

## Valletta - A musical homage in 8 acts

**Valletta**, known in Maltese as **il-Belt** (The City), is one of the two EU capitals of culture in 2018. The other one is Leeuwarden in the Netherlands.

The ship sirens announce the modern crusaders, **Welcome** to one of the EU's miniature states. Since September 21st, 1964, Malta has been independent of Britain, and on May 1st, 2004, the country joined the European Union. 4 years later, the Euro was introduced. This rock in the Mediterranean has changed many times the owner over the millennia.

The ancient temples on the islands of Malta and Gozo are the oldest freestanding sacral buildings in the Mediterranean. Built around 5000 years ago, in fact they are older than the pyramids, their purpose, origin and builders are still a mystery. There are about two dozen **Megalithic Temples** on the two islands and this is very unique in the Mediterranean. Malta and also Gozo were already around 5,000 years BC. settled, but on Sicily, the neighboring island, where the first settlers came, there is nothing like that.

Since 1992, the temples have been included on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list.

The construction of the **Grand Master's Palace il-Palazz** was begun in 1571 and has been little changed until today. From 1575 to 1798 a total of 21 grand masters of the "Order of Malta" resided in this building, until they moved their seat after the invasion of Napoleon to [St. Petersburg](#). Since 1976, the palace has also been the official residence of the President of the Republic of Malta. Not all rooms are accessible and are closed on official occasions. The "Sovereign Knight and Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and Malta" is now located in the Palazzo di Malta in Rome and is one of three recognized Orders of the Catholic Church by the Holy Seat.

Michelangelo Merisi, called Caravaggio, had a busy life. He rose from the destitute artist to the favorite painter of the Roman cardinals. "The beheading of John the Baptist" is his greatest work which unveiling he could not attend because he was once again in prison. This time it was a tumult with a knight and therefore he fled from Malta. For a similar reason he came to Valletta just a year before. At that time he was charged with a manslaughter in Rome. Due to the occasion of the Düsseldorf exhibition in 2006, eight renowned writers were inspired by the **Aura of Caravaggio**; the fictional short stories appeared in an anthology entitled "Painter, Murderer, Myth". Around his early death at the age of 38 myths entwined between heart attack, malaria and assassination.

**Lower & Upper Barrakka Gardens:** The Lower Garden was probably used to produce vegetables and crops for the garrison nearby. It was built at the end of the 18th century and has a neoclassical temple. In 1824 the Upper Garden, built from 1661 and almost twice the size of the lower one, was made accessible also. Originally both were private gardens. Below this garden is the Saluting Battery, which fires a single cannon shot around 12 and 16 o'clock. It follows the tradition to set the clocks on ships afterwards the shot.

**The Blue World** consisted of 3 natural wonders: The Blue Hole (Maltese Ghar iż-Żerqa) was a hole about 15 meters deep and about 10 meters wide in the rock bottom on the cliffs of Gozo, which was connected under water to the open sea. This connection collapsed in 2017. The Blue Grotto (Maltese Taħt il-Hnejja) is the largest hall of a cave system near Żurrieq. The six cave halls are accessible only from the sea. Blue algae make the water appear sky blue in the sunlight. The Blue Lagoon (Maltese Bejn il-Kmiemen) is formed by the islands Comino and Cominotto and is overcrowded by tourists completely which are dumped by express boats here. Due to the special ecological importance of living species and their habitats, large parts are closed. This leaves a small corridor for splashing not swimming. On the rocks there is an almost closed carpet of colorful towels...

**Jazz @ Ta 'Liesse:** Since 1990 every July the "Malta Jazz Festival" is held outside the church "Our Lady of Liesse" close to the waterfront on a crossroad. Organized by the "Council for Culture and the Arts" renowned jazz greats such as Wayne Shorter, John Patitucci, Diana Krall, Chick Corea, Al Di Meola, Natalie Cole, Betty Carter, Michel Petrucciani, Richard Bona or Mike Stern have been invited... If the main island of the state Malta has no opera house, Gozo has two. Emerging from competing music clubs of the "Cathedral of the Diocese of Gozo" and the "Basilica of St. George", they have built the Astra Theater (1200 seats) and the Aurora Opera House (1600) in Ir-Rabat each. One half of Gozo supports one club, the other half the other. Yearly there is one show only within a competition of quality. A second presentation will not sell out both houses...

Since 1985 the title **European Capital of Culture** has been awarded for one year. The designation is intended to highlight the richness, diversity and commonality of Europe's cultural heritage and to enable a better understanding of Europe's citizens for each other. In this phase numerous events and exhibitions accompany are intended to generate increased attention and numerous visitors. The most modern crusaders are passing these sites completely...

When journalist Daphne Garuana Galizia made connections to the "Panama Papers," she was killed on October 16th, 2017. Her murderers are still on the loose, the clients are unknown. Corruption, mafia and offshore accounts are also a kind of culture.

Emperor Charles V gave the islands as a fief to the "Order of St. John". When the reconnaissance troop of the "Knights of St. John", from which the "Order of Malta" emerged, returned from the island in 1530, they commented: "A completely uninteresting piece of rock." I cannot agree with that at all.

Volker Rapp