

**V.I8** VALLETTA  
EUROPEAN CAPITAL  
OF CULTURE 2018

WELCOME TO VALLETTA 2018



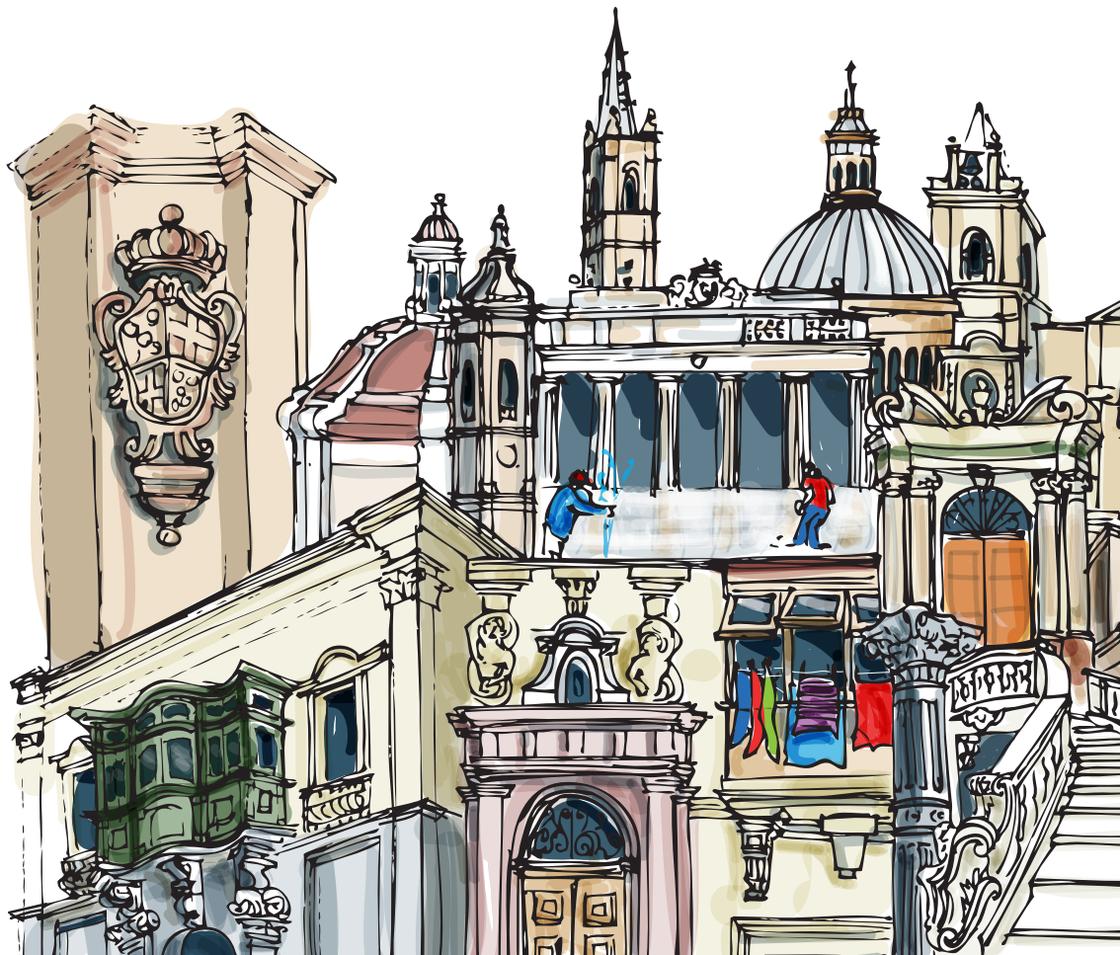


On the way to Europe celebrating the Maltese cultural nexus as European Capital of Culture, the occasions where we come together to enjoy our city, your city, through novel experiences as well as relive our traditions anew are growing.

Plans and preparations for the programme for the year itself are well underway, while many events, activities and festivals are leading us there. The Valletta 2018 Foundation, which is the national organising body for the hosting of the title in Malta, is proud of your contribution to this project rooted in local realities, which are both European and Mediterranean, and that will have an international reach. The success of Valletta 2018 lies in the process of accessibility, inclusion and participation, bringing people together, while bridging borders and differences, with a firm and clear commitment to a delivery of excellence.

