organising a Gozo Day in Warsaw. Exchange programmes with tourism vocational institutions in Poland were also discussed, together with the GTA's participation in the Malta Day celebrations in Warsaw this September.

At the conclusion of the meeting, H.E. Dr Gavin Gulia signed the GTA Visitors' Book and was presented with a copy of the Association's gift publication, Gozo: The Hidden Treasures, by GTA Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna.



GTA Meets Gozo Channel Chairperson and CEO



Connectivity remains a priority on the Gozo Tourism Association's agenda. In this regard, on 17 August, the GTA Executive Council held a meeting with the newly appointed Gozo Channel Chairperson, Dr Marlene Cini, and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Ronald Sultana.

The discussion focused on a number of matters aimed at further strengthening the consistency, reliability and quality of the inter-island service provided by Gozo Channel. Recognising that efficient connectivity is fundamental to Gozo's tourism industry and wider economy, the GTA put forward several proposals intended to facilitate and improve the transfer of tourists overnighting in Gozo, thereby enhancing the overall visitor experience and encouraging longer stays on the island.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining a constructive and synergised dialogue on matters related to the inter-island service and acknowledged the importance of continued collaboration in addressing present and future challenges.

The GTA delegation was led by Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna, Vice Chairman Mr Mario Loporto, Treasurer Mr Konrad Scicluna, CEO Mr Joe Muscat, and Council Member Mr Joseph Mercieca.

GTA Meets with the Minister for Gozo



On 19 August, the Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) Executive Council held one of its regular coordination meetings with the Minister for Gozo, Hon. Clint Camilleri, focusing on the tourism sector in Gozo and a number of key areas of importance to its continued development. The meeting once again underscored the strong collaboration and synergy that exists between the Ministry for Gozo and the Gozo Tourism Association in advancing initiatives that support the sustainable growth of Gozo's tourism industry.

During the meeting, GTA presented an overview of Gozo's tourism performance during 2025, which showed encouraging improvements in the sector. The Association also presented the Minister with its Budget 2027 proposals.

A discussion followed covering a number of important areas, including sea and air connectivity, the tourism product, marketing opportunities, human resources and the island's environment. Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to maintaining close cooperation and an ongoing dialogue on matters affecting the tourism sector, recognising the importance of a coordinated approach in addressing challenges and capitalising on opportunities for Gozo.

The Minister was accompanied by Permanent Secretary Mr Mario Borg, while the GTA delegation was led by Chairman Mr Paul Scicluna, Vice Chairman Mr Mario Loporto, Treasurer Mr Konrad Scicluna, Council Members Mr Joseph Mercieca, Mr Amand Veranneman and Ms Naomi McDonald, and CEO Mr Joe Muscat.

Budget Proposals 2027

Tourism remains one of Gozo's principal economic pillars, with the sector's success firmly rooted in the island's distinctive identity. For decades, Gozo has been positioned, marketed, and promoted as a destination that offers a unique experience, distinguished by its natural and rural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, and historical character.

The Malta Tourism Strategy 2021–2030 rightly emphasises the importance of building on Gozo's uniqueness by focusing on its distinct competitive advantages and embracing sustainable, climate-conscious tourism principles. Likewise, the Gozo Regional Development Authority's Strategy 2021–2030 identifies sustainable tourism, centred on quality and niche-market offerings, as a key priority for the island's future development.

Despite this clear strategic direction, further efforts are required to ensure that tourism development in Gozo remains aligned with these long-term policy objectives. Stakeholders within the local tourism industry have repeatedly expressed concerns regarding the current direction of destination marketing. The Gozo Tourism Association (GTA) continues to maintain that Gozo should be promoted as a distinctive destination, offering experiences that clearly differentiate it from competing Mediterranean markets.









Budget Proposals 2027
Connectivity

Modern Fast Ferry Network

- Retain, enhance and sustain fast ferry services while supporting the Sliema–Buġibba–Mġarr route to strengthen year-round passenger connectivity.

Upgrade Mġarr Fast Ferry Terminal

- Develop a modern passenger terminal with improved waiting areas, accessibility and commuter facilities.

Greener and More Accessible Fleet

- Commission a fully electric, wheelchair-accessible ferry to replace MV Nikolaos and to maintain a resilient four-vessel fleet.

