

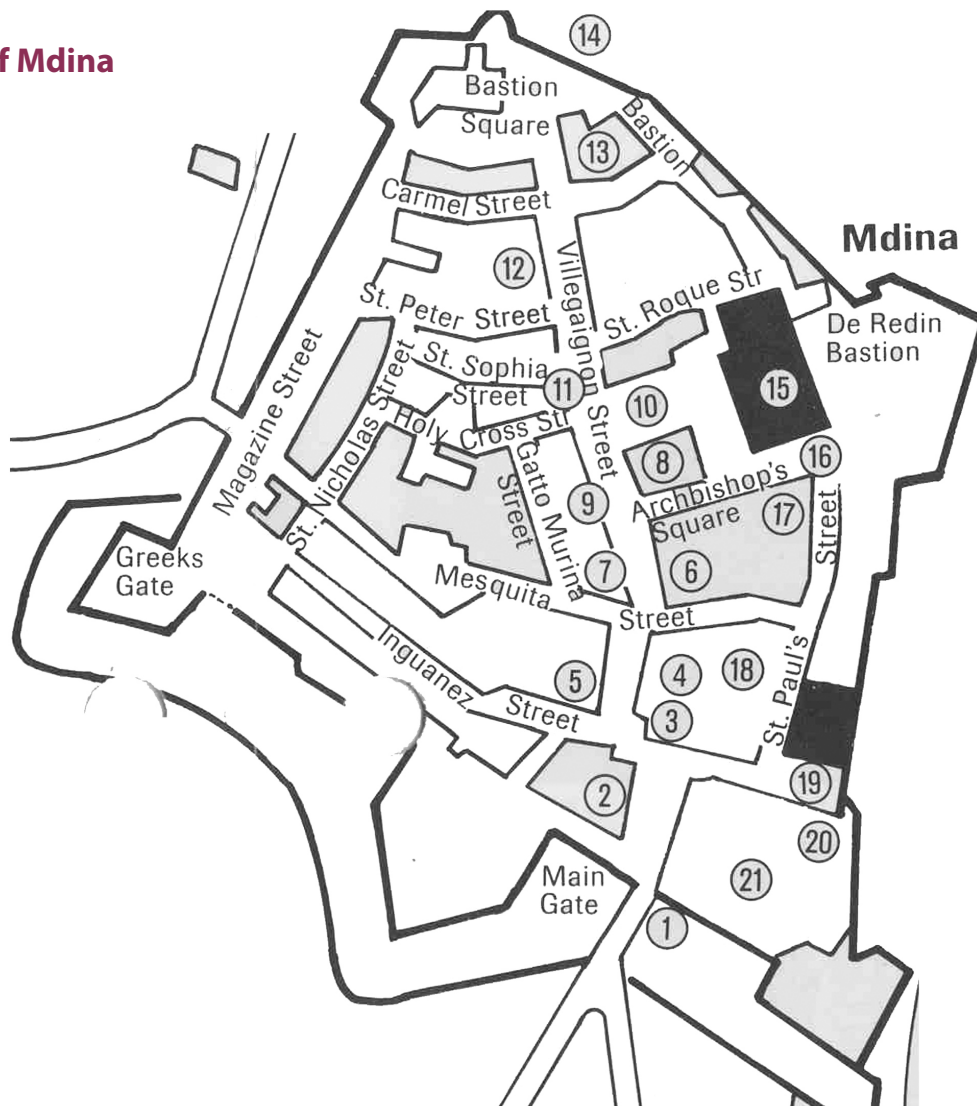
OUR COUNTRY

MDINA AND THE CITADEL

Our Country is split over three arrow stages. In the Silver Arrow there will be a discussion about the old Capital City Mdina and/or the Citadel in Gozo.

