

Ћondoq Ir-Rummien Walk

L-IMĠARR TO L-IMĠARR - 10KM

 Xlendi Walk

 **Hondoq Ir-Rummien Walk**

-  **Starting:** L-Imġarr Harbour
-  **Ending:** L-Imġarr Harbour
-  **Length:** 10Km
-  **Grading:** Easy but with a series of uphill and downhill
-  **Landscape:** Scenic, partly coastal
-  **Trail markings**
-  **Getting there and back:** Gozo Channel operates regular ferries to L-Imġarr Harbour leaving from iċ-Ċirkewwa in Malta.
-  **Recommended Walking season:** October to May

 Dwejra Walk

 Comino Walk

 Daħlet Qorrot Walk

 Ramla Walk

 Saltpans Walk

 Ta' Gordan Walk

Overview

This circular route starts and ends at Il-Port tal-Imġarr (L-Imġarr Harbour) walking through the three villages of Il-Qala, In-Nadur and Għajnsielem and visiting the bay of Hondoq ir-Rummien. The scenic walk takes on some beautiful views over to Comino as you walk up from sea level to Il-Qala Belvedere as well as far reaching views from the Maltese Garden located on the high plateau of In-Nadur surrounding Kenuna Tower. Although the walking is relatively easy, mainly on established roads and paths, it does involve a series of uphill and downhill. Definitely recommended is a stop at the small bay of Hondoq ir-Rummien where, if weather permits in the warmer months, do stop for a dip into its clean, clear waters. This is the only sandy pocket where locals can enjoy a swim when the prevailing northwesterly wind blows. On your way through the village cores take some time to savour local village life in the main square or go off-route to explore the place better – In-Nadur for instance holds an interesting Maritime Museum.

If you need any short cuts there are buses linking the villages to the bus terminus in Victoria or to L-Imġarr Harbour.

For the more adventurous a rough coastal path starting from the clay slopes at the eastern end of the harbour can provide an alternative to the road for getting to Hondoq ir-Rummien – however short stretches of it are quite narrow and subject to constant erosion.

Notes

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

- Refrain from collecting or causing damage to any specimens of flora, fauna, geological items or archaeological artefacts.
- Tread lightly and avoid disturbance.
- Keep to the paths.
- Do not litter or light fires.
- Keep away from the cliff edge.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Protect yourself from UV radiation – wear a hat and sun protection as even the cooler months can get quite hot.
- Although rainfall is scarce rain sometimes comes in heavy downpours causing flash floods. Avoid walking in valleys during or just after heavy rains.
- Keep a safe distance from the shoreline or cliffs during adverse weather conditions with very strong winds or wild seas.

Before undertaking any part of this walk, it is strongly recommended to ensure that one's physical and medical conditions permit the undertaking of these activities. Particular attention is to be made to the often irregular terrain and to refrain from undertaking these walks in prohibitive weather conditions. All walks are undertaken at one's own risk.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this brochure as at time of publication, the Ministry for Gozo accepts no liability for any inaccuracies or omissions whatsoever. Moreover, the Ministry for Gozo accepts no liability for accidents or any type of losses while following these walks.

HUNTING

During your walk, as in most of the countryside, you will encounter many small stone huts – the local *dura* – a hut used by bird hunters or trappers. Do keep this in mind when walking – typically the sign 'RTO' (Reserved To Owner) will often mean that it is privately owned land.

The walk starts from just outside the Passenger Terminal in the picturesque L-Imġarr Harbour. Cross the road and head towards the moorings. The small traditional boats with their vivid colours dot the harbour in stark contrast with the giant modern ferries sailing restlessly to and from Malta. L-Imġarr is the only all-weather harbour of the island and has always provided a vital link to Malta with its ferry boats carrying passengers, cattle and goods. It is still an important fishing base for locals as well as a departing point for various day trips around the island and ferrying of passengers to Kemmuna (Comino) and it holds the only yacht marina on the island. Many locals come down to the harbour in the weekends to watch the buzzing activity but also to enjoy the numerous restaurants which have opened up. Hidden amongst other modern boats lies a relic of past times when the wooden Gozo boat used to be the only means of travel between the islands. The Knights of St John constructed two stores here and manifested their preference for a coastal and strategic location by investing heavily in the imposing Fort Chambray built high above the harbour in 1749 with the unfulfilled intention of it serving as the new city of Gozo.

