

MARIA MUSCAT AND SARAH MUSCAT AZZOPARDI

MALTA CONFIDENTIAL

HIDDEN GEMS
LOVED BY LOCALS



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

#01

THREE HOTELS WE REALLY LIKE

> Iniala Harbour House

Perched above the iconic St Barbara Bastion, Iniala Harbour House has to be one of the best places to stay in Valletta. The hotel enjoys an exceptional location on a quiet street – among the most beautiful in the city – just a three-minute walk from the cathedral, yet safely removed from the tourist crowds.

The street is lined with beautifully restored traditional houses overlooking the Grand Harbour and ‘the Three Cities’, offering spectacular views.

Naturally, you should opt for a harbour-facing room. It is a true pleasure and privilege to wake up to a view you will never tire of, then slip into the bathtub to finish waking up while taking in that same scenery before heading down for brunch at the hotel’s two-Michelin-starred restaurant, ION Harbour (see page 26).

© JEAN MARC ZERAFÀ



INIALA HARBOUR HOUSE
10, ST BARBARA BASTION
VALLETTA



+356 2166 1111

inialamalta.com
Instagram: @inialavalletta





© DAVID CURRAN



03

A SUMPTUOUS AND UNEXPECTED ROOM

In one of the earliest palazzos to be built in Valletta, Palazzo de La Salle (headquarters of the Malta Society of Arts), the magnificent Sala dei Cavalieri ('Knights' Hall') is undoubtedly the palace's hidden gem.

Often referred to as the Grand Masters' Hall, this chamber was added to the palazzo over 100 years after its construction in 1732.

THE MALTA SOCIETY OF ARTS
PALAZZO DE LA SALLE
219, REPUBLIC STREET
VALLETTA



+356 2124 4339 / +356 2124 4400

Free entry

artsmalta.org
info@artsmalta.org
Instagram: @maltasocietyofarts



Likely intended as an ornate secular space commemorating the de La Salle family and its connection with the Order of St John, the room was originally an open-air terrace. The vaulted ceiling that now covers it boasts a stunning decorative scheme featuring an allegorical figure of Malta. Several Grand Masters look down from gilded busts and oil paintings, alongside a life-size gilded sculpture of St John the Baptist. Piano recitals are held here regularly. The palazzo also hosts regular art exhibitions.





04

THE BEST ORANGE JUICE OF YOUR LIFE?

While **Tal-Kafè** coffee house, on the corner of St Christopher Street and St Paul Street, serves excellent coffee, the real star is the freshly squeezed orange juice, possibly the best you will ever taste.

With the perfect balance between sweet and tangy, the true Maltese orange is a zesty delight. Primarily in season from December to April, the fruit is something of an unsung hero, and few local places serve it exclusively any more. Intense in flavour and aroma, it is rarely exported, as its thin skin bruises easily.



 **TAL-KAFÈ**
162, ST CHRISTOPHER STREET
VALLETTA



Closed on Sundays

Instagram: @tal_kafe



The orange is cultivated extensively in private gardens across Malta, particularly in Lija, Attard and Balzan – known collectively as ‘the Three Villages’ – where the soil composition favours citrus and has done so since the ninth and tenth centuries, when the fruit trees were introduced to the island by the Arabs.

Housed in a former wine tavern dating back to 1880, the café shares the premises with a 135-year-old shop, **Tal-Hwawar**, which sells herbs and spices.

TAL-HWAWAR
161, ST CHRISTOPHER STREET
VALLETTA

+356 2123 6553



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A BEAUTIFUL SECLUDED SWIMMING SPOT

While the Blue Grotto in Żurrieq is splendid, it can become extremely busy in the summer months. For the same aqua-marine waters, but with only a handful of visitors, there is an alternative a short distance from the grotto: a secluded rocky swimming spot that requires a 20-minute hike to get there.

The hike passes through Wied Babu, one of the lushest valleys in Malta, and rewards your efforts with a beautiful swim where the gorge meets the sea.

There is no official entrance to the valley: you will need to look out for a hidden metal ladder leading down over a railing on the main road towards the Blue Grotto. Once you have climbed over, make your way down carefully in the direction of the coast. The hike is somewhat challenging in parts, making it best suited to adventure lovers (the valley is also popular for rock climbing and abseiling), but the reward at the end is well worth the effort.

📍 **WIED BABU
ŻURRIEQ**



Access from the main road leading to the Blue Grotto
20-minute hike to reach the swimming spot



17

A TRULY STUNNING NATURAL SITE

Il-Maqluba is a striking natural sinkhole in Qrendi, steeped in legend, history and unique natural beauty. This dense scrubland is a designated Tree Protection Area, where endemic flora and fauna thrive. The dramatic landscape can be admired from a belvedere halfway down the sinkhole. Because of the thick overgrowth, the lowest level cannot be accessed, which only adds to the mysterious atmosphere of the site.