It is for this reason that we are proud to be leading the Valletta 2018 Foundation into making Valletta 2018 happen, today, tomorrow, and for years to come.

**Jason Micallef**  
Chairman





As one would expect from a Knights of St John major project, Valletta is embellished by a good number of churches and palaces. Each with its particular attraction. From behind the austere facade, St John's Co-Cathedral's remarkable treasures and masterpieces overshadow the rest. The first building inside the new city, however, was the Our Lady of Victories church, (1573-78). 22 other churches were eventually built in Valletta, two catering for the Protestant minority.



## CHURCHES + PALACES

The Grandmaster's Palace, with its splendid Armoury, the tapestries and frescoes of centuries ago, is the biggest and most impressive of the palaces of Valletta. From the Auberge de Castille and the Auberge d'Aragon to Palazzo Parisio and Palazzo Ferreria, a walk in the city is a unique cultural and historical experience...

Valletta was one of the first planned cities of Europe. The Knights made sure its architectural beauty is complemented by the cool, fresh air of its gardens. The Upper and Lower Barrakka Gardens offer panoramic views of Grand Harbour and the Three Cities region of Cottonera. At the other end of the peninsula one finds Hastings Gardens. All of them have paths lined with monuments and plaques paying tribute to various personalities and significant events from Maltese history.