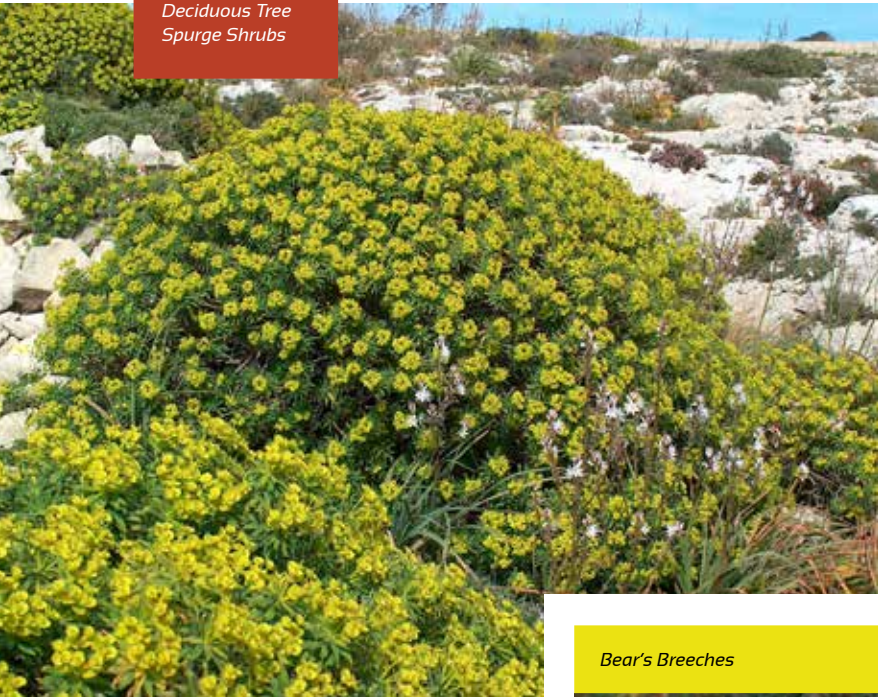
Walk along the harbour and turn left into a lane between two fields which conceals an old and surprisingly green path acting as a short cut up to the main road exiting just opposite the hotel. For a few minutes it engulfs you in its rustic ambience amidst dry stone walls and lush vegetation – a microcosm seemingly trapped in times



