



# VALLETTA

COMMONWEALTH WALKWAY



## 1. CITY GATE

Most people enter Valletta through **City Gate**, the main entrance to Valletta, by crossing the wide dry ditch separating the fortress city from Floriana by way of a large walkway and entering between two modern interpretations of large demi-bastions, their stones quarried in Gozo. On each side are the great fortress walls that have protected Valletta for many centuries. There have been five city gates in total. The present one was designed by Renzo Piano, who is also the architect of the Shard in London. The bridge leads into Freedom Square at the top of Republic Street, formerly a market, but which now acts as a pedestrian open space. Behind the city walls are wide, shallow steps; the left steps lead to Hastings Gardens while the right lead to Castille Place. Upon entering Valletta, the visitor immediately comes face to face with the New Parliament Building as well as Pjazza Teatru Rjal, both of which were Renzo Piano projects. Pjazza Teatru Rjal is Valletta's open air venue for concerts and productions, developed from the ruins of the Royal Opera House, which was destroyed in a German bomb attack in April 1942. The venue was completed in 2013 and some columns for the Royal Opera House are still visible to this day.



## 2. THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING

On the 4th May 2015, **The New Parliament Building** was officially inaugurated and it has since served as the site for Parliamentary discussions. Like City Gate, it was designed by Renzo Piano and its stone was also quarried locally.

The building consists of two huge blocks of stone resting on slender columns. The northern block contains the Parliament chamber and the southern block the offices of the Members of Parliament, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The two blocks are separated by a central courtyard affording views to Saint James's Cavalier behind.

The façade is finished in solid stone, sculpted as if it has been eroded by the sun. The aim was to create architecture that fitted into the historical context.

**Saint John's Cavalier** (Saint John's Bastion) is one of the original barracks built to protect the inland side of Valletta in the 16th century. The original plan was to build nine, but only two were built: Saint John's Cavalier and Saint James's Cavalier, located behind the new Parliament Building. Both were designed by Francesco Laparelli da Cortona, sent to help the Order of the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem by Pope Pius V. Laparelli was

the architect who laid out the city plans, but it was his assistant, Maltese architect Glormu Cassar who finished the Cavalier. The Cavalier contained cannons and was specifically designed to protect Valletta from outside invaders while also providing a view of invaders if they managed to enter the city. It also served as accommodation for artillery men and horses.

The Cavalier was also used for military purposes by British armed forces during the Second World War. In 1967, the Maltese Government granted a 99-year lease to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta for use as its Embassy. The Cavalier was restored to its former glory by Roger de Giorgio.

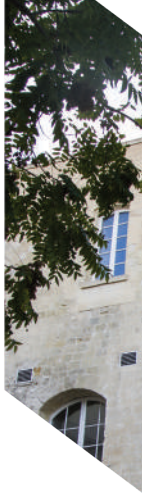


### 3. HASTINGS GARDENS

**Hastings Gardens** were built by the architect Adriano DeVina and named after Francis Edward Rawdon-Hastings, 1st Marquis of Hastings, KG (1754-1826), a former Governor-General of India who, following his resignation ended up serving as Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Malta from 1824 to 1826. He died at sea off the coast of Naples and was buried in this garden. Following his death, his right hand was cut off with instruction that it should be buried with his widow. The hand was buried clasped with hers in the kirk at Loudoun Castle in 1840.

The gardens overlook Floriana, Marsamxett Harbour and the grounds of the Phoenicia Hotel. The Sette Giugno Monument, which commemorates the death of four Maltese people during the 7th June 1919 following riots with British troops, was moved here from Pjazza San Gorg in 2010.

At the exit is a plinth on which once stood a 70- foot statue of Sir Frederick Cavendish Ponsonby (1787-1837), who succeeded Hastings as Governor of Malta until 1835. He was the father of Sir Henry Ponsonby, Private Secretary to Queen Victoria. The statue was destroyed by lightning in January 1864.







