

# TOP 10

Festivals in Gozo 2017

Photo by Daniel Cilia



A Cultural Guide to Gozo Events

[www.visitgozo.com](http://www.visitgozo.com)



Photo by Tonio Schembri

## Carnival

24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> February

Carnival is a colourful and fun celebration in Gozo. For five consecutive days, the island's intense, natural Mediterranean blue and green is rivaled by the vibrant colours of carnival costumes and floats that meander the main towns and villages in upbeat mood. Join the locals for five days of revelry, with young and old dressing up in intricate costumes or grotesque masks. Follow the Rabat parades with their floats and rhythmic dance. Carnival in Nadur village is deeply traditional and essentially spontaneous. Here, the purpose of costumes is disguise – it is pure fun, a concoction of costumes that make people unrecognisable and most remain silent to aid their disguise, gaining the Nadur celebrations the sobriquet, *the silent carnival*.



## Gozo Faith & Traditions

1<sup>st</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April

Easter time in Gozo is deeply rooted in religious tradition and the rituals of this period are fascinating for any visitor. On the weeks preceding Easter, Gozo is a hub of activities in preparation for the Good Friday processions and pageants, which provide real life re-enactments of the life and passion of Christ. The pealing of church bells on Easter Sunday on the 16<sup>th</sup> April heralds the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. An exuberant mode prevails in some localities as groups of bearers wearing the *kunfratija*, lift the statue of Christ along the streets to the sound of lively band marches. These celebrations intertwine with local life and traditions and offer the visitor an authentic experience of Gozo.



Photo by Paul Scicluna

## Gaulitana Festival of Music

25<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> April

*Madama Butterfly* will be the highlight of the 11th edition of the *Gaulitana: A Festival of Music*. The full scale production of Puccini's masterpiece, will present Malta's internationally acclaimed soprano Miriam Gauci in the lead role. Colin Attard will direct the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra and the Gaulitanus Choir. The opera night will be part of OPERA+ Weekend – an intensive programme of musical events concluding the festival - a feast for travellers who wish to combine their passion for music with a tranquil stay in a Mediterranean setting. More information and programme details on [www.gaulitanus.com](http://www.gaulitanus.com).



## Festi

Immerse into local life, the festa way! Experience towns' and villages' traditions at their best, soak in the mesmerising atmosphere of sounds, lights and colours as communities come together to celebrate the patron saints. Bands march through the streets of villages and fireworks light up the skies as crowds enjoy traditional food from street stalls. Visitors are always welcome and joining a festa is a great way to get a real taste of local life.

28 <sup>th</sup> May	Feast of St Paul, Munxar
4 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Feast of St Anthony, Ghajnsielem
11 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Feast of Corpus Christi, Ghasri
18 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Fontana
25 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Feast of St John the Baptist, Xewkija
29 <sup>th</sup> Jun	Feast of St Peter and St Paul, Nadur
2 <sup>nd</sup> Jul	Feast of the Visitation, Għarb
9 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Feast of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Kerċem
16 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Feast of St George, Victoria
23 <sup>rd</sup> Jul	Feast of St Margaret, Sannat
30 <sup>th</sup> Jul	Feast of St Lawrence, San Lawrenz
6 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Feast of St Joseph, Qala
15 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, Victoria
20 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, Żebbuġ
27 <sup>th</sup> Aug	Feast of Our Lady of Loreto, Ghajnsielem
8 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Feast of Our Lady of Victories, Xagħra
17 <sup>th</sup> Sep	Feast of Our Lady of Graces, Victoria

## 20<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Victoria International Arts Festival

6<sup>th</sup> June – 10<sup>th</sup> July

*The Victoria International Arts Festival* has established itself as the longest-running Festival of its kind on the islands. For its 20<sup>th</sup> edition, between Tuesday 6 June and Monday 10 July 2017, a series of 37 concerts, together with exhibitions, master classes, and specialised talks will be presented. This is a five-week period of uninterrupted musical and cultural activity that is attracting tourists and music-lovers who visit Gozo specifically for the Festival. As for the past 9 years, the opening and closing concerts of the Festival will see the participation of the *Malta Philharmonic Orchestra* under the direction of Prof. Joseph Vella, Artistic Director of the Festival. This year being the 20<sup>th</sup> edition, the organisers are planning a concentration of three inaugural events. All concerts, which take place in Victoria, comprise chamber ensembles of various and diverse formations, soloists, choirs, big bands, orchestras, and more. No fewer than 20 different countries from all over the world, to include South America, Asia, and Australia will be represented, and over 600 performers will be taking part. All concerts and cultural events are offered to the public free of charge.