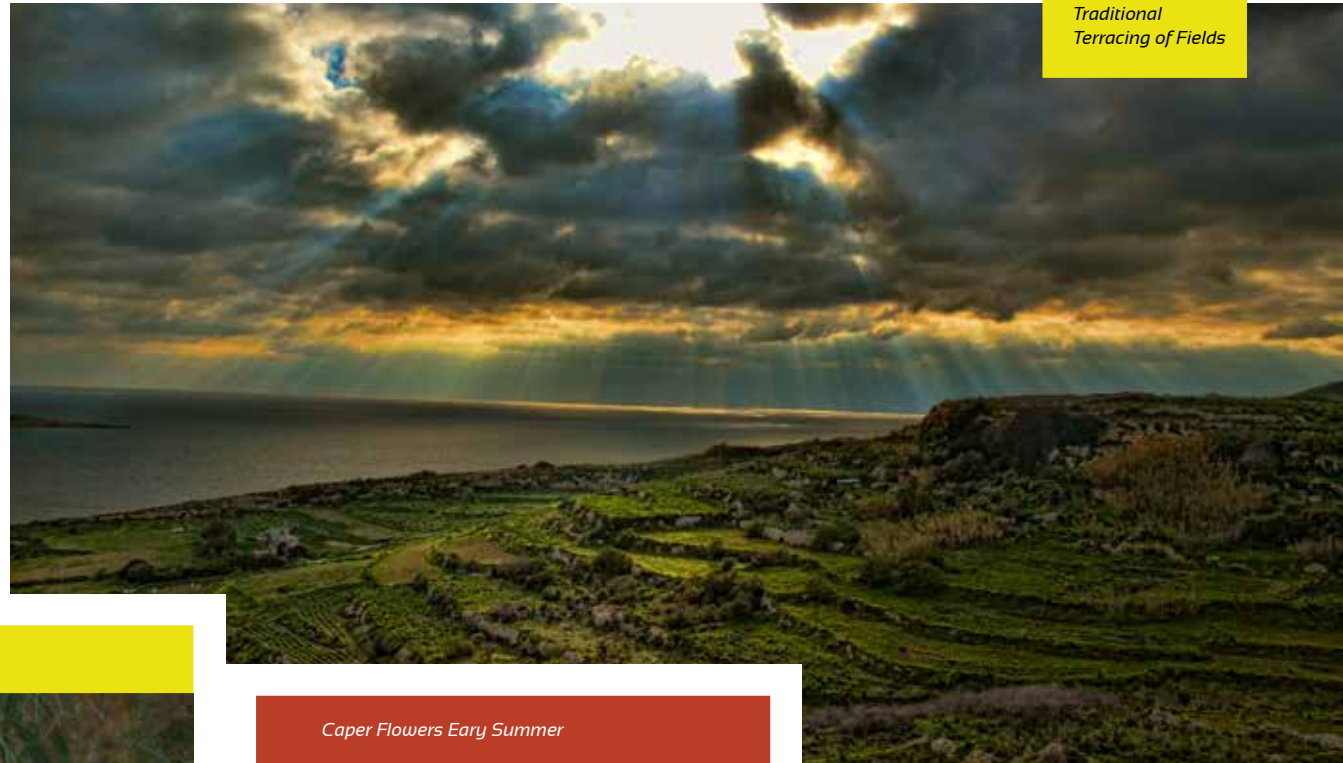
The Gozo Boat

gone by when the area around the harbour was known as Ġnien Migiarr (L-Imġarr's Garden), so distant from the bustle and developments between which it is actually sandwiched. Among the foliage you can catch glimpses of the imposing Fort Chambray and the Lourdes Sanctuary overlooking the harbour whilst the cliff side holds a few rock cut caves some of which are still in use by farmers to store tools and produce. The winding stone path

*Deciduous Tree
Spurge Shrubs*



*Traditional
Terracing of Fields*



Bear's Breeches



Caper Flowers Early Summer



*Mediterranean Stonecrop will find a way in the
tiniest of spaces*



passes in between miniature fields and giant Carob trees and is surrounded by Fig, Prickly Pear and shrubs of Tree Spurge which colour the landscape with autumn hues of amber and red in May. In winter you will come across the broad luxuriant and shiny leaves of the Acanthus – known commonly as the Bear's Breeches – the design of which was immortalised in Corinthian style columns. At the end of summer its exploding seeds may surprise you as they burst open and land metres away from the plant. The large collapsed boulders form interesting natural rock gardens with Caper and Mediterranean Stonecrop.

At the top of the steps take care in the narrow main road and continue uphill. Take the first turn right into Triq iż-Żewwieqa. The road crosses a small valley

which on the seaward side supports one of the few populations of Chaste Tree which take over the whole valley bed. You will encounter this otherwise rare tree at closer range further on along the walk. On the landward side of this small bridge lies a dense thicket of Almond, Carob, Olive, Chaste Tree and Buckthorn trying to hold their ground amidst the sea of Giant Reed. Above the valley on the left stand the church and friary of St. Anthony (which also functions as a retreat house) and the high plateau above is your destination later on in the walk when you get to the village of In-Nadur. The road proceeds to Il-Qala whose belvedere looks over one of the most stunning views in the archipelago over sloping terraced fields and, across

the channel, the famous turquoise waters of Bejn il-Kmiemen (Blue Lagoon) which separate the island of Kemmuna from its smaller sister Kemmunnett.

