



Malta

**A travel report about the student trip
of the Gymnasium Donauwörth
11. - 16.09.2016**



Day 1 - Arrival

The long awaited school trip finally begins

The long awaited school trip to Malta began early on Sunday morning. Out of the 34 students participating, 15 of us had spent the last year planning the trip in the P-Seminar "Malta- an island between World Heritage Sites and mass tourism".

For quite a few of us, it was our first time flying. Our plane arrived on the island without any hiccups around midday, from which a coach took us through beautiful sandstone towns to our accommodation, "The Bayview Hotel", in Sliema. Since we weren't able to check-in for another hour, we left our suitcases and went to explore the neighbourhood. While we organised a boat trip around the harbour, Mr Graminger educated us on the history and culture of the island.



We were then able to go up to our 7-person apartments and unwind, before those who wanted to went on a harbour cruise around some of the island. Though it was difficult to understand the commentary coming through the speaker, we were able to see beautiful and Mediterranean cities and towns along the coastline in perfect weather, which contrasted starkly to the industrial dockyards near Valletta.

Our buffet-style dinner was provided by the hotel, after which we ended the evening by splitting into small groups and exploring the area of the nearby St. Julians.



Day 2 - Mdina

Malta in a box – A little tour to the best-known tourist landmarks of the Mediterranean island

On the following day, we had the opportunity to go to the nearest supermarket after breakfast, in order to buy some water bottles. That was quite important since we had already struggled with the highly humid climate of Malta on the first day. Then we started our day trip with the coach.



Cathedral of Mdina

The first destination was the city of Mdina. After a short walk through the city of Rabat located nearby, we reached “The silent City” Mdina. The city gate and the mighty walls around Mdina gave us a little impression of what we would see inside. The Cathedral and its big forecourt looked really imposing and were in contrast to the narrow streets of the city. Another highlight was the magnificent panoramic view over Malta from the city wall that could be enjoyed while having some Maltese chocolate cake in the popular café Fontanella. After leaving dreamy Mdina, we continued our trip to the south-west coast of

Malta where we gazed at the steep Maltese coast, the Dingli Cliffs. Their highest point is 253 meters above the sea. We then went on to the Blue Grotto, which we visited together with other caves on colourful and traditional Luzzu boats. Inside these caves, we could see some corals and also a special stalagmite that was shaped like a Madonna figure. The crystal clear and azure blue water was really impressive. As it was really warm on that day, we were spontaneously allowed to swim a bit and enjoy the cool water. Shortly after that, we traveled to our last destination of the day on the east coast. In the scenic fishing village of Marsaxlokk, which translates to “Port of the warm wind”, everyone could relax by going for a walk. The town boasts a lot of Luzzu boats due to its population of fishermen. Together with the grand church, it was a perfect photographic scene. Afterwards, we went back to our apartments, full with impressions, but also tired.



Blue Grotto



Marsaxlokk

Day 3 - Gozo

Miracles of nature, time travelling and heavenly beaches.

A trip to Malta's little sister island

Our stay on Malta's neighbouring island Gozo can be seen as an escape from mass tourism and environmental pollution. An escape leading us to an impressive oasis of silence and Mediterranean atmosphere. An escape presenting us the little island as an historic, cultural and rural paradise.

After a 45-minute bus ride along the Maltese coast, we left the port of Cirkewwa on a ferry, passed the impressive rocky islands of Comino and Cominotto and headed to the castles and cathedrals of Malta's little sister.

Initially, our coach took us to the geological phenomenon "Azure Window" while our seminar teacher and tour guide, Mr Graminger, gave us some general information on the island's history and culture. When we saw the spectacular, 50-metre-high natural arch formed by water and wind, we became curious and started an adventurous trip along the azure-blue sea.



As all roads on Gozo lead to Victoria, we went on to the island's capital passing the mainly unspoilt landscape and lots of small alleys before we arrived at the citadel which is of historical significance and gives still a powerful impression.

The on-coming traffic in a one way road and the slow bus journey, which wouldn't have been possible without sounding the horn, showed us a Maltese saying that is obviously more important than any road traffic regulation: "Maltese people don't drive on the right, they don't drive on the left either, they drive in the shade!"

After our arrival we had the unique opportunity to visit an audio-visual introduction in a brand new 14-million-Euro entrance hall mostly financed by the European Union about the rich history of the citadel spanning more than 3500 years. While walking around the citadel walls, we had a breath-taking view of the city and its marketplace called "it-Tokk". The interesting shopping facilities and renowned restaurants aroused our interest, so that we used our leisure time to discover them afterwards.