Photo by Ted Attard

## Qala International Folk Festival

22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September

Music, folk dance, costumes... the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of the Qala International Folk Festival is organised by the Qala Local Council and the Qala Menhir Folk Group. A weekend of folk dance, music and traditional food in the quaint village square brought to life by an intercultural programme that has grown to attract locals and visitors for its quality entertainment in an intimate, local square setting.



Photo by Daniel Cilia

## Fjakkolata A Celebration of Light

8<sup>th</sup> October

When was the last time that you were truly awed? Make your way to Gozo and enjoy the crisp air as the sun sets and Għar Ilma hill lights up in a spectacle of hundreds of flaming lanterns. The beauty of light like you have never experienced before. A unique moment to inspire you, against the beautiful backdrop of the Gozitan countryside. Drop in at the quaint Santa Luċija village square and mingle with the locals, savouring local food and unique hospitality.





Photo by Paul Camilleri

## Operas in Gozo

14<sup>th</sup> October

On the 14<sup>th</sup> October, Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* will be presented at the Aurora theatre. It is a period of special anniversaries for the Aurora as 2016 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary from the opening of the opera house that gave birth to opera in Gozo, while 2017 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary from the first ever opera in Gozo. Aurora chose to celebrate this anniversary with two operas – a double bill, on the same night. Online booking on [www.teatruaurora.com](http://www.teatruaurora.com)

*Lucia di Lammermoor*, a tragic opera in three acts by Gaetano Donizetti, will be proudly presented by Teatru Astra, on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> October. The artistic production will be in the hands of Enrico Stinchelli, of *La Barcaccia* fame. Astra Theatre's Musical Director Joseph Vella, will direct the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra during the two performances. Online booking on [www.teatrualastra.org.mt](http://www.teatrualastra.org.mt)



Photo by Joe Attard

## Festival Mediterranea

28<sup>th</sup> October - 8<sup>th</sup> November

Festival Mediterranea, (now in its seventeenth edition) is an annual celebration of culture with Gozo as a beautiful island backdrop in warm Autumn. Mythology has it that the charm of this island aided the most beautiful nymph Calypso to halt Ulysses on his journeys and lure him away from his travels for seven mystical years. Today, Gozo's charm seeks to lure its visitors into a kaleidoscope of cultural events, highlighted by the celebrations of the arts in such festivals as the *Mediterranea*. Organised by Teatru Astra, the *Festival Mediterranea's* highlight is the spectacular presentation of Gaetano Donizetti's opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, with a double representation on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> October 2017. Gozo's Teatru Astra enjoys a well-established tradition of excellence, with the engagement of an internationally renowned cast, a fantastic opera chorus, imposing sets and scenery, outstanding costumes and spectacular lights. [www.mediterranea.com.mt](http://www.mediterranea.com.mt), [www.teatruastra.org.mt](http://www.teatruastra.org.mt)



## Christmas, an island of joy

Christmas is a joyful time and Gozo steps up to celebrate. The town of Victoria and main village squares light up with decorations and there is a hustle and bustle around the island that heralds the festive event. Look out for beautiful choir singing and traditional cribs that reveal true craftsmanship. The traditional processions with the bambin Gesu' are held in every village with the participation of children. Roam around Betlehem f'Ghajnsielem where a whole area known as Ta' Passi in the limits of Ghajnsielem is transformed into a nativity village, providing a cove where religion and local traditions intermingle. Check out the Gozo Christmas calendar and wrap yourself with the true spirit of Christmas.