General Introduction

Map of Mdina



MDINA, MALTA'S SILENT CITY

Mdina is a fortified medieval town enclosed in bastions, located on a large hill in the centre of Malta. The town was the old capital of Malta, and with its narrow streets, few inhabitants and beautiful views over the Island it is truly a magical town. Mdina is referred to as the "Silent City" by Maltese and visitors alike - no cars (except those of a limited number of residents) have permission to enter Mdina and the town provides a relaxing atmosphere among the visitors walking its narrow streets and alleyways.

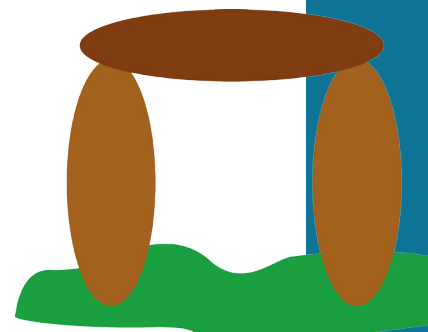
Take a walk around the old Capital City of Mdina. Get to know the facts about important buildings, tell the cubs some fascinating tales and historical gossip. Mdina is the pivot of Malta's 7000 year history, and Prehistoric remains in the area can vouch for this. Go around the narrow, winding roads of medieval Mdina, while pointing out the baroque buildings the Knights have left us. Amazing views from the Belvedere shows off the beauty of Malta.



Mdina has a small population of around 250 people who live at 0.9km², within the city walls. In contrast, outside the city walls, the village of Rabat is just a step away, and has a population of over 11,000 people. The medieval town of Mdina presents a mix of Norman and Baroque architecture and is the home to many palaces, most of which today serve as private homes. The large and striking Cathedral of the Conversion of St. Paul stands in the main square of the town.

Mdina was first inhabited and fortified around 700 BC by the Phoenicians and was at that time called Maleth. Mdina benefits from its good location on the island's highest point, far away from the sea. Under the Roman Empire the Roman governor built his palace in Mdina and it is said that even St. Paul stayed there after he was shipwrecked in Malta.

It was the Normans who surrounded the city with its thick defensive fortifications and they also widened the moat around Mdina. After an earthquake in 1693, there was the need to redesign parts of the city. This introduced Baroque designs within the city, and the Knights of Malta rebuilt the cathedral as well as the Magisterial Palace and Palazzo Falzon. The gate that stands at the entrance today is not the original entrance; the bridge was built later on to enable cars and people to enter Mdina. The original entrance gate stands approximately 100 meters to the left.



Mdina: Things you can do and see

Natural History Museum: The Museum has an impressive collection with the reference collection holding over 10,000 rocks and minerals, over 3,500 birds, birds' eggs and nests, 200 mammals, over 200 fish species, thousands of local and exotic shells and insects.



Carmelite Church and Priory: This 17th century building offers visitors an opportunity to visit the spiritual way of life of the friars. The church and priory both have impressive works of art and are accompanied by a museum, gift shop and a cafeteria.

Palazzo Falzon: A well preserved medieval building which dates back to 1495. It holds an incredible collection of antiques.

St. Paul's Cathedral: This majestic Cathedral is located in the heart of Mdina, on the site where St. Paul converted Publius to Christianity. It is an artistic gem from the 17th century.

Cathedral Museum: Originally a seminary, the museum today is one of the most outstanding religious museums of Europe. It exhibits an impressive collection of sacred art, famous paintings, coin collections, Roman antiquities and original documents from the time of the Inquisition and the early Università. There is also a wonderful series of woodcarvings by Albrecht Durer and much more.



Palazzo Santa Sophia: The basement of this house is assumed to be the oldest in siculo-norman style and dates back to 1233. The first floor, however, was added not earlier than 1938. All buildings that were erected between 1100 and 1530 are generally classified as "siculo-norman".

Torre dello Stendardo: This tower was constructed as a watchtower in 1750. On its roof a signal fire was set alight to warn the population in case of enemy attacks. It is now a police station.

Chapel of St. Agatha: This church was originally built in 1417, and redesigned by Lorenzo Gafà, in 1694. The church is dedicated to St. Agatha who, it is said, found shelter on Malta from the persecution of the Roman Emperor Decius (249 AD). Besides St Paul and St Publius, St Agatha is one of the three patron saints of Mdina.