Past the first set of apartments turn right into Triq lċ-Ċawl and follow the scenic road down to the coast. At the intersections keep left. The sloping greyish outcrops of Blue Clay contrast with the underlying golden Globigerina Limestone. The steppe habitat here is dominated by the tough Esparto Grass which survives as a perennial stabilising the shifting clay. Before reaching the dilapidated farmhouse turn right to follow a partly surfaced concrete footpath winding down among detached blocks of soft limestone. Into view to the right comes the quasi-islet known as Ġebel taċ-Ċawl (*ċawl* in Maltese can refer to either the locally extinct Jackdaw or the Damsel fish). Take the path down on the right to get closer to the shore — the area may be a bit muddy after the rain as the impermeable clayey layer can be saturated with water. The coast here is an interesting geological area where the natural sequence of rocks has been overturned by a fault which runs along this coastline and which is exposed along the smoothed sloping cliffs. The landscape is a result of the sliding movement which brought down a mass of Upper Coralline Limestone (normally found at the top of the geological layers of Maltese rocks) to sea-level settling down as the hardstone islets of Taċ-Ċawl, Tal-Ħalfa in the distance and Il-Ħnejja shoal in between whilst the whole rocky expanse of Ġebel Barbaġanni came to form a promontory. The resultant creeks on both sides are Id-Daħla taċ-Ċawl to the west - framing L-Imġarr Harbour and Għajnsielem church



Blue Clay Outcrop



Taċ-Ċawl Rocks



A Perfect Place and Swim!



Cliff Carrot



Golden Samphire – a hardy coastal species



in the distance - and Ta' Bumbarin to the east. Both are very good snorkelling spots but require a short scramble down.

Continuing eastwards along the path at Ġebel Barbaġanni (the Barn Owl's rocks) among typical maritime plants such as wild Cliff Carrot, Golden Samphire and endemic Sea Lavender you may be tempted for a swim in one of the prettiest creeks. Ta' Bumbarin is an interesting placename which could possibly refer to *bumarin* — the local name for the critically endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal — now considered extinct from the region but which once visited the numerous caves dotting the islands' coastline.

Proceed along the path among wild Caper shrubs and soon the cliff-top chapel of Madonna Tal-Blat and the small sandy beach of Hondoq ir-Rummien come into view.

Madonna tal-Blat Chapel



The main road between Il-Qala and Hondoq ir-Rummien



Tree Spurge

The Painted Frog



Pomegranate flower (above) and fruits in September (Below)



The bay's name — literally the Pomegranate Creek, is an unassuming beach with a few Tamarisk trees and is one of the most popular and frequented bathing areas in summer — indeed the only beach accessible when the rough mistral winds blow. The site recalls small-scale industrial activity in days gone by in the abandoned 1960s seawater distillation plant and a disused hardstone quarry nearby but otherwise the area has, at least till now, been spared from residential urbanisation. This shore was chosen as the site where submarine cables were laid down from mainland Malta and via Comino to provide

electricity to the island when the Gozo power station closed down in 1959. A solitary Cypress tree stands by the public conveniences just opposite the beach. An interesting and frequent endemic plant, the pungent Maltese Fleabane, is quite easily spotted sprouting out from the cut rock face.

Head up to the rustic Madonna tal-Blat eighteenth century chapel which enjoys a unique position commanding views of the channel and the island of Comino. The rocky expanse below the ridge transforms into a colourful autumnal scene around May when the Tree Spurge shrubs start shedding their leaves.