Photo by Ted Attard

# Other Events

## January

**1st Jan:** New Year’s Toast, The Gaulitanus Choir, at Kempinski Hotel, San Lawrenz

**15th Jan:** Traditional Feast of St Anthony Abbot, Xaghra  
Traditional blessing of animals, dog show, cat show, races for children and other activities organised by Saint Anthony Church in collaboration with Xaghra Local Council

**29th Jan:** Feast of St John Bosco, Victoria

## February

**1st Feb:** The Best of the Gozo Youth Wind Band - Don Bosco Grand Concert, Victoria  
Carnival is a colourful and fun celebration in Gozo and this year it will fall between the 5th and 9th February. For five consecutive days, the island’s intense, natural Mediterranean blue and green is rivaled by the multi colours of carnival costumes and floats that meander the main towns and villages in upbeat mood.

**19th Feb:** Organised Carnival, Nadur

**20th Feb:** Organised Carnival, Għarb

**24th Feb:** Organised Carnival Qala, San Lawrenz

**24th – 28th Feb:** Carnival Activities in Victoria

**24th -28th Feb:** Spontaneous Carnival in Nadur  
Sunset invites a multitude of masked and hooded creatures to throng the streets of Nadur. The creativity of those taking part and the many visitors have earned it other names such as the grotesque carnival. A unique experience, not to be missed.

**25th Feb:** Carnival Activities, Nazzarenu Square, Xaghra  
A varied Carnival programme including competitions and

dance by local companies. The traditional kukkanja will entertain visitors in the main village square.  
**26th Feb:** Organised Carnival in Xaghra, Żebbuġ and Xewkija  
**27th Feb:** Organised Carnival in Sannat

## March

**11th & 12th Mar:** FMVA Vintage Motors Festival  
**25th Feb – 2nd April:** Gaulitana, a Festival of Music  
**25th & 31st Mar:** Evita, a musical at the Astra Theatre, Victoria

## April

**1st Apr:** Opera Madama Butterfly, Gaulitana Festival  
**1st April:** L-Imsallab fi Triqatna, Victoria, a re-enactment of the passion of Jesus through the streets of Victoria  
**\*1st April – 16th April:** Two weeks of activities to celebrate the Easter season  
**25th Feb – 2nd April:** Gaulitana, a Festival of Music  
**2nd April:** Via Crucis at Ta’ Ghammar Hill, Għarb with meditations based on the teachings of Pope Francis.  
**2nd April:** Evita, a musical at the Astra Theatre, Victoria  
**7th April:** Our Lady of Sorrows. An open air mass and religious, traditional procession in Victoria. Xewkija village organises an animated pageant along the old streets of the village.

**8th April:** Via Crucis at The Citadel Victoria with meditations based on the teachings of Pope Francis.

**9th April:** Good Friday Procession organised in Qala

**13th April:** Good Friday Procession organised in Victoria

**14th April:** Good Friday Procession organised in Nadur, Victoria, Xaghra and Żebbuġ.

**16th April:** Christ the Risen. Processions held in Victoria, Kerċem, Nadur, Xewkija, Żebbuġ, Qala, Xaghra, Fontana and Għarb

**30th Apr:** Gozo Half Marathon. Run for it! The 42nd edition of the Gozo Half Marathon

The Gozo Half Marathon was organised for the first time in Xaghra, Gozo on the 6th of February, 1977. Back then about 35 competitors took part but this number has increased dramatically over the years with locals and visitors from other European countries now joining this annual event. Apart from the half marathon, the event hosts an 8 mile (12.9 km) run, and a 4 km and 2km races for younger athletes, making it an ideal event for the whole family. The half marathon route is of varying elevation and takes the participants through various Gozitan villages and breathtaking views of the island’s landscape.

## May

**6th May:** The Gozo Ultra Trail, the most scenic route in the Mediterranean returns on Saturday the 6th May 2017. The event will consist of a 55km trail run, 55km MTB challenge and a 21km trail run. The course is a gorgeous circumnavigation of the island which covers cliff edge single tracks, lush valleys and water courses, seaside salt pans, sandy beaches and rocky terrain – in short, you will experience the whole of the Mediterranean in one race!

**7th May:** Dwejra Fair at San Lawrenz village. Mingle with the locals in this traditional village fair and experience local life in a colourful way.