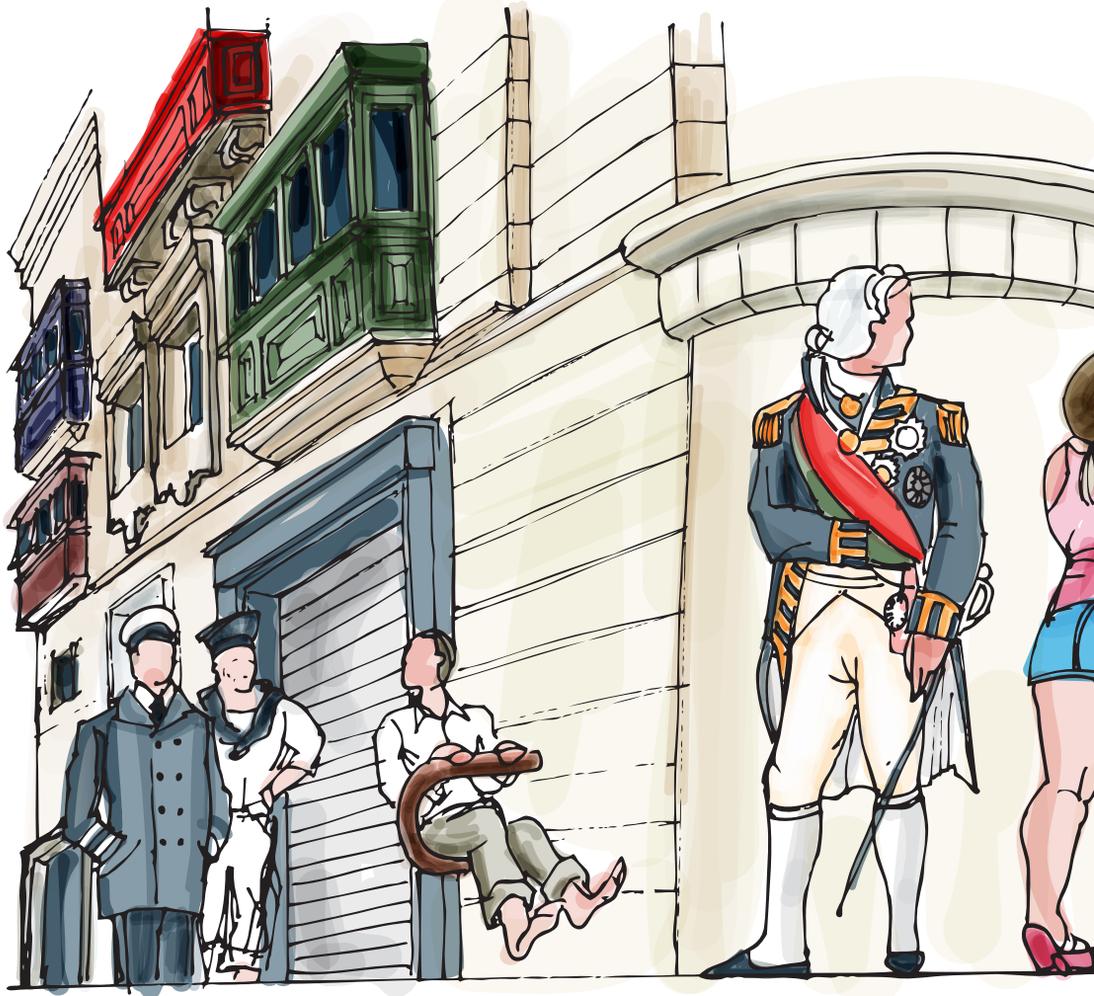
## GARDENS, THEATRES + FORTIFICATIONS

Valletta's Teatru Manoel is a national jewel, and Europe's third-oldest working theatre. The best of the world's actors, artists and musicians have, over the centuries, graced its stage. The famous old Royal Opera House, destroyed by a WWII bomb, has been replaced by a new venue designed by world-renowned architect Renzo Piano. Another major theatre can be found inside the Mediterranean Congress Centre (MCC).

As a fortified city, Valletta has at the tip of its peninsula the historic Fort St Elmo. A watchtower existed on this point even before the advent of the Knights (1530). St James Cavalier, a raised platform on which guns were placed to defend the city from an inland attack, was the work of Francesco Laparelli and Ġlormu Cassar. Today it houses the Centre for Creativity.









Down from Merchants Street, at the corner with St John's Street, on the right hand side there is a large metal hook jutting out of the wall. It is said the hook was originally installed in order to hoist the bells of the newly-constructed St John's Co-Cathedral. Much later, during the British era, every Royal Navy midshipman aspiring to become an officer had to pass through this hook, or be doomed to failure. Legend has it that one such youngster who underwent this experience was Horatio Nelson. It was a physical test that still offers a challenge today!



## THE HOOK + NELSON'S TEST

A few metres further up, stands what has been said to be a sort of pillory dating back to the times of the Knights. Exposed and tied to it, the poor criminal was then the target of passers-by who hurled things and insults at him.

Ġan Anton Vassallo, a Maltese poet who was born, lived, died and was buried in Valletta, is mostly famous for his “Tifhira Lil Malta” (A Tribute to Malta). He never overlooked his Valletta roots. In many of his narrative verse, lyrics, rhymed tales and satirical poems, Vassallo, who was born on June 6, 1817, gives one vivid picture after another of life in the Capital during the 19th Century. Many critics consider Vassallo to have been the patriotic and romantic forerunner of National Poet Dun Karm.

## VALLETTA'S VERY OWN POET

Vassallo died in 1868 and was buried inside the Carmelite Church in Valletta, though Prof. Oliver Friggieri says in his book on the poet, that he has unsuccessfully tried to find the commemorative plaque that used to mark the burial place of one of Malta's major poets.







SIMONDS,  
THE OLIVE  
ALES & STOUT

CABARET  
EVERY EVENING

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EMPIRE  
IS BACK ON

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Music  
Hall

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The changing face of Strait Street, popularly known as “The Gut”, is an echo of the city’s ever-changing pulse. It is gradually emerging from the old picture of this notorious street with its bars, women, music halls, restaurants and guesthouses. The Gut has been the subject of many books by famous writers, including Hollywood actor David Niven who was stationed in Malta during the 20s.

## THE GUT... THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING



After many years of neglect and abandonment, which many took for repentance for its frivolous past, Strait Street is becoming the home of the new generation of young professionals, with small, intimate restaurants, wine bars and other businesses attracting back the crowds.