#### 4. FORTRESS BUILDERS - FORTIFICATIONS INTERPRETATION CENTRE

**Fortress Builders - Fortifications Interpretation Centre** explains Malta's military architecture and heritage. Unlike other museums in the city, the Fortifications Interpretation Centre does not focus on the fortress' structure as being associated with sieges and warfare; rather it focuses on the fortress as a protector of the citizens it houses. The museum archives the story of how the fortifications were developed and modified over the centuries and the various constructions of the architects, explaining the varied structures to be found around Malta. The museum contains well-made artifacts, many of them are the work of the curator, Stephen Spiteri, along with video installations, touch screens, information panels, games for children, and 3D puzzles, spread over three floors.

The roof offers a breath-taking view of Fort Manoel and Fort Tigne.

## 5. SAINT PAUL'S ANGLICAN PRO-CATHEDRAL

**Saint Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral**, with its tall spire, was built on the instructions of Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV, who spent the winter of 1838-39 in Valletta for her health, shortly after the King's death. Previously, Anglicans worshipped in a room in the Grandmaster's Palace and so she appealed to her niece, Queen Victoria, for funds to create a place of worship for Anglicans. Without waiting for a reply, she paid for it herself, laying the foundation stone on 20th March 1839.

The site was formally the Auberge d'Allemagne, home of the German Knights Hospitaller. The Cathedral was dedicated to Saint Paul the Apostle, who was shipwrecked in Malta in 59/60 AD. The final design was given to William Scamp, who had worked with Sir James Wyattville on restoration works at Windsor Castle.

The Cathedral's altar is at the West End of the structure. It survived serious bombing during the Second World War, a blessing considering its spire acted as a useful landmark for enemy bombers. It contains memorials dedicated to the Navy, Army, Air Force, the Merchant Navy Submariners, as well as to past Governors of Malta.

## 6. MANOEL THEATRE

**Manoel Theatre** was built in Old Theatre Street in 1731 and is the oldest theatre in the Commonwealth. It first opened its doors in 1732 with Scipione Maffei's production Merope. It is named after its founder, Antonio Manoel de Vilhena, the 66th Prince and Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Malta. When the new Royal Opera House was built in 1866, the Teatru Manoel became the haunt of beggars, who paid a penny a night to sleep there. It was later a dance hall, a cinema



and in World War II a refuge from bombing raids. The theatre has a horseshoe shaped auditorium with an oval ceiling and gilded boxes, in which Queen Adelaide watched a gala production of Lucia di Lammermoor in 1838. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II also attended a production here on her 1967 State Visit.



## 7. SAINT JOHN'S AMBULANCE HEADQUARTERS

**Saint John's Ambulance Headquarters**, located in Piazza Indipendenza, is a voluntary organisation with three branches: The Training Association, First Aid & Nursing and The Rescue Corps. They were formed by the original Knights of St John, whose eight-pointed cross dates back to 1120. The arms and points of the cross were associated with the four cardinal virtues - prudence, temperance, justice and fortitude and the eight beatitudes.

**The Auberge d'Aragon**, to the right, is one of seven auberges and was erected in 1571. It was occupied by the Knights of Saint John from Aragon who were entrusted with the defence of Saint Andrew's Bastion. It was designed by Glormu Cassar and sustained extensive damage in the 1693 Sicily earthquake. In 1798 it was taken over by the French, and later by the British in 1800. It was the office of the Prime Minister from 1924 until 1971 and the 1964 Independence documents were drafted here. Since 2013, it housed the Ministry for European Affairs and Implementation of the Electoral Manifesto.

## 8. FORT SAINT ELMO

**Fort Saint Elmo** was built in 1552 as a star fort, guarding the entrance to the Grand Harbour. In 1565 it withstood Turkish attacks during the Great Siege for 28 days, but eventually fell on 23rd June to continued bombardment by the Turks. The following year, the ruined fort was rebuilt. It was later attacked by the Italians and Germans in the Second World War, and sustained damage during the Italian seaborne attack of 26th July 1941. It has recently been restored.