## June

**6th June – 10th July** - Victoria International Arts Festival featuring concerts, exhibitions, master classes and specialised talks.

**10th Jun:** Bis-Saħħa Wine Festival in Santa Luċija Square. A festival of wine, live music and local food. Entrance is free.

**10th Jun:** RockAstra - The fifth edition of RockAstra, Victoria. Join this upbeat concert and enjoy Gozo under a festive summer sky. Unmissable.

**\* Jun - Leone Goes Pop:** Independence Square (It-Tokk), Victoria. Swing, rock, pop to the 10th edition of Leone Goes Pop, which is set to entertain the heart of Gozo’s town – the central square, It-Tokk. The Leone Band returns for another year round with a night of pop, rock and swing music, that keeps a crowded square entertained for hours.

**18th June:** Swejjaq – A traditional artisan and farmer’s market at the main square of San Lawrenz village, highlighting the best of local produce.

**24th – 25th Jun:** Agricultural Fair, Nadur

**17th – 18th Jun:** Farm to Fork, Gozitano Complex, Xewkija

**\* Jun:** Oasi Weekend Celebrations

**\* Jun:** 8th Edition of the Figs Festival, Xaghra

**\* Jun:** Festival “Fiori d’Argenta”, Xewkija; A festival of culture, music, and traditions, culminating in a horse parade through the village streets.

## July

**2nd Jul:** Infiorata, Għarb  
An intricate carpet of fresh flowers arranged in thematic designs. The Infiorata is an old Italian tradition, the oldest one originating in ‘Gerano’ the twinned village of Għarb which is found in the outskirts of Rome Italy and which Għarb adopted as an annual event since 2003.

**22nd July:** Marsalmozajk – Mosaic Festival, Marsalforn. A colourful event and a unique experience of this beautiful art that fascinates old and young, along the Marsalforn port area.



**24th – 27th July:** Festival at San Lawrenz

**31st July:** Opera Vs Pop Under The Stars 10th Edition, Victoria

Following the nine previous successful editions of Opera vs Pop Under the Stars, The Gozo Youth Orchestra in collaboration with The Ministry for Gozo and Embassy of the United States of America presents: “Opera vs Pop Under the Stars – 10th Edition” by the Gozo Youth Orchestra. Programme will include classical and operatic songs and arias, followed by an array of lighter pop arrangements from soundtracks and musicals.

Info and Reservation: gozowindbandorchestra@yahoo.co.uk

## August

**5th Aug:** Gozo Ceramics Festival, Xlendi Gozo

Presentation of ceramic artefacts by local artists who will be working live, demonstrating different techniques such as throwing, coiling, modelling, slab building and firing.

**5th Aug:** Riflessi Sajfin

An open-air festival organised by Oasi Foundation’s primary prevention team, Marsalforn

**18th – 19th Aug:** Festa ta’ Kemmuna

**18th – 20th Aug:** The Delicata Classic Wine Festival, Council Gardens, Nadur

**29th Aug:** Feast of St John Martyr, Xewkija. A traditional village square dinner gathers a whole village in a celebration that is animated by music and dance at St. John’s square, culminating in a traditional bonfire.

\* Throughout August, activities forming part of Summer Nights programme are organised with the participation of local musical bands

## September

**2nd Sep:** Jazz Do Festival, Mgarr Harbour. An eclectic mix of jazz styles that entertains an ever growing crowd against the unique setting of Mgarr Harbour. Dine out or mingle in a local bar in the area, while bands jazz up the atmosphere!

**7th Sep:** Commemoration of the Two Sieges, Xagħra

**9th Sep:** Stage And Proms On The Sea – 3rd edition, Mgarr Marina

The Gozo Youth Wind Band (GYWB) will present the 3rd Edition of this successful spectacular evening. Staged on a large floating platform at Mgarr Harbour, this concert offers a unique Mediterranean setting where music can be enjoyed against a backdrop of seacraft and a moonlit sky.