Gozo Air Connectivity

- Advance the rural airfield project to establish a fixed-wing air link between Gozo and Malta.

Future-Proofing Mġarr Harbour

- Undertake studies and environmental assessments to evaluate the future enlargement and long-term capacity of Mġarr Harbour.

Ċirkewwa South Quay Enhancement

- Upgrade the South Quay to provide additional berthing capacity, expanded marshalling space and improved passenger facilities.

Cruise Passenger Facilities

- Improve cruise infrastructure, introduce emergency support services and upgrade tender landing facilities at Xlendi, Marsalforn and Hondoq ir-Rummien.

Alternative Port Facilities

- Develop Marsalforn as an alternative porting location for the Sliema–Buġibba-Gozo fast ferry service.

Alternative Access to Mġarr Harbour

- Identify additional road access routes to reduce dependence on the existing single access road.

Integrated Digital Travel Platform

- Introduce a unified digital ticketing system while improving public transport connectivity through more frequent village bus services.

Budget Proposals 2027
The Touristic Offer

Strengthen and guarantee Electricity Supply to Gozo

- Investment is needed in a new 132 kV submarine cable linking Gozo to Malta. This investment needs to be coupled with new distribution centres to meet the demand of the increases in population and in tourist arrivals.

Ringfence Eco Contribution Revenue for Gozo

- Retain and reinvest Gozo's Eco Contribution revenue into visitor infrastructure, environmental management, heritage conservation and tourism product enhancement.

Safeguard Access to Dive Sites

- Protect shoreline access for the diving sector, particularly along Gozo's north and northwest coast.

Establish a Gozo Marine Park

- Create a marine park with appropriate management to strengthen Gozo's position as a premier diving destination.

Implement Diving Sector Strategies

- Fund the implementation of the Diving Strategy for the Maltese Islands and the GTA Action Plan for Diving.

Reduce VAT on Cultural Attractions and Events

- Reduce VAT rate on admissions to cinemas featuring multi-visual shows from 18% to 7%.

Support the Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage

- Introduce initiatives to preserve, restore and promote Gozo's cultural and heritage assets.

Modernise the Tourism Act

- Accelerate amendments to the Tourism Act to reflect contemporary tourism trends and the evolving needs of the sector, beyond the accommodation sector.

Introduce a Tailor-Made Tourism Product Grant Scheme for Gozo

- Create a dedicated grant scheme supporting the development and modernisation of niche tourism experiences.

Revise the Summer Breaktime Directive

- Apply summer excavation and demolition restrictions across Gozo within a 50-metre radius of licensed tourism establishments.

Create a Gozo Aesthetics and Public Realm Unit

- Establish a dedicated unit to improve public spaces and coordinate the reporting and resolution of environmental issues.

Develop a Signature 'Gozo Film Trail'

- Create a curated film trail showcasing Gozo's cinematic heritage as a distinctive tourism product.

Outsource the management of public conveniences across Gozitan Tourist resorts

- Outsource the management of public conveniences to ensure high standards of cleanliness, maintenance and accessibility.

Budget Proposals 2027
Tourism Development & Destination Marketing

Establish a Joint Marketing Incentive Fund

- Create a joint fund to attract additional niche travel programmes and cruise calls during the shoulder and winter months.

Expand Participation in Niche Tourism Trade Fairs

- Increase present support for participation in specialised international tourism fairs promoting Gozo's niche tourism strengths.

Support the Film and Screen Industry

- Introduce Gozo-specific incentives to attract film and television productions and encourage longer filming periods on the island.

Promote Sustainability Certification

- Provide financial and technical assistance to tourism businesses seeking recognised sustainability certifications and eco-labels.

Accelerate the Digital Transformation of Tourism Businesses

- Support tourism operators in upgrading their digital presence, online booking capabilities and marketing through innovative technologies.

Develop and Support Emerging Tourism Niches

- Continue investing in high-potential niche tourism sectors including adventure, outdoor activities, sports, wellness, digital nomads and experience-based tourism.



Budget Proposals 2027

Human Resources, Skills & Workforce Development

Introduce a Tourism Employment Retention Incentive

- Establish incentives that reward tourism businesses for retaining employees on a long-term basis.

Support Student Employment in Tourism

- Introduce grants encouraging students to work in Gozitan tourism establishments during weekends, holidays and vacation periods.

