

# GOZO 10 *great* WALKS

[ ALSO INCLUDES THE ROUND GOZO COASTAL WALK ]

From the authors of  
the book of *Malta:  
10 Great Walks* 'that  
reveals and reminds us  
of some of the beauty  
of the Maltese islands  
and entices readers to  
physically discover it.'

J. FACCHETTI  
THE SUNDAY TIMES  
OF MALTA

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We would appreciate feedback on this book, including suggestions and corrections. Please send comments or enquiries to our website:

**[www.walkgozo.com](http://www.walkgozo.com)**

# Introduction

Gozo, a small island with a long and rich history, provides many wonderful opportunities for walking. There are few other places in the world which offer such an array of impressive and readily accessible features. The attractions of Gozo include stunning landscapes, a beautiful natural environment and a range of rich archaeological and cultural treasures. Gozo, a short 30-minute ferry ride from Malta, has its own more tranquil way of life, with country lanes leading you past small villages, peaceful valleys, picturesque sea inlets and dramatic cliffs. It has been inhabited from the earliest times and possesses many stone-age monuments, some among the best in the world. The island is so small (14 kilometres by seven kilometres) that on any one walk you can encounter a variety of interesting features.

This book provides details of ten great walks on Gozo, together with a description of the noteworthy features that lie along each route. The duration of most walks is around four hours, and most can be shortened or extended to suit particular interests and circumstances. The exception is the Round Gozo Coastal Walk (Walk 10) which is best enjoyed over a four- or five-day visit to the island. This book includes a detailed map for each walk and also describes the main details and context (historical, cultural and environmental) of the key points of interest. The start and end points of all walks can be easily reached by ferry, bus or a short taxi ride.

All the walks (except Walk 10) can be done from Malta by taking an early morning ferry from Ċirkewwa to Gozo and returning in the evening. But, if you can, stay a night or more on Gozo to better understand and enjoy its many natural and man-made attractions.

## The Walks

The general locations of the walks are shown on the map on the front inner cover, with the detailed maps and routes given in individual sections of this book. All of the walks pass through coastal and rural areas and are mostly along level paths, though there are a number of inclines that some might find a little challenging. As the highest point in Gozo is only some 195 metres above sea level, you can appreciate that the uphill sections are relatively modest by international standards. Some of the walks take you on cliffs, though (with just minor exceptions) rarely close to the cliff edge. It is best not to walk alone on cliffs, particularly in windy conditions. For safety, do bring a mobile phone with you – there is nearly full mobile phone coverage throughout Gozo and Comino. If you are planning an evening walk during the hot season, be sure to allow enough time to be back before dark.

At times have to use your own judgement about minor route details or suitable short cuts. Google Earth, Open Street Map or other similar online maps can help to give a good appreciation of the route, its features and options for walking paths. You can always ask the locals for help: they are friendly, and English is very widely spoken

as a second language. If you find yourself a little lost and having to cross a cultivated private field, do so from the perimeter paths and avoid damage to the crop.

The walks we describe are:

<b>Walk 1</b>	Mġarr and the South Coast
<b>Walk 2</b>	Ta' Ċenċ Cliffs and Xlendi Bay
<b>Walk 3</b>	The Azure Window and Inland Sea
<b>Walk 4</b>	The Wild Northwest Coast and Valleys
<b>Walk 5</b>	The Salt pans of Gozo
<b>Walk 6</b>	Megalithic Temples and Ramla Bay
<b>Walk 7</b>	Nadur and its Bays
<b>Walk 8</b>	The East Coast and Qala
<b>Walk 9</b>	The Island of Comino
<b>Walk 10</b>	The Round Gozo Coastal Walk

**OUR FAVOURITES?** Nadur and its Bays (Walk 7) for the valleys and the outstanding natural garrigue and boulder scree, the Azure Window and Inland Sea (Walk 3) for its unique geological features, cliffs, views and archaeological features, and the Island of Comino (Walk 9) for its Blue Lagoon, wild plants, sense of isolation and times past.