Proceeding up the road to Il-Qala one encounters a disused hardstone quarry for Lower Coralline Limestone extraction which at the start of the twentieth century was supplying blocks of stone to construct the Grand Harbour's breakwater and later on for L-Imġarr Harbour as well. Shipped from the quay in the bay this limestone travelled as far as Liverpool for the building of one

of its Cathedrals. Several local proposals have suggested the area's restoration with indigenous trees and shrubs.

To the left of the road is a freshwater spring enjoyed by frogs, reeds and numerous Chaste Trees and nearby Pomegranate trees after which this bay is named.

Proceed along the road to Il-Qala*.

***NOTE:** If you are captivated by unexplained mysteries such as the local cart ruts phenomenon then you may wish to detour for about half a kilometre into Triq il-Kalati Puniċi (in itself a reference to Punic cart ruts) taking a turn to the right before reaching the village. This track will take you to Il-Qortin — one of the four sites in Gozo where these enigmatic rock cut features attributed to either the Bronze Age or the Classical Age are found.

HONDOQ IR-RUMMIEN WALK



LEGEND

X - X denotes a distance of 1km

> indicates route direction

SEA PLANE

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|--|---------------|--|------------------|--|---------------|--|---------------|
| | BUS STOP | | PUBLIC TOILET | | GEOLOGICAL FAULT | | FORTIFICATION | | CHURCH |
| | PARKING AREA | | VIEW POINT | | MENHIR | | BREAK WATER | | QUARRY |
| | FERRY | | REST AREA | | CART RUTS | | TOWER | | SLIPPERY |
| | YACHT MARINA | | GARDEN AREA | | MARITIME MUSEUM | | WIND MILL | | SWIMMING ZONE |

Kunčizzjoni
Church in Il-Qala



Inside the Kunčizzjoni Church

Soon you reach another chapel and adjacent cemetery known as Il-Kunčizzjoni tal-Qala — one of the earliest Marian churches in Gozo which was originally dedicated to the Assumption until 1615 when it was changed to the Immaculate Conception. It served as a parish to villages in eastern Gozo for several years. The site's popularity as a place of devotion seems to have a long history and many pilgrimages were held here especially in times of hardship or calamities. Its sacristy houses several ex-votos such as paintings and equipment used during rescues but the outer walls

Crown Daisy



Horn-of-Plenty (tiny in detail)



Wild Fennel flowers when others dare not

were also used for this purpose in the form of graffiti which can still be seen today on the back and sides of the church — easily observed from the road.

Follow Triq Il-Kunčizzjoni up to Il-Qala taking the left turn at the stone cross. On the way (on the right side of the road) lies a thicket of Chaste Tree — this is one of the few places where the tree is still harvested and can be seen up close. Further on the village square of Il-Qala is a good place to stop for refreshments and have a look at the parish church (1889) dedicated to Saint Joseph whose feast is celebrated on the first Sunday of August.

From here take the left turn into Triq San Frangisk and then right to walk uphill past the school stopping for a moment to spot the Il-Qala Menhir sandwiched between buildings to your right. The story of this standing stone will probably remain untold as any evidence of the past has been destroyed and only a few prehistoric sherds were found. At the top of the road turn left into Triq David Cocco Palmieri to head to the village of In-Nadur past an old tower windmill standing alone as a reminder of days gone by. The route proceeds through In-Nadur via the village square — take the right turn into

Kenuna Tower



The view from the Kenuna Garden

Spring flower riots before the onset of the long dry season



Triq Madre Ġemma Camilleri and then left into the small square behind the Parish Church. The monumental baroque church was partly built in 1760 and is dedicated to In-Nadur's patron saints the Apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul whose popular feast is celebrated on the 29th of June — a public holiday for all Maltese known also as the folklore festival *L-Imnarja* — the Luminaria — a feast of illumination which has been local tradition for centuries. Proceed by turning left into Triq Cicciano