Banca Giuratale: After Grandmaster Vilhena had confiscated the original Ministerial Palace for his own use, the Università found its new seat in this building. During the revolt against the French, a national assembly came together here. It elected a committee to consult with Lord Nelson, to get his assistance against the French. The Palazzo Giuratale became their headquarters.

Nunnery of St Benedict: The Benedictine nuns in Mdina are first mentioned in 1450. The present building is based on a medieval hospital for women. It was enlarged and totally restored in 1625. The rules of this Order are extremely strict, and the nuns are never allowed to leave the building, not even after

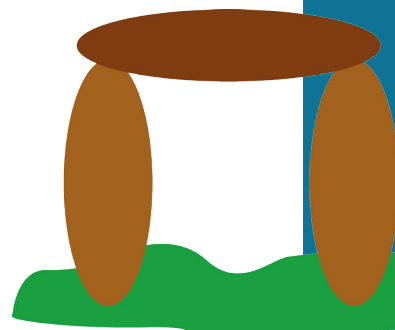
their death. Every nun is buried in the crypt, and the only men allowed in are the doctor and the priest. Today, about 20 nuns live there in total isolation, devoting their days to prayer and the maintenance of the garden.

Mdina Dungeons: The entrance is located inside the main entrance gate to Mdina, at the first turning on the right. Here, in the series of secret underground passageways, chambers and cells, a number of mysterious events from the dark side of Maltese history have been recreated.



Mdina Experience: This attraction provides a perfect start to a day in Mdina. Take a journey through time and re-live the tragedies and triumphs brought to life before you in an audio-visual spectacular documentary that brings 3000 years of history alive. The Mdina Experience is found in a medieval building that is a museum in itself.

There are various other places to visit which have opened recently. An example is the Tools and Traditions exhibition in Palazzo de Piro.



THE CITADEL - GOZO

The Old Citadel (also called the Citadella or Kastell) rises dramatically above Rabat . Built at a perfect strategic vantage point, it defiantly dominates the skyline exactly as intended by the military architects who built it. A visit to the Citadel should not be missed.

For this reason, until 1637, the entire population of Gozo was required by law to spend the night within the Citadel for their own safety.

The climax of the Turkish raids on Gozo came in 1551. A strong Ottoman naval force, after an unsuccessful attack on Malta, turned its attention to the less well protected Gozo.

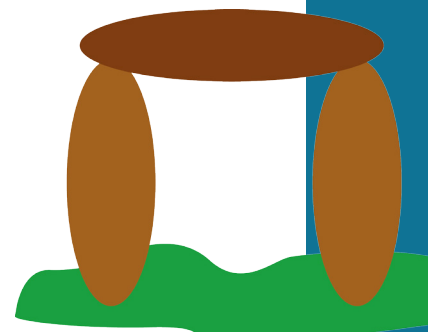


A brief history

The Citadel has been at the centre of activity on the island since possibly Neolithic times, and was certainly fortified during the Bronze Age around 1500 BC. It was later developed by the Phoenicians and in Roman times, it was a complex Acropolis. Gozo was a privileged Roman Municipality, independent of Malta and the Citadel was the centre of its administrative as well as its military and religious life, an important temple to the goddess Juno stood where the Cathedral now stands.

The north side of the Citadel dates back to the period of the Aragonese, while the south flank, overlooking Rabat (Victoria), was re-constructed under the Knights of St. John between 1599 and 1603. This rebuilding came towards the end of Gozo's darkest period, when for two centuries, robbing Turks and Berber corsairs had harassed and pillaged the Maltese Islands.

After a short siege the crumbling medieval walls of the Citadel were overwhelmed and the defenders begged for an honourable capitulation. Tragically for the population, (then numbering around 5000), the surrender terms were far from honourable. With the exception of just 40 elderly and disabled citizens, the entire population of Gozo was chained and taken into slavery. It took nearly 50 years to re-populate the island and rebuild the Citadel in its present layout.