## Some Practical Advice

- » Please help to conserve the clean and valuable natural environment of Gozo. Carry your litter back with you and do not pick any wild plants, as some species are endangered.
- » Follow the set route and paths, without short cuts through cultivated fields or private property.
- » Consider going for a swim at one of the pleasant bays or inlets along the route.
- » Remember to bring water, a hat and sunscreen, especially in the hot months.
- » Make sure you wear comfortable clothes and good walking shoes. In summer a pair of shorts is adequate while in winter and spring, trousers and



CORY'S SHEARWATER (Nicholas Galea)



THE SPECTACLED WARBLER (Nicholas Galea)

The types of birds you come across will vary greatly with the time of year. In the hot summer months, many of the common land birds will be either absent or have gone to ground to avoid the intense heat. Those walkers familiar with the seacoasts of more northern countries will likely notice that, outside of breeding or migration periods, there is a comparative absence of sea birds.

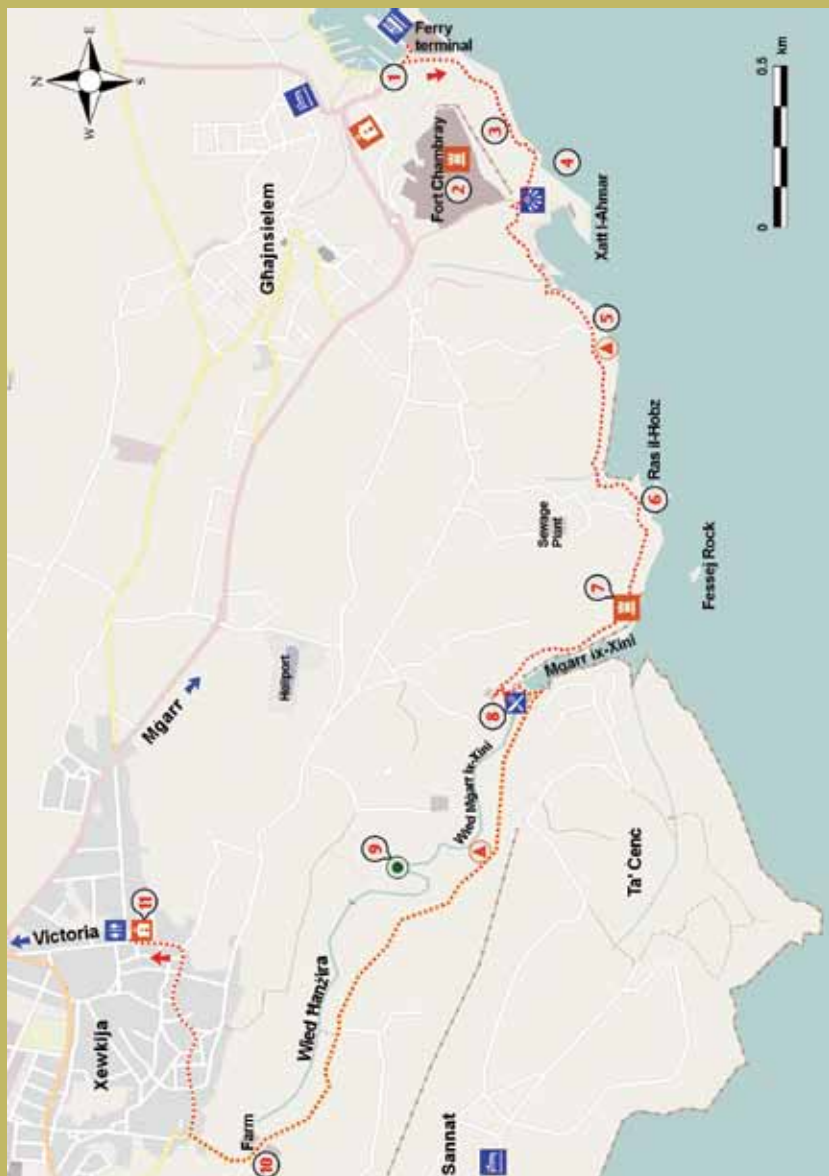
In winter months expect to see numerous robins and their close relatives, the redstart throughout your walks. Both these species arrive as an influx from continental areas to spend the winter months in the islands. Other birds likely to be readily seen are the white wagtail, lark, stone chat, sparrow, starling and an occasional solitary kestrel, with its characteristic hovering flight as it hunts for small birds, large insects and for the numerous lizards that frequent these islands.

Your walks may also be punctuated by the scolding *cha-cha-cha-cha* of the ubiquitous Sardinian warbler from deep within the scrub. Occasional glimpses will reveal this small grey bird with its distinctive black cap and white chin. If you see one or two very small brown birds typically engaging in bursts of brief upward flight before diving for cover while making a somewhat faint but distinctly metallic high pitch *zeep-zeep-zeep*, these are likely to be fantailed warblers which are resident all year round. In the course of walks through areas containing large boulders and bare rock pinnacles, you may be rewarded by the sight of a solitary blue rock thrush, a handsome dark blue bird about the size of a starling, and Malta's national bird. You will need to be quick-sighted however, as they generally make a characteristic dive, like a diver from a springboard, out of sight when approached.