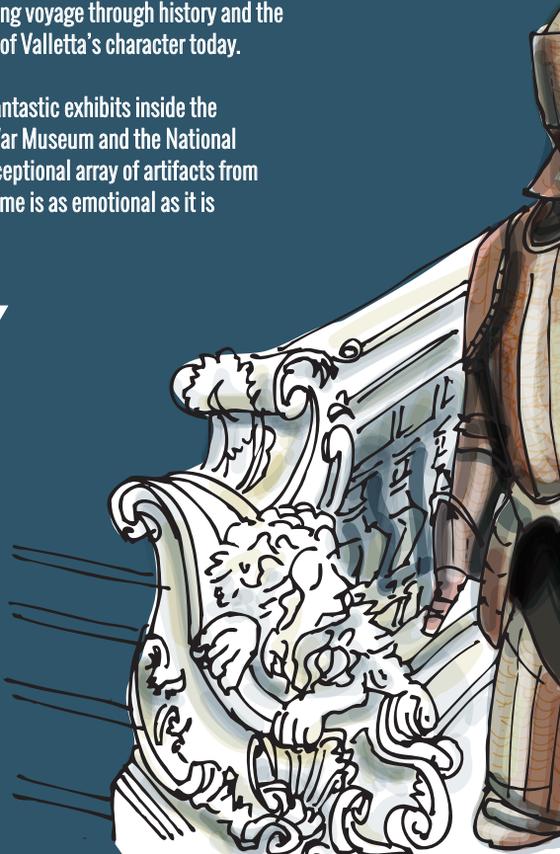
Even today, however, as you walk down Strait Street on a warm, summer evening, you can somehow still hear the music of another epoch, and the ghosts of people being entertained, people drinking and waiting for some fun....

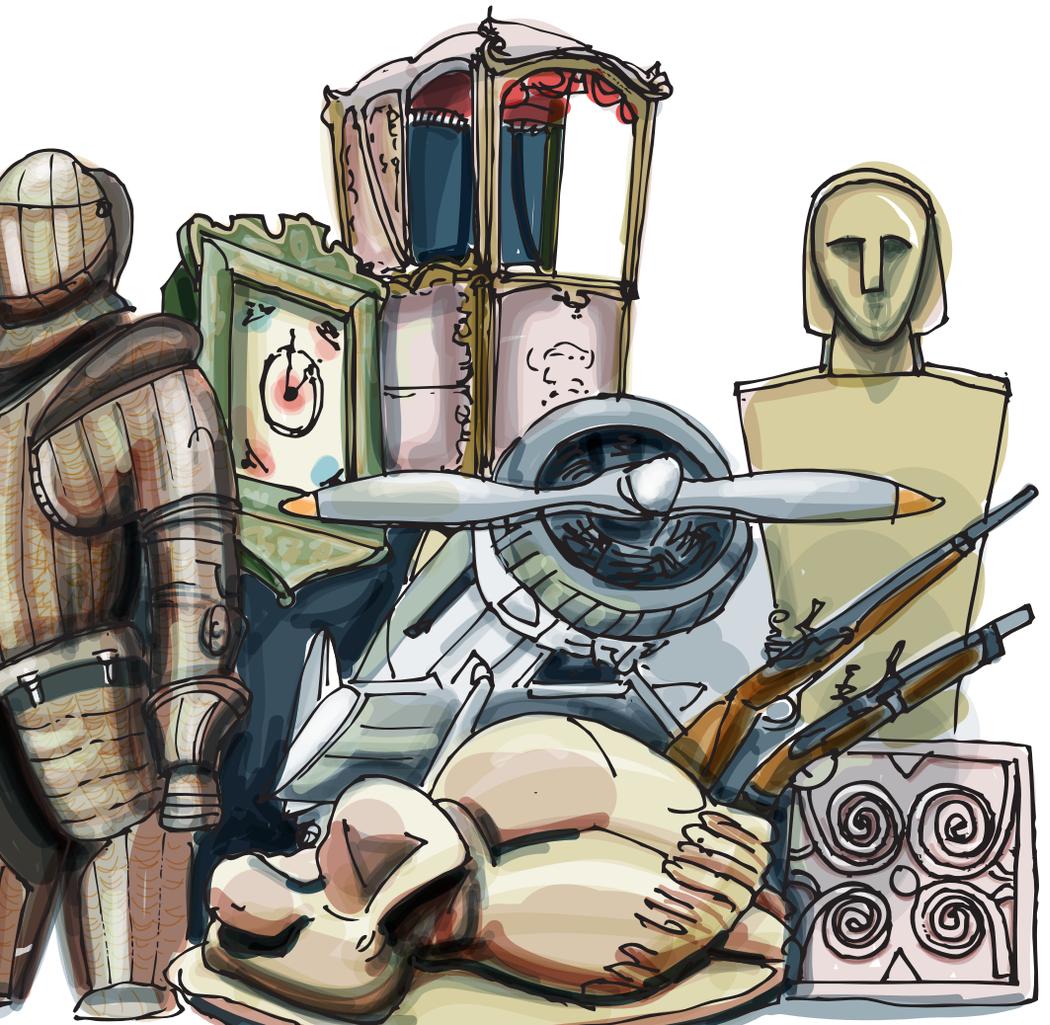
Valletta offers a wonderful selection of museums with a variety of themes and many unique items on display, all of which are part of the cultural and historical process that has forged Malta and her Capital City. At each of these museums the visitor is accorded an opportunity to go on a most interesting voyage through history and the arts, a cultural experience that is part and parcel of Valletta's character today.