Info and Reservation: gozowindbandorchestra@yahoo.co.uk

**10th Sep:** Rock Concert by The Travellers at Marsalforn

**17th Sep:** Swejjaq – A traditional artisan and farmer’s market at the main square of San Lawrenz village, highlighting the best of local produce

**22nd – 24th Sep:** 12th edition of the Qala International Folk Festival

## October

**1st Oct:** OASI Cup run, 4th edition. Run, walk Gozo and say yes to a healthy lifestyle! oasi.org.mt

**8th Oct:** A Celebration of Light, the locally known fjakkolata. A spectacle of thousands of burning lanterns lit over Għar Ilma hill, overlooking the village of Sta Luċija, Kerċem. Worth a visit!

**14th Oct:** Opera, Tejatron Aurora, presents Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana and Leoncavallo’s I Pagliacci

**20th Oct:** Symphony of Lights, a musical concert at Sta Luċija, Kerċem

**26th & 28th Oct:** Opera, Tejatron Astra, Lucija di Lammermoor, Astra Theatre, Victoria

**28th Oct:** Halloween, a local adaptation of this western celebration, falling on All Saints’ Eve, Nadur

**29th Oct – 18th Nov:** 12th edition of the Festival Mediterranea

## December

**2nd Dec – 7th Jan:** Christmas, an island of Joy – a full programme of events spanning five weeks, through December to the 7th January, to celebrate Christmas

**3rd Dec:** Swejjaq – open market Christmas Edition at San Lawrenz village

**8th Dec:** Feast of the Immaculate Conception – Victoria & Qala

**16th Dec:** Festival of Light organised by Fondazzjoni ta’ Klula to celebrate the patron saint, Santa Luċija. Santa Luċija square is decorated with flaming lanterns, bonfire and animated by children carrying candles in a traditional procession

**17th Dec:** Feast of Santa Luċija, at the Santa Luċija hamlet

**9th & 10th Dec:** Carols by Candlelight, a choral concert by the Schola Cantorum Jubilate.

**19th Dec:** Christmas Concert at St George’s Basilica, Victoria by Chorus Urbanus

**24th Dec:** Christmas pageant at San Lawrenz

**25th Dec:** Twas the Night Before Christmas – St George’s Square, Victoria

’Twas the Night Before Christmas - Christmas Eve concert from 01:30-02:30hrs at St George’s Square by The Gozo Youth Wind Band & Orchestra presents a spectacular concert including guest pop singers with evergreen Christmas songs, carols, arrangements, medleys amongst others.