Provide Language and Cultural Integration Programmes for Foreign Workers

- Organise language and cultural training to improve integration, customer service and visitor experiences.

Establish a Comprehensive Tourism Training and Upskilling Scheme

- Support scheme for employers and employees in developing skills in digital technologies, sustainability, leadership and specialised tourism sectors.

Strengthen Workforce Stability through Improved Work Permit Frameworks

- Review migrant legislation to promote workforce stability while protecting both employers and employees.

Introduce Winter Employment National Insurance Credits

- Provide incentives encouraging businesses to retain employees throughout the winter season.

Develop the ITS Gozo Campus as a Centre of Excellence

- Develop the ITS Gozo Campus into a specialised tourism and hospitality education centre.

Recognise Educational Tourism as a Strategic Sector

- Formally recognise educational tourism and introduce measures that strengthen Gozo's competitiveness as a learning destination.

Improve Coordination on Student and Employment Permits

- Improve coordination between Identità, Jobsplus and educational institutions to streamline permit procedures and graduate transitions into employment.

Support Affordable Housing for Key Workers

- Facilitate affordable accommodation for employees working in the sector.

Create a Level Playing Field in Recruitment

- Ensure fair recruitment conditions between the public and private sectors while encouraging improved employment conditions and career development.

Budget Proposals 2027

Environment, Planning & Sustainable Development

Develop Gozo-Specific Regional Planning Policies

- Introduce regional planning policies tailored to Gozo's unique identity, balancing heritage, quality of life, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Strengthen Gozo's Planning Autonomy

- Establish stronger regional planning autonomy to ensure development decisions reflect Gozo's long-term needs.

Retain Existing UCA Restoration Incentives

- Maintain fiscal incentives supporting the restoration of properties within Urban Conservation Areas.

Extend Conservation Incentives to Traditional Properties

- Extend restoration incentives to vernacular and post-war properties that preserve Gozo's traditional character.

Introduce a Traditional Property Restoration Scheme

- Launch dedicated incentives encouraging the restoration and adaptive reuse of traditional properties.

Establish a Marine Reserve Around Gozo

- Create and effectively manage a marine reserve around Gozo to strengthen environmental protection, marine biodiversity and sustainable marine tourism.

The Gozo Tourism Association remains committed to working constructively with Government and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that Gozo continues to develop as a high-quality, year-round and sustainable destination. The Association firmly believes that Gozo requires targeted measures, dedicated resources and policy interventions that reflect its unique circumstances as an island region.

The Gozo Tourism Association believes that targeted policies and dedicated resources are essential to address Gozo's unique realities as an island region. Protecting tourism is not only an economic priority but also a means of safeguarding Gozo's identity, residents' quality of life and long-term prosperity. The choices made today will shape the future of the island for generations to come.

Statistics
Inbound Tourists

Inbound Tourists to Gozo – July 2026 vs 2025

According to the NSO, Gozo recorded continued growth in inbound tourism during July 2026 when compared to the same month in 2025, with significant increases registered in both same-day and overnight visitors.

Same-day visitors increased by 17.5%, rising from 242,488 in July 2025 to 284,987 in July 2026. Overnight visitors registered an even stronger increase of 45.4%, rising from 20,441 in July 2025 to 29,721 in July 2026, reflecting strong growth in the island's overnight tourism sector.

Gozo/ Comino	July			2025/ 2026
	2024	2025	2026	% change
Day Visitors	235,021	242,488	284,987	**17.5%**
Overnight Visitors	20,919	20,441	29,721	**45.4%**

Overall, between January and July 2026, Gozo recorded continued growth in inbound tourism when compared to the same period in 2025, with increases registered in both same-day and overnight visitors. Same-day visitors increased by 14.0%, rising from 1,158,719 in 2025 to 1,321,398 in 2026. Overnight visitors also recorded an increase of 26.6%, rising from 92,297 in 2025 to 116,882 in 2026. This growth highlights Gozo's continued appeal as a destination for both short visits and longer stays, while confirming the positive trend in the island's tourism performance.

Gozo/ Comino	January - July			2025/ 2026
	2024	2025	2026	% change
Day Visitors	1,018,160	1,158,719	1,321,398	**14%**
Overnight Visitors	89,869	92,297	116,882	**26.6%**

Malta NSO
National Statistics Office

GOZO TOURISM ASSOCIATION