Malta's own 'Upside Down', Il-Maqluba – literally meaning 'the overturned' – is a geological attraction formed during a severe storm in 1343, when the porous limestone gave way, creating a 'doline'.



IL-MAQLUBA



Open 24/7

Bus 74 from Valletta stops at 'Maqluba' stop in Il-Maqluba Square

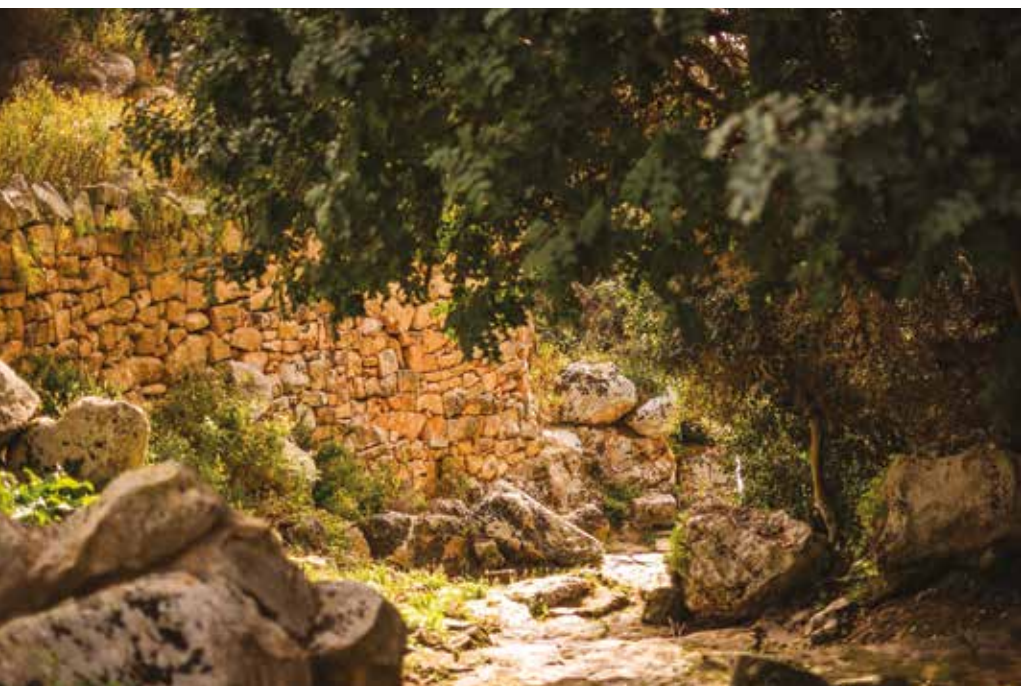




According to legend, the sinful ways of the people of the hamlet of Hal-Lew angered God to such an extent that he sent word of his displeasure through a virtuous woman who lived there. The warning fell on deaf ears, and so he resorted to extreme measures. The land swallowed the hamlet whole, sparing only the messenger.

Further legends claim that angels – or even a giant – cleared away the remains of the destroyed village by hurling them some 5 kilometres out to sea, thus forming the nearby island of Filfla.

Adding to the site's historical significance is one of two chapels dedicated to the Martyrdom of St Matthew the Apostle, perched on the edge of the Il-Maqluba pit. It is believed to be one of the oldest crypts in the Maltese Islands.



21

STEP INSIDE ONE OF MALTA'S MOST BEAUTIFUL PRIVATE RESIDENCES

We have Justine Pergola, daughter of the Baroness of Tabria, to thank for opening the doors of her 18th-century palace, one of Malta's finest private residences, to the public. Whilst the interiors are spectacular, it is the palace's enclosed Italian-style gardens that are the highlight of the visit.

To make the experience last a little longer, you can choose to have tea, enjoy lunch at the restaurant, treat yourself to a private tour or sip a cocktail, in addition to the (free) stroll through the gardens and a peek inside the charming conservatory.



PALAZZO PARISIO
VICTORY SQUARE
NAXXAR

+356 2141 2461

Closed on Mondays
Free entry to the gardens
Restaurant: booking recommended



palazzoparisio.com
info@palazzoparisio.com
Instagram: @palazzoparisio



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#27

RESTAURANTS AND BARS WITH A VIEW IN GOZO

These unassuming spots on the sister island combine a great local experience with exceptional views.

> Gleneagles Bar

Something of a Gozitan institution, the Gleneagles Bar, set on the hill overlooking Gozo's main port, takes its name from the first Gozo ferry line ship. Run by affable brothers Tony and Sammy, it serves as an essential pit stop and meeting place for a diverse crowd, thanks to its friendly service, eclectic décor and unmatched harbour views.