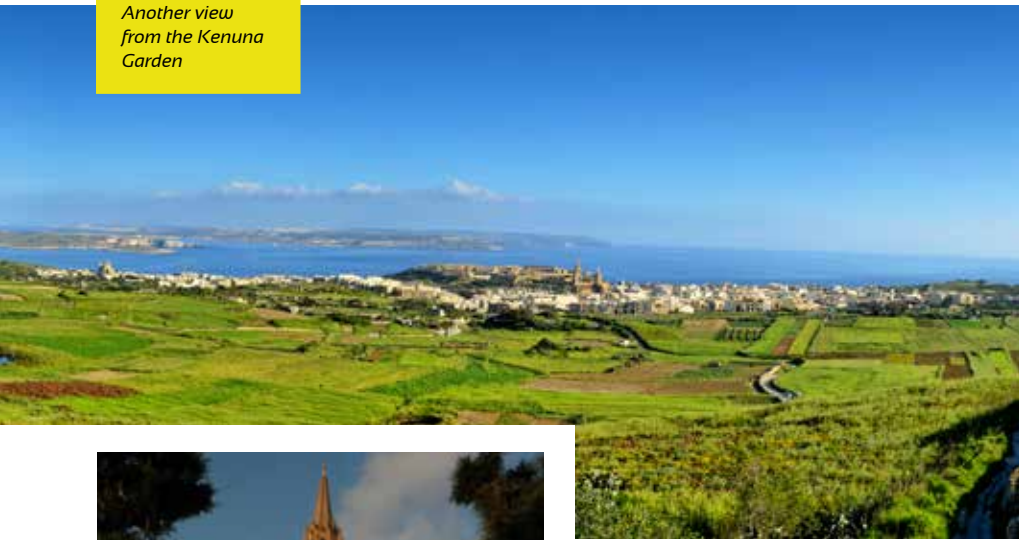
and then right into Triq il-Kappillan. If you have time and are into naval memorabilia this street houses an interesting collection within the Kelinu Grima Maritime Museum (**Opening Hours: Monday to Saturday: 9.00am-4.45pm Telephone: 2156 5226**).

Turn left to descend to Triq Xandriku and another left to take you to the wide views opening up from the In-Nadur promenade. Follow the ridge to Ta' Kenuna Tower with its adjacent Maltese Garden. The view from up here highlights

the vantage position of this high plateau fully attesting to the placename's origins and the locality's coat of arms — In-Nadur meaning a look-out post. Despite the presence of the threatening cannon down below, this tower was not used for defensive purposes but for communications.

To head back to L-Imġarr retrace your steps a few metres back towards the promenade and descend along a concrete path on your right. Be careful as the path

Another view
from the Kenuna
Garden



Għajnsielem Parish Church

may be slippery when wet and a bit muddy further down along the clayey part of it but it is the nicest way of descending to the rural landscape of Ġebel Aħmar which comes to life with many a Zitting Cisticola chirping as they circle their territories in spring. At the bottom of the path keep left and then turn right to head towards Għajnsielem. The road is named Triq Borġ I-Għarib due to a legendary placename (translated as “the foreigner’s mound”) – a nearby much disturbed archaeological site with several megalith about 300m away to the west close to the road (on privately cultivated land).

Proceed straight down Triq Simirat and keep right to reach Pjazza Indipendenza – the nineteenth century church of Our Lady of Loreto functioned as the parish of Għajnsielem until 1979 when the new larger church was completed. The former was built next to the site of a niche raised by a pious local, Anġlu Grech, after he had a vision of Our Lady. A few metres onwards will lead you to the large open square with its imposing Gothic parish church which was started in 1924 and which maintained the same traditional Loreto dedication. To the left of the church take the path through the arch into Betlehem f’Għajnsielem – a life-size crib which comes to life in December when the Nativity scene is re-lived and continues until the Epiphany.

You will soon come out to the main road running parallel to the lush Ġnien Migiarro valley below. Cross the road very carefully and descend the steps down next to the Gleneagles bar to return to your starting point.