Since 1975, it has contained the National War Museum, which has recently been re-opened. The museum documents the story of Malta's conflicts from the Bronze Age, to the Great Siege of 1565, as well as the struggle between 1940 and 1943. The George Cross bestowed on the island by King George VI is displayed here.



## 9. THE MALTA SIEGE BELL WAR MEMORIAL

**The Malta Siege Bell War Memorial** was unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in May 1992 on the 50th anniversary of the Siege of Malta to commemorate all those who died between 1940 and 1943, whether in Malta or in the many convoys that were sent to Malta to relieve the island. The Memorial is made up of two parts, both of which were designed by the British sculptor, Michael Sandle, RA.





The Bell Tower, which is 50 metres high, contains the Santa Maria Bell, which commemorates the Pedestal Convoy that arrived from Gibraltar on 15th August 1942, the day of the feast of Santa Maria. The convoy brought 55,000 tons of vital supplies to Malta, enabling the besieged island to fight on for several months more, despite the sinking of an aircraft carrier, a destroyer, two cruisers and nine merchant vessels. The tanker, Ohio, heavily torpedoed, limped into the Grand Harbour between two destroyers.

The other part of the memorial is a bronze figure of a recumbent corpse (6 metres long), wrapped in a shroud, reaching out towards the Grand Harbour, symbolising the 7,000 people who lost their lives during the Second World War.

## 10. THE LOWER BARRAKKA GARDENS

**The Lower Barrakka Gardens** offer a stunning view of the Santa Maria Bell, the Grand Harbour and the Breakwater. Like the Upper Barrakka Gardens, there is an open arcade, which is now a terrace. The garden houses numerous commemorative plaques recording the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring, Giuseppe Garibaldi and the 50th anniversary of the European Union.

In the centre of the garden is a monument in the form of an ancient Greek Doric temple, dedicated to the memory of Rear-Admiral Sir Alexander Ball, Bt (1757-1809). He led the two-year blockade of Malta between 1798 and 1800, following which the French garrison was starved into submission. The force employed was small, made up of 500 English and Portuguese marines and 1,500 Maltese who hated the French and revered Ball. From 1801 until his death, he served as Governor of Malta. He was instrumental in persuading the Maltese to allow Britain to use Malta as a naval base and trading port. Some English settlers thought he was too lenient with the Maltese, but he credited the latter with the British victory of 1800. In turn, the Maltese adored him.



## 11. VICTORIA GATE

**Victoria Gate** is one of the many structures throughout the Commonwealth which was dedicated to Queen Victoria's reign. This gate replaced an earlier gate called del Monte Gate, following its construction in 1569 by Grand Master Pierre de Monte, a single arch gate with a drawbridge.

Sir Arthur Borton, Governor of Malta, laid the foundation to the present gate with twin arches in 1884. It was built by Emmanuel Galizia and opened to the public the following year. Carriages and riders could easily pass through the wider main arches while pedestrians used the smaller passages on either side. The entrances are adorned by the coat of arms of Malta and Valletta, with the royal arms of Queen Victoria positioned in the centre.

In 1935, the year of King George V's Silver Jubilee, the gates were adorned by a huge crown with the dates 1910 & 1935.

## ★ CUSTOMS HOUSE

**Customs House** was built in 1774 by local architect Giuseppe Bonnici. The House has an ancient history and always played an important role to provide essential services to traders and consumers. Being one of the oldest government departments its role was to control all imports and exports



of goods. This marker was also unveiled by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in the presence of the Honourable Minister for Tourism Edward Zammit Lewis on the 28th November 2015, during her last visit in Malta. Moreover, this building was used as a gateway to all the dignitaries coming to Malta.