GLENEAGLES BAR
10, VICTORY STREET
MĠARR HARBOUR, GOZO



+356 2155 6543

Daily 3pm-midnight



> Francesco's

Housed within a band club in the main square of Żebbuġ, Gozo, Francesco's enjoys one of the most majestic views on the island from its sunny terrace.

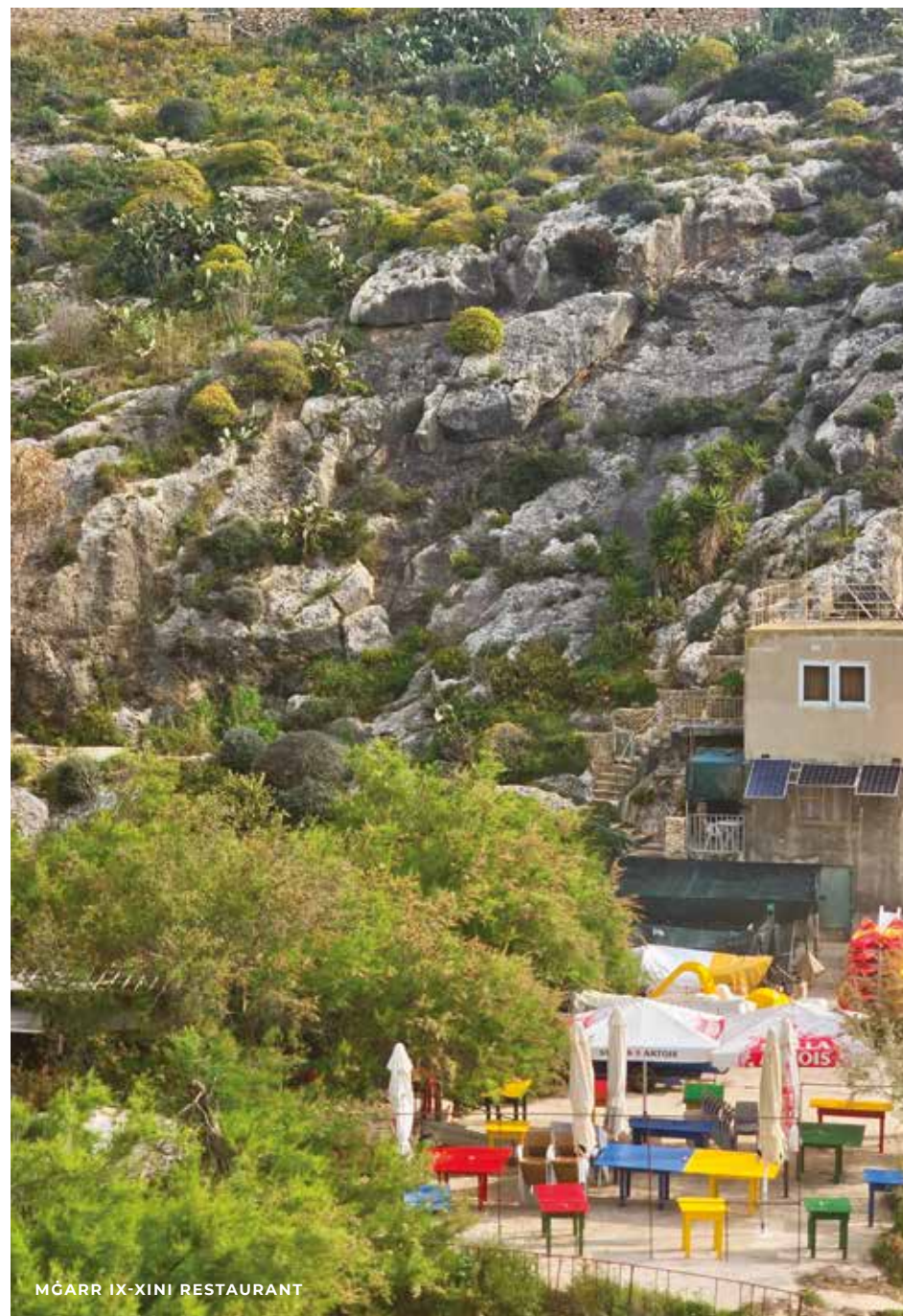
While it is best known for its inexpensive and cheerful pizza menu, what many do not realise is that it offers an authentic local lunch experience on Sundays, with a selection of traditional roast dishes available until they run out.