The Citadel today

Before you have fully passed under the archway into the Citadel, you will be welcomed by the majestic sight of Gozo Cathedral, across the small square at the top of a wide flight of steps guarded by two 17th-century bronze cannons.

A walk along the fortified ramparts is rewarded with a breath taking 360-degree panorama of Gozo's hills and valleys, villages and churches and a view right across the sea to Malta.

Only a couple of families live within the Citadel walls today and some old residences lie in ruins. However, a comprehensive restoration project is underway and in the meantime the cathedral square and the area around it remain perfectly intact. In the square you will find the magnificent baroque Cathedral of Gozo dedicated to Santa Marija, or more precisely the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; as well as the Law Courts and the Bishop's Palace.

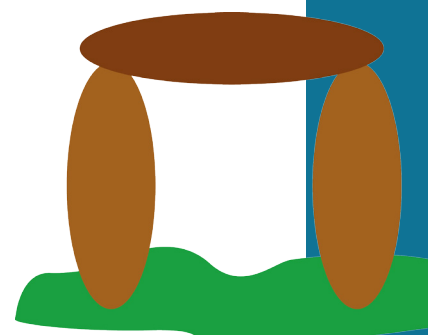
Very close by are several fascinating small museums: **The Cathedral Museum, the Museum of Archaeology, the Folklore Museum, the Gozo Nature Museum, the Old Prison, the Old Gunpowder Magazine, the Grain Silos, the Battery and the World War II Shelter.**

Along the winding streets you will find the historic Chapel of St. Joseph and a number of holy niches (shrines) and bass reliefs. Look out too for well-preserved Norman-style windows and arches. On the façade of historic houses and church buildings can be seen Coat-of-Arms, and it is worth noting that whilst some of the damage is due to the toll of time, some is the deliberate work of Napoleon's troops who briefly occupied the island at the end of the eighteenth century.



Suggestion:

Both Mdina and the Citadel provide a unique opportunity for a Treasure Hunt to be carried out. In this way, the cubs will be learning by doing and enjoying it all the way.



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



Activity: Cultural Visit



Objective: Making the cubs aware of the importance of these sites and the parts they played in Malta's history



Time: 2 – 4 hours



Outline: The cubs will be made aware of how our forefathers lived and relevant milestones in the history of Malta relating to Mdina. They will therefore understand more Malta's history and appreciate an important part of Malta's historical culture.

Prepare a treasure hunt in one of the above mentioned places. Have the cubs pretend they are tourists or the knights and give them several tasks to do, riddles to solve and places to visit. This will help them learn through fun.



Equipment: First Aid box, Water, Snack



Place: Mdina/Citadel - Gozo



Group Size: Pack



3rd Parties: Transport arrangements to visit the relevant sites.



ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



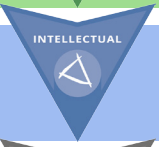
During the Activity:



– Taking an interest in the history of one's own country and the way our ancestors used to live. Doing a treasure hunt for this activity will also enhance the social interaction between the cubs and encourage teamwork.



– The cubs have to go around exploring the particular site on foot.



– Cub will be learning about the particular site and gathering historical knowledge. They also need to use their intelligence for the treasure hunt.



– When it comes to doing the treasure hunt and finding the answers to the clues, cubs have to use their mental creativity.



- At the end of the activity discuss with the cubs. They can mention the emotions their ancestors used to feel to live in those times and so relate to them. How going back in time and visiting such museums make them feel. Are they proud of what our ancestors did? What can we do to up keep their work? In addition you can discuss the treasure hunt and how it made them feel: happy, tired, proud, enthusiastic, successful, etc.



– A lot of places visited evoke the people's spiritual background at that particular time in history. In addition stopping to think about what those before us did and how it affected the present society can help the cubs realise that life is a cycle and that we need to appreciate what came before our life time and to do our best for those coming after us.

SILVER ARROW