**30th Dec:** Christmas concert at the Parish Church, San Lawrenz

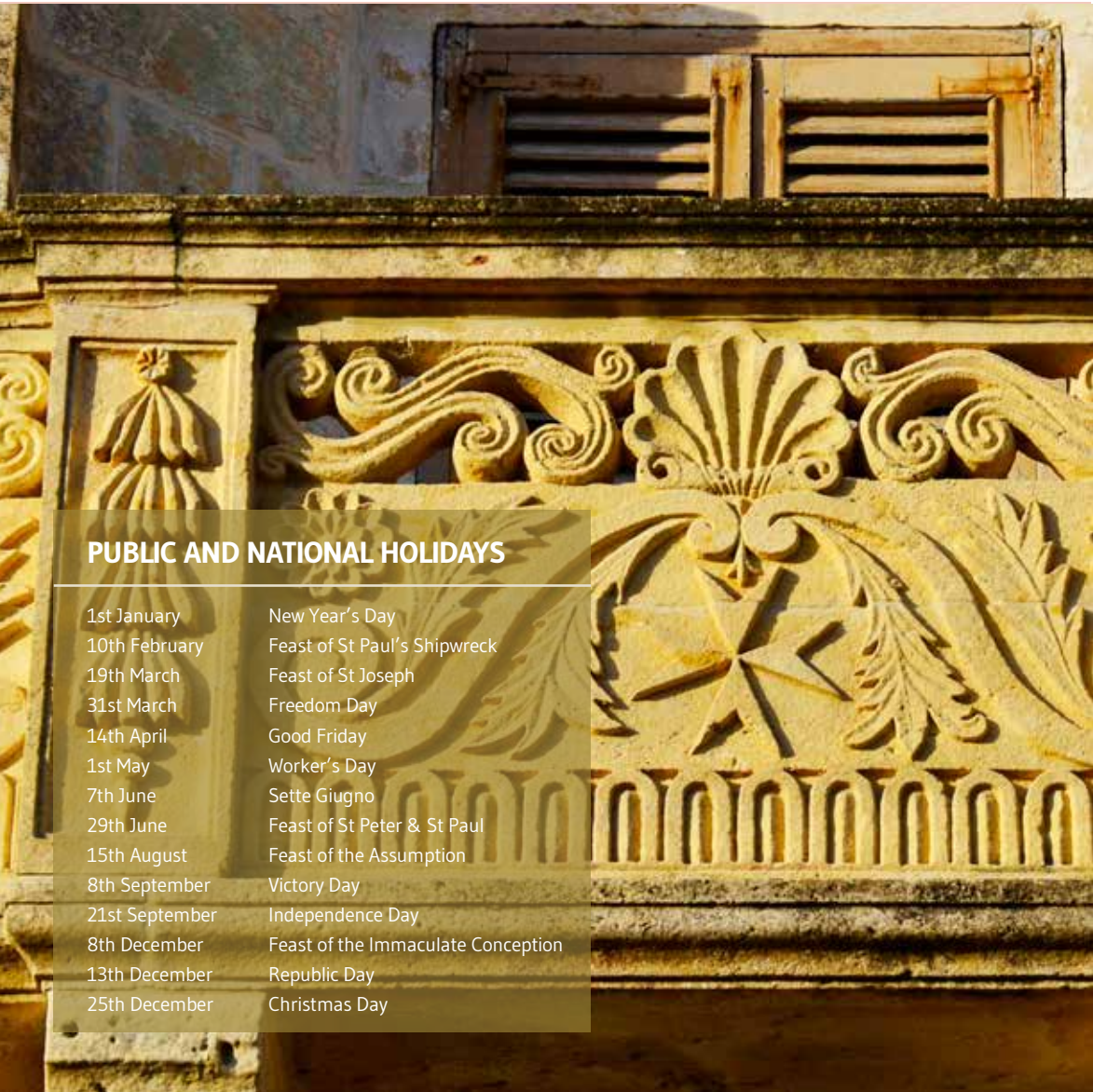
**31st Dec:** New Year’s Eve in the City, Victoria

The Rabat, Citta’ Victoria Local Council and the town’s commercial community, create a festive celebration of the New Year. The thousands of people who literally flock to Victoria on the day have the opportunity to celebrate together in historic surroundings. Participation is free of charge. Event takes place at Independence Square and at Saint George’s Square.

**\* Dec:** Gozitano Christmas Village

The Gozitano Christmas Village will be hosting a series of events and activities. The site of the Gozitano will be transformed by music, illuminations and food stalls offering an impressive selection of wine from 17 different countries and 37 different wine regions. Gozitano attractions include production of traditional Christmas sweets, with the participation of artists, choir singing, local band and father christmas distributing presents.

*\* Content is indicative of highlights of the Gozo cultural calendar and is not comprehensive of all events. For full details, changes to the original programme and for other unlisted events, please check visitgozo.com*



## PUBLIC AND NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

1st January	New Year's Day
10th February	Feast of St Paul's Shipwreck
19th March	Feast of St Joseph
31st March	Freedom Day
14th April	Good Friday
1st May	Worker's Day
7th June	Sette Giugno
29th June	Feast of St Peter & St Paul
15th August	Feast of the Assumption
8th September	Victory Day
21st September	Independence Day
8th December	Feast of the Immaculate Conception
13th December	Republic Day
25th December	Christmas Day





## GOZO, YOUR NEXT STOP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Experience Gozo's gems, secrets and magnificence, a perfect blend of history and myth, mediterranean culture and cuisine.

History and culture have carved their own story on this island, symbolised by its prehistoric temples, magnificent churches and the towering Citadel. Blessed with a wonderful countryside, pristine beaches, and unique coastline, Gozo is there for you to discover.

Gozo is connected to over ninety six (96) destinations through the Malta International Airport ([www.maltairport.com](http://www.maltairport.com)). Once in Malta, drive to Cirkewwa Harbour (approximately one hour) and take the comfortable Gozo ferry for the scenic 25-minute crossing to Mgarr Harbour, gateway to Gozo.



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