 FRANCESCO'S ASSUMPTION SQUARE ŻEBBUĠ, GOZO	
+356 2155 9568	Friday and Saturday evenings until 10.30pm and all day Sunday until 10pm

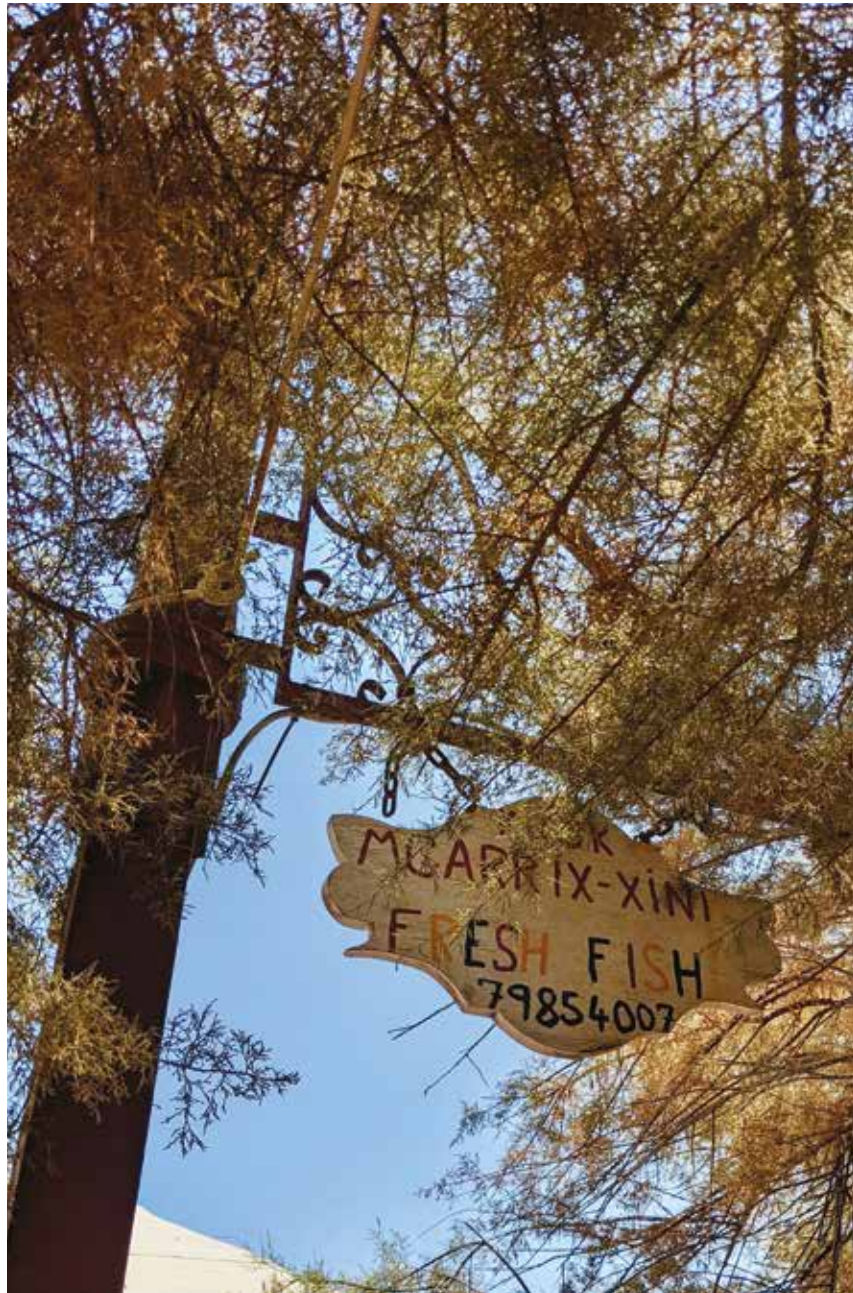
> Mġarr ix-Xini Restaurant

Known by a few names, including Rew Rew and Restaurant ix-Xini, this establishment, run by a local couple, is little more than a beach shack, but its location is hard to beat. Set in a small bay within one of the most beautiful inlets in Gozo, you may recognise it from the film *By the Sea*, starring Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. The food is simple and unfussy, comprising fresh fish and seafood cooked in the open air, and while the place is a little rough around the edges, it is perfect for a leisurely, pine-shaded lunch overlooking the sea.

 MĠARR IX-XINI RESTAURANT 27CC+5CF SANNAT	 
+356 7985 4007	Daily 11am-5pm in summer



MĠARR IX-XINI RESTAURANT



MCARRIX-XINI RESTAURANT

MALTA

WE TESTED 1,000 PLACES, AND CHOSE ONLY THE BEST

A hidden dance club; spectacular gardens tucked away from view; Valletta's finest off-the-beaten-track restaurants; secluded beaches known only to insiders; how to experience Comino and Gozo without the crowds; where to stay in the island's most beautiful hotels; the coolest spots for a bite or a drink; dine under the stars in a private olive grove; taste the best orange juice of your life ...

Hidden hotels, outstanding restaurants, secret bars, off-the-radar strolls ... In this guide you'll find a carefully curated, eclectic selection for every budget. Designed for both travellers and locals, it reveals handpicked addresses chosen by local writers – each place a gateway to discovery, far from the crowds and off the beaten path. A fresh take on the art of travel.

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