## 12. UPPER BARRAKKA GARDENS

**Upper Barrakka Gardens**, like the Lower Barrakka Gardens, offer an impressive view of the Grand Harbour and the Three Cities, as well as Fort Saint Angelo in the distance. The gardens were built above the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Bastion by the Italians in 1775 for the Knights of the Italian langue to enjoy at the end of the day. The stone

arcades were originally roofed, but the top was later removed following the Rising of the Priests in 1775. Below the gardens is the Saluting Battery where cannons are fired each day, at noon.

The gardens contain a 2003 replica of Les Gavroches, a fine representation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, originally made by the Maltese sculptor, Antonio Sciortino in 1907. There is a bust of the British statesman, Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965) and a statue of the fourth Prime Minister of Malta, Lord Strickland (1861-1940), again by Sciortino.

From 1905 until 1972 the gardens could be reached by lift from the port, but this was later considered too dangerous to use. Since 2012 a new lift has been built, catering for the many cruise passengers who enter Valletta via the Grand Harbour.



### 13. AUBERGE DE CASTILLE

**Auberge de Castille** has been the office of the Prime Minister in Valletta since March 1972 when Dom Mintoff was Malta's eighth Prime Minister. It is one of the seven auberges, originally housing the langue of Castile and León and Portugal. It is situated at the highest point of Valletta.

The first version was built between 1571 and 1574 by Glormu Cassar. It was then rebuilt between 1741 and 1745 by Andrea Belli. In 1798, under French occupation, the Spanish Knights were evicted.

From 1805 the Auberge was the Headquarters of the British Armed Forces in Malta. During the war, the Gunners were stationed here and the then Governor of Malta, General Sir William Dobbie, arranged a daily Changing of the Guard outside the Auberge to inspire the Maltese people.

Now that it is the Prime Minister's office, there is a Cabinet meeting held here every Tuesday. The Auberge was restored between 2009 and 2014, and the square outside the Castille Place, was completely remodelled in 2015.



## 14. STATUE OF JEAN PARISOT DE VALETTE

**Statue of Jean Parisot de Valette** was made of bronze by Joseph Chetcuti and given by Lombard Bank in 2012. He holds a sword in one hand and the plans for Valletta in the other.

Jean Parisot de Valette (1495-1568) was the hero of the Great Siege of 1565. He was a French nobleman who served as 49th Grand Master of the Order of Malta from 1557, and he was part of the Langue de Provence.

After the Fort Saint Elmo, he managed to retain Birgu and Isla, despite being outnumbered by 30,000 Ottoman soldiers. On the 28th March 1566, he laid the foundation stone for Valletta, the new city which was eventually named after him. He died on the 21st August 1568, and is buried in the crypt of Saint John's Co-Cathedral.





## 15. NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY

**National Museum of Archaeology** is housed in the Auberge de Provence, built in the Baroque style in 1751 by Glormu Cassar. It contains a particularly fine Grand Salon on the first floor, with painted walls and a ceiling with wooden beams. It was previously used by the Knights of Malta as a refectory and banqueting hall. Presently, it is used to host temporary exhibitions.

The museum's permanent collection includes artefacts dating back to Malta's Neolithic period. Artefacts include the Sleeping Lady and Venus of Malta from the Bronze Age, as well as numerous treasures from the Phoenician period. The first floor houses artefacts from the Roman period.

This museum gives a good introduction to the pre-history of Malta. It was originally opened as the National Museum in 1958 with the archaeological collection on the ground floor and fine arts on the first floor, but in 1974 the fine arts collection was moved to the National Museum of Fine Arts in South Street. The museum was greatly renovated in 1998.



## 16. SAINT JOHN'S CO-CATHEDRAL

**Saint John's Co-Cathedral** was built by the Knights of Malta between 1573 and 1578. It was designed by Glormu Cassar. Its exterior is severe, having been built soon after the Great Siege, but its interior is ornate and was heavily gilded by the Calabrian artist, Mattia Preti.

The marble floor bears the elaborate tombstones of some 375 Knights and Officers of the Order of Malta, the more significant ones being closest to the altar. Jean Parisot de Valette and others are buried in the crypt. The altar was designed by Melchiorre Cafà and finished by Giuseppe Mazzuoli.

