



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE SYMPOSIUM 2025





BEYOND THE SQUARE AND COMPASS; UNRAVELLING THE TAPESTRY OF MALTA'S SECRET FREEMASONRY TRAILS - A NEW PRODUCT FOR DARK, HISTORICAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL TOURISM?

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Abstract

Despite centuries of activity and presence, Freemasonry in Malta, remains an obscure and untapped subject. The author believes that a recent policy towards more openness and engagement with the public by local freemasons is conducive to a new opportunity for Tourism. The author felt that Masonic tourism presents a 'gold nugget' opportunity; complimenting the already highly popular attractions posed by the rich history of the 18th century Knights-era, when Freemasonry first began here, as well as that of the pre and post Victorian era, when Freemasonry in Malta reached its zenith. The 20th century also has its interesting masonic episodes; ones which often brought ecclesiastics, Freemasons and the political establishment in direct conflict with each other.

By means of a Questionnaire, the author asked Tourism stakeholders directly involved in product development or those aware of latest dynamics and trends of the sector, whether they agree with the hypothesis that Freemasonry does present new and exciting prospects for the industry, in which tourism genres, what client profile and to what extent is it exciting and promising. The author confirmed by way

of his findings, a significantly high level of interest and support for his hypothesis. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed and confirmed that masonic tourism indeed does present original and exciting prospects in the Cultural and Heritage Tourism genre and with Lectures & Conferences, Special Interest Tours and Historical Tours being the potential product areas. The research also profiled the main target client concluding it ought to be, mainly, males over 40, hailing from the British Isles, the USA and France, in that order, whilst the tourism potential with local residents, though less significant, ought not to be ignored



VALLETTA'S CENTURY OLD SHOPS: DELIA, D'AMATO AND PRECA.

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Abstract

Commerce in the city of Valletta started in the 16th century and is still prevalent today despite the changes it has experienced. This long essay will aim to explore three venerable shops that have graced the streets of Valletta for over a century by using top visual priorities in the city of Valletta. This will serve to restore these outlets, to their place in the lively retail atmosphere of Valletta. It will also determine if the identification of original authentic features serve to interpret commercial outlets to visitors. These storied establishments are not merely places of commerce but living monuments to Valletta's enduring traditions and vibrant history. From artisanal crafts to timeless treasures, each shop carries with it family heritage, a legacy of craftsmanship, resilience, and the spirit of a bygone era. The shops used for this study are Carmelo Delia, a carpenter shop, Preca Jewellery and D'Amato Records which stand as bastions of authenticity, offering a glimpse into Valletta's unique identity and character as well as providing a curiosity for those visiting the city. As such, they deserve to be celebrated and cherished as integral components of Malta's cultural heritage before they are lost forever.



THE BACKSTORY TO THE BACKLOT: WHERE HISTORY MEETS HOLLYWOOD AT FORT RICASOLI.

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Abstract

This long essay will be focusing on the relationship between Fort Ricasoli as a historical location and its involvement in the filming industry. The site's original purpose as a fortification has become obsolete but its existence still constitutes it as cultural heritage that deserves recognition and preservation. The historical background behind Fort Ricasoli will first be explored. From its inception in the 17th century as a fortification for the Knights of St John, to its involvement in the French invasion of Malta, its occupation by the British up until the Second World War and its post-Independence use culminating in it being leased to the Malta Film Commission. In addition, the challenges that MFC might face in the management of a 17th century fortification that is being used to build film sets will be researched. Beyond this there are also the benefits that arise from using a historical site for the construction of sets to shoot films and television such as the very location lending itself as a part of the set. Finally, how this adaptation of Fort Ricasoli has influenced the site in terms of its cultural and historical value will be delved into. There are questions such as whether MFC is sufficiently preserving the site from degradation, especially on its sea fronts and what role it can play for tourism in Malta taking into consideration recent events such as the open day for the Gladiator 2 film set. Its potential as a cultural venue that hosts various events will also be explored and how this will lean more into its potential as a touristic site rather than solely for filming purposes. This research aims to bring Fort Ricasoli to the forefront in Malta as more than just a filming backlot but also as a site of great historical and cultural value for the country without taking away from its worth as a filming location which itself works hand-in-hand with bringing its own touristic niche to the islands.



INTERWOVEN WONDERS: EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE TOURISM POTENTIAL ALONG THE NATURAL FAULT OF THE VICTORIA LINES.

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the potential for alternative tourism along the Victoria Lines, a twelve kilometre fortified wall, spanning Malta's Great Fault. It explores the types of alternative tourism that are most suited for the area. Additionally, the study uncovers potential benefits for local communities and possible environmental impacts of alternative tourism along the Victoria Lines. The site has provided a trail that has attracted locals and tourists alike, due to its naturally scenic and historically attractive sites, presenting the greatest concentration of military architecture on the island. Qualitative data from three semi structured interviews with experts and specialists were analysed thematically. Although the current condition of the Victoria Lines already provides tourism opportunities, significant concerns remain regarding accessibility, conservation, and actions of specific individuals. However, the latest and leading development is the publishing of a tender to draft a Conservation and Management Plan for the Victoria Lines, which could bolster the potential for tourism along the site and surrounding communities. This study contributes to addressing research gaps by providing insights from experts and offering practical recommendations for alternative tourism development.



A WALK UNDER THE SAINTS: A LOOK AT THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE FACADE AND CORNER NICHES IN QORMI.

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Abstract

The essay examines the meaning and significance of the religious niches of Qormi, considering both their tangible heritage (being an architectural feature and containing certain structural elements), as well as their role in bearing the intangible heritage of the town through rituals, traditions, and narratives associated with them. The study delves into the locally available literature and utilizes interviews to uncover Qormi-specific details regarding niches. The research seeks to provide an understanding of two significant structural elements of niches, such as the lighting and indulgence, to understand the motivation behind choosing a saint for a niche, and to gauge the way niche-related traditions have changed over time, including the passers-by interaction with niches, and niches acting as landmarks to refer to. The author concludes that niches play a significant role in both tangible and intangible heritage of the town in multiple ways. They serve as key architectural features, showcasing diverse styles and functions, while also reflecting the local community's devotion to particular saints. Although their religious significance has decreased over time, it still holds relevance. Furthermore, niches embody a rich layer of intangible heritage that has yet to be fully explored.



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