Snippets

THE GOZO BOAT

1 Today’s Gozo Channel ferry service with 3 Malta built modern ships carrying over 3 million passengers annually runs very frequently and almost uninterrupted – but in past times anyone wishing to cross from the opposite coast in Malta at Marfa had to light a fire to signal to boat owners in Gozo the need for a ride.

Until 1960, before the introduction of a steamer service, the older versions of the passenger ferry between L-Imġarr and the Grand Harbour in Malta were much smaller traditional wooden boats evolving in design over the centuries and leading finally to the Gozo Boat which was in use for a century and was referred to with different names such as *tal-latini* (due to its lateen rig) or *xprunara* (Gozo Speronara). It retained sails till the 1950s even though engines had started to be fitted on it since 1919. At 47 feet long and allowing for a 30 tonne cargo these boats were built to last a lifetime, enduring the rough seas prevailing in the channels in windy weather. As with other traditional boats it was painted in green, blue, red and yellow whilst a completely black one was used to transport the dead. The moustache on the bow was decorated with the traditional eye of Horus – to protect from the evil eye.

The last known Gozo Boat in existence, dating to 1933 and built by Maltese boatbuilders is the *Sacra Famiglia* which after years of lying decaying in the harbour is now thankfully restored and is

on permanent display at the harbour as part of an initiative of the local voluntary organization Wirt Għawdex in conjunction with Gozo Channel.

CURIOUS TREES

2 The Carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) is a tree of Biblical fame which has remained popular in Malta due to its use for the production of *Ġulepp tal-Farrub* (carob syrup) as well as fodder for animals. This evergreen tree can live for centuries and is either male or female – trees having pods are female. The seeds inside the pods gave rise to the term carat from its Latin name due to their past widespread use for weighing precious stones.



The evergreen Carob Tree

The Chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*) is a deciduous tree preferring valley beds and watercourses. It is extremely rare on

mainland Malta but thankfully has fared a bit better in Gozo. It is traditionally used for weaving baskets but has also been used for centuries as a herbal medicine. It flowers in summer in beautiful lilac hues and then produces fragrant peppercorns which gives rise to the name Monk's Peppers said to have been popular at one time in convents to maintain chastity.



The Chaste Tree - a rare species with quite a story!

MARINE LIFE

3 Ta' Bumbarin creek at Hondoq ir-Rummiën is a delightful snorkelling spot sheltered from wind by the adjacent cliffs while its semi-submerged caves provide cool shade in the summer heat and interesting microhabitats. Indeed it seems many fish and other species seek refuge here. One of the curious inhabitants is the sand-dwelling soft echinoderm known as Sea Cucumber whilst diving further out into the channel it is not unusual to come across a large mollusc – the protected Noble Pen Shell standing up amongst the invaluable habitat provided by the swaying ribbon-like leaves of Posidonia meadows – both species are endemic to the Mediterranean Sea. Its widespread presence is often

linked to clean healthy waters and the habitat's extremely high ecological value has afforded it high protection status within the EU.

MADONNA TAL-BLAT CHAPEL

4 The chapel is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Local lore has it that being so close to Comino, just a kilometre away, this coastal church served the residents of Comino who could follow mass celebrated at Tal-Blat Chapel from the opposite shore. The sea is a recurrent theme in many coastal chapels and this one could have been built as a vow by fishermen or mariners and it is in fact also linked to Saint Andrew the patron saint of fishermen – both saints feature together in the altar's frontpiece painting which is now kept in the parish church. The statue in the niche represents Our Lady Star of the Sea (the Stella Maris) on a Maltese boat. Old maritime graffiti of ships can be traced on the façade.

OF HERMITS AND LEGENDS

5 Legend has it that when the building of the Kuncizzjoni church started all the stones were moved overnight to another place and each time they were taken back on site of the present church. The locals interpreted this as a divine sign that the church was to be built there and so it was.