The Cathedral contains eight side chapels, each one dedicated to the patron saint of the eight Langues. There is also a museum area containing fine tapestries, paintings and objets d'art. In the Oratory is the 1608 painting of The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, the only work that Caravaggio ever signed. Originally the convent church of the Knights of Saint John, it soon rivalled Saint Paul's Cathedral in Mdina. In the 1820s it became a Co-Cathedral.



## 17. REPUBLIC SQUARE

**Republic Square** was named after Malta was declared a Republic in 1974. Originally called Piazza Tesoreria, it is now known amongst the locals as Pjazza Re ina, because of Queen Victoria's statue, which was placed here in 1891.

Behind the statue is the Biblioteca, the National Library of Malta, designed by the Polish Italian artist, Steffano Ittar, and completed in 1796. It was originally called the Biblioteca Tanseana because the collection of Louis Guérin de Tencin formed the main part of the library. It was finally opened in 1812 and has been called the National Library of Malta since 1976.



## 18. THE GRANDMASTER'S PALACE

**The Grandmaster's Palace** in Saint George's Square is now the President's Office in Valletta. Formerly it served as the Governor of Malta's Valletta office as well as the Parliament building. It was badly bombed during the Second World War. It also housed the Malta Legislative Assembly and at one time was the Prime Minister's office.

It was designed by Glormu Cassar and was originally the Auberge d' Italy.

The exterior walls of the Palace contain a number of plaques, including a commemorative plaque of King George VI awarding the island the George Cross in 1943. Two guards guard the entrance and change at intervals.

Part of the palace is open to the public as a museum. This includes the Armoury which houses a collection of 6,000 spears, swords and shields, amongst other weaponry used in the days of the Knights. The Palace houses a Throne Room, formerly the Supreme Council Hall, known as the Hall of Saint Michael and Saint George during the British Administration. Here the President of Malta holds state functions.

## 19. CASA ROCCA PICCOLA

**The Casa Rocca Piccola** is a private palace, built in 1580. It is open to the public and served as a prime example of how a Maltese family of distinction lived at that time. It is one of the few remaining houses in Valletta which have retained their original style. The 9th Marquis de Piro, who was born in 1941, resided in this house. It is named after Don Pietro La Rocca, Admiral of the Order of Saint John in the Langue of Italy. In 1788 the house was sold to a Maltese nobleman.

There are ten principal rooms on the piano nobile, including the Grand Salon, a chapel, a winter dining room, an archive room, a cabinet room, two bedrooms and a library. Downstairs is the summer dining room, an art nouveau addition to the house, with French windows leading into a courtyard.



Amongst its many treasures, Casa Rocca Piccola also houses a collection of costumes and it is possible to visit the underground shelters in which around 180 people could seek refuge during the bombing of Valetta in the Second World War.

## 20. THE COLLEGIATE PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT PAUL'S SHIPWRECK

**The Collegiate Parish Church of Saint Paul's Shipwreck** is in Saint Paul's Street leading towards the Grand Harbour. It is Roman Catholic, one of Malta's oldest churches, and was designed by Girolamo Cassar in 1570 and completed by 1582. The church was then given to the Jesuit fathers and a new church built. The façade was rebuilt by Nicola Zammit in 1885.

The church commemorates the shipwreck of Saint Paul the Apostle on the island in 59/60 AD, as described in Acts 28, verse 1, in which Saint Luke wrote: "We found that the island was called Melita." Saint Paul brought Christianity to the Maltese Islands when he converted the then pagan nation. The church contains several paintings depicting the saint's life by Attilio Palombi. It is also home to a jewelled reliquary containing a relic of the saint's right wrist along with a piece of the column from San Paolo alle Tre Fontane on which he was said to have been martyred in Rome. The church also houses a wooden statue of Saint Paul, carved in 1659 by Melchiorre Cafà.



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MINISTRY FOR TOURISM



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