From the National Museum of Fine Arts and the fantastic exhibits inside the Grandmaster's Palace Armoury Museum to the War Museum and the National Museum of Archaeology with its display of an exceptional array of artifacts from Malta's prehistoric periods, the voyage through time is as emotional as it is educational and informative.

## THE CITY MUSEUMS

There is a world of contrasts... from the St John's Co-Cathedral Museum, with its Grandmaster Perellos tapestries, to the Toy Museum displaying an extensive collection of Maltese and international toys from the 1950s onwards.





## VALLETTA TRIVIA



- A source of great devotion for the Maltese since it was first displayed in 1630, the miraculous crucifix inside the Franciscan Church of St Mary of Jesus, popularly known as Ta' Ġiezu, is part of one original log of wood, except part of the head which seems to have been mysteriously added as an afterthought. Was the artist, Umile Pintorno, re-inspired...?
- The French occupation of Malta (1798-1800) can hardly be traced anywhere on the Maltese Islands, but Valletta still displays one badly-preserved original street name in French - Rue d'Égalité, known today as Old Treasury Street...
- A fanatical support during sporting events has always been a characteristic of the people of Valletta. In waterpolo and traditional boat races, but significantly so in football, Valletta supporters were the first to introduce the idea of celebrating victories in a carnivalesque way... it is perhaps derived from their well-known love of the Maltese Carnival...
- The Cafe' Prego in South Street, and the Cafe' Premier in Republic Square is where the first seeds of Malta's new literature were sown in the 60s...poetry and prose works that were a complete departure from the traditional themes of patriotism and religion...
- Under his real name of David Robert Jones, in the early 60s world famous English singer David Bowie used to sing live at the open-air section of Cafe' Premier... once even taking part in the Malta Song Festival...
- Many years ahead of Bowie, another popular British singer, Frankie Vaughan, used to sing at the same Valletta venue when he was stationed in Malta with the British Services...

- To this day pop music devotees continue to search for the one quick random shot of the Malta Carnival at old Freedom Square that was purported to have been used in an ex-Beatle Paul McCartney/Wings music video in the 70s...
- There is another fascinating city below Valletta... a vast underground network of tunnels, halls and wells still waiting to be rediscovered and re-opened to the public...
- There is a niche at every street corner in Valletta. Its burning oil used to be the only source of light in pre-electricity days. There are 87 niches in all...
- Valletta's main street, Republic Street, was originally named by the Knights as St George Street...it then became Rue Nationale under the French, and Strade Reale and Kingsway during the British Era...
- Carts Street in Valletta provided the ideal place for the Knights to leave their personal carriages and cabs before making their way on foot to the Grandmaster's Palace...
- The statue figure of Queen Victoria in Republic Square is featured wearing a dress made of Maltese lace...
- The ghost of the Knights' chief engineer, Francois de Mondion, is said to still haunt the Teatru Manoel. Confoundingly, the same man's ghost is also said to haunt Manoel Island across the water from Valletta...
- Social housing has always been available in the City - il-Mandraġġ, l-Arċipierku, id-Due Balli, St Joseph Street, French Street...
- The old building that today houses the examination hall across from the Fort St Elmo granaries used to serve as an orphanage exclusively for the offspring of prostitutes...