In the afternoon, we went on travelling through Gozo's history by inspecting the astounding neolithic temple complex of Ġgantija and an exhibition on the 6000-year-old religious monument and its history.

To end this impressive day in a relaxed atmosphere, we decided to have a short trip to Ramla Bay, a dreamlike red sandy beach surrounded by dunes and tamarisks below the cave of Calypso. All of us were nearly as overwhelmed by the beauty of the beach as the hero Odysseus must have been when he met the sea nymph at this magnificent place. Swimming in the lovely sea offered us the chance to think once more about all the impressions gathered on Gozo in the breath-taking, late-summery, Maltese coastal landscape before we had to return to our apartments. What a wonderful day!



Day 4 - Valletta

A day in the city that brings history back to life - a must-do for all Malta visitors.

On this day it was also time for us to discover something new: the capital city Valletta. We wanted to meet our travel guide at the city gate, but as we were a little bit early he had not arrived there yet. This was our chance to look around in the city in small groups for about half an hour to get some first impressions.



St. John's Co-Cathedral

When we met again it was not only our guide who had arrived, but also thousands of people who packed the wonderful city. We went to St. John's Co-Cathedral first, which is one of the most beautifully furnished cathedrals in the Mediterranean area. In this cathedral we saw the famous piece of art "The decapitation of John the Baptist" by Michelangelo Merisi de Caravaggio, which is one of his masterpieces.

Afterwards we visited the Grandmasters Palace, where now a days sometimes official state receptions take place.

Finally we went to the Barrakka Gardens, which are located on the highest point of the city walls of Valletta. From here we had an outstanding view across the Great Harbour and as we were there exactly at 12 o'clock midday, we witnessed the daily firing of the cannons.

From that moment one part of our group had the rest of the day at their disposal. The other part had the chance to ask the Maltese guide some critical questions about the topic of tourism while they were sitting in the Hasting Gardens.

At the very beginning we got to know that since 1970 masses of tourists have been coming to the small Mediterranean island - although the population is not that much impressed by it. As the travel guide told us, his idea for solving the problem would be to set a tolerable yearly limit to the numbers, as a middle way between none and too many tourists. However, the government does not care about the opinion of the Maltese as there is a lot of money in tourism.

During several bus rides we also saw how trash was thrown into big stone quarries and so we asked him if tourists made the trash problem worse. Interestingly, he told us that this was precisely because they had such pits where they can dump in their trash. At this point we realised that there is a massive lack of environmentally friendly behaviour in Malta, as there is no sign of waste separation and daily large amounts of waste are thrown on the streets.

Furthermore, we expected renewable sources of energy like sun, water or air to be used for electricity generation on an island in the Mediterranean Sea. Surprisingly, that's not the case as in Malta only oil is used for energy production.

From this discussion you could clearly see that protection of the environment is largely a unknown topic in Malta. Year by year more of the paradise atmosphere will be destroyed so that a decrease of tourism in Malta is to be suspected.

Afterwards, the seminar participants also had three hours left for lunch or strolling around before we left the city walls of Valletta behind us by boat.



Barrakka Gardens

Day 5 - Comino

Bathing experience and relaxation in paradise, goose-pimples and cool down in the catacombs – a perfect conclusion of our students' trip

In order to reach the today's destination, the island of Comino at the north coast of Malta, we went to the ferry port of Cirkewwa.

From there we took a rather small sail to the Blue Lagoon, a heavenly gorgeous part of the island, which surprisingly wasn't too crowded yet. Although the promised beach was the size of only a few square metres, it would have been a sin not to go for a swim in the amazingly turquoise water and the perfect weather.

As in the course of the morning hundreds of tourists were arriving on huge ferries, the silent paradise became full. Hence there was hardly any protest from the students when it was time to leave.



Blue Lagoon



Blue Lagoon

After returning to Malta, our coach took us to Rabat, where we focused on visiting the Saint Paul's Catacombs, which once had been made for the burial of over 1400 Christians and Jews from 350 AD on. Today they gave us the welcome possibility to cool down from the blazing sunshine while gathering some cultural impressions.

Back at Sliema, especially some girls took the opportunity to become Mediterranean shopping queens by blowing their money in a shopping mall at Tigné Point.

In the evening, the majority of the group decided to watch the exclusive dress rehearsal of the Maltese musical "Belliegha- Rockin' the Underworld" in the centre of Valletta which we had been spontaneously invited to the day before. The fantastic nightly scenery and the breath-taking performance of the both the actors and the musicians along with a brilliant selection of songs ranging from One Republic up to Metallica let us all go goose-pimply, though the temperature was still pleasant- the perfect conclusion of a successful student's trip to Malta.



Saint Paul Catacombs