The Sanctuary stands in Pjazza San Kerrew named after Saint Corrado who was one of the several hermits who settled here. It is thought that he previously lived in a cave in Mosta valley on the mainland until he was forced to leave and spread his mantle to float on it to Comino before eventually settling in Il-Qala. In past times sick children were lowered down into what was thought to be his grave to be healed.



Il-Qala Parish Church

In 1937 a skeleton dating to the fifteenth century was found in the same place known in the legend and the remains are kept in the church's crypt.

MARITIME GRAFFITI

6 Some of the oldest maritime graffiti depicting sailing vessels are encountered in the prehistoric temple site of Tarxien (Malta), dated to about 1,600BC but the practise remained common right up to the 20th century until steamers came into the scene. Although the graffiti are mainly related to the sea it was not a realm restricted to seafarers – popular superstition and religion seem to be the main motives behind these etchings. Their widespread presence on many church walls indicates

their popularity and ritual nature as Ex-votos for those seeking a grace or giving thanks for a safe sea journey. It has been suggested that sometimes these graffiti were used instead of candles when funds were low. These graffiti have proved invaluable to the study of ancient seafaring communities and their means of transport prior to the nineteenth century.

IL-QALA

7 Il-Qala (meaning an inlet) has a population of about 1600 and is the easternmost village of Gozo. The council organises an interesting annual event around early autumn celebrating local folklore and traditions over a few days during the Il-Qala International Folk Festival.



Maltese National Tree

The outskirts of Il-Qala offer an insight into interesting archaeological features such as enigmatic cart ruts in limestone and the eighteenth century St. Anthony's Battery built by the Knights of St. John.

IN-NADUR

8 In-Nadur has a population of about 4000 and spreads over a high plateau. Many are return migrants which explains the numerous Australian, American and Canadian flags. It was awarded the title of Best Emerging European Rural Destination of Excellence. Besides its religious feast, In-Nadur is also famous for two carnival festivities – an organised and a unique spontaneous one which draw crowds from all over Malta and Gozo. The town is also popular for its famous bakeries dishing out many a *Ftira Għawdxija* – a Gozitan style type of pizza the most famous one perhaps

being *Tal-Ġobon* – an enclosed dough filled with potatoes and fresh goat cheeselets.

TA' KENUNA TOWER AND MALTESE GARDEN

9 Ta' Kenuna Tower was built during the British rule in 1848 and served as a semaphore. It was restored in recent times and is now being used as a telecommunications tower. Allow some time to stroll around the pretty Maltese Garden – a unique initiative for the island at the time when it was put forward by a local green group *Għaqda Riħan* with the help of a local botanist who wanted to preserve and propagate endangered indigenous and endemic species such as the Maltese Everlasting, the Maltese National Plant – The Maltese Rock Centaury and the Maltese National Tree – the Arar/Sandarac Gum Tree.

Info Pages



WEBSITES:

www.gozo.gov.mt
www.visitgozo.com
www.ecogozo.com
www.gozochannel.com

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TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE IN GOZO:

No. 17, Independence Square, Victoria, Gozo, VCT 1021
Tel: (+356) 22915452

OPENING HOURS:

Mondays to Saturdays: 09:00 to 17:30 (Last admission 17:15)
Sundays and public holidays*: 09:00 to 13:00 (Last admission 12:45)

*Note: *except on Christmas Day, New Year, Good Friday & Easter Sunday*



BUS TIMETABLES:

www.publictransport.com.mt



GOZO FERRY TIMETABLE:

www.gozochannel.com

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MINISTRY FOR GOZO



Xlendi Walk



Dwejra Walk



Comino Walk

OTHER WALKS IN THE SERIES



Dafilet Qorrot Walk



Ramla Walk



Salt pans Walk



Ta' Ġurdan Walk

Rural Development Programme for Malta 2007-2013



Axis 3 – Improving the Quality of Life in Rural Areas
Project Part-financed by the European Union
The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
Co-financing Rate: 75% European Union: 25% Government of Malta
Europe Investing in Rural Areas