A number of animals are rare or endemic to Gozo, such as two endemic species of snails, the rare sand cricket, and a species of lizard found only on the small Fungus Rock, near the Inland Sea (Walk 3). Some species of plants and animals have become extinct, and a number of others, especially those on minor islets, are in danger of extinction.

## Getting to and around Gozo

As there is no airport on Gozo all overseas visitors must first arrive at Malta and then take the short ferry ride between the islands. You can get from the airport on Malta to the ferry port of Ċirkewwa (about 20 kilometres away) by bus, taxi or rented car. There is a direct bus from the airport to Ċirkewwa approximately every hour (check times on [www.arriva.com.mt](http://www.arriva.com.mt)). There is also a direct bus to Ċirkewwa from



## Mġarr and the South Coast

### Route

- » MĠARR HARBOUR
- » XATT L-AĦMAR
- » MĠARR IX-XINI
- » XEWKIJA

- > Spectacular sea views
- > Fort Chambray
- > Picturesque sea inlet and beach
- > Wild Mġarr ix-Xini valley
- > Traditional village and wonderful church

This first walk in the charming island of Calypso starts at the bustling port of Mġarr, the main gateway to Gozo. Setting out from near the ferry terminal, the path passes among luxuriant vegetation along the coast below the impressive Fort Chambray. The coastal path takes you by small bays and limestone pavements with salt pans to reach the picturesque sea inlet of Mġarr ix-Xini where Turkish raiders landed in 1551. The path turns inland at a coastal watchtower to reach a pretty beach with a pleasant café and an opportunity for a swim. You then ramble inland alongside the dramatic and very beautiful valley of Wied Mġarr ix-Xini with its impressive caves and wonderfully diverse wildlife. The route ends in the town of Xewkija, the oldest village on Gozo with its famously high church. This walk boasts wonderful views of Comino and distant Malta, high cliffs and features such as caves, coastal defences, picturesque inlets, wild plants, unspoiled countryside and a village church with the third highest dome in the Christian world.

This can be a good start to a walking holiday on Gozo or as part of a day trip based on a ferry ride from Malta. It is a very pleasant walk of medium difficulty, passing in the main through well-formed tracks and minor country roads. There is however one slightly slippery section as you ascend from the coastal path to the western side of Fort Chambray, so wear walking shoes with good grip. It is best not to undertake this walk on a very wet day as there is no protection from the elements and the path may be slippery and uncomfortable in places. The walk ends in the main square in Xewkija from where you can take a bus (or walk) to either Victoria or Mġarr Harbour. At a leisurely pace this walk will take about four hours - the length is about nine kilometres. If you intend to do the walk in good weather it is worth bringing a swimming costume to enjoy the water at the safe and beautiful beach of Mġarr ix-Xini. There is a conveniently located café at that beach (open March to November). Bring a camera as the views are first class and binoculars would also be an advantage. Public buses can get you to Mġarr and back from Xewkija.



ROCK-CUT STEPS

original cobbled track that has been unearthed during restoration works. The track contours along the creek and then rises gently towards a private villa overlooking the small beach (8). Once you reach the villa you should look out for a path on the left which leads downwards to the beach. (You know if you have missed the turning should the track reach a wide unsurfaced road.) The path downwards through rock-cut steps is a thrilling ending to this stretch of walk! This is a good spot to take a break as the pebbly beach is safe and pleasant for swimming. The beachside café here provides coffee, good homemade almond cake and excellent fish lunches. The café, with its

seating shaded by tamarisk trees, is open for business from the beginning of March to the end of November.

It is worthwhile rambling a little along the inland path beside the café to admire the beautiful Wied Mġarr ix-Xini (*wied* means valley), the deepest on Gozo and a fine example of a valley incised in Lower Coralline limestone. Look at the high sides of the gorge and the number and variety of plants growing there. Water seeping through fissures in the limestone walls provides moisture for an abundance of plants and flowers in crevices and cracks. The moist and shaded valley floor behind the café hosts tamarisk and eucalyptus trees as well as giant reeds, wild fennel and, unusually for the Maltese islands, brambles. There are a number of small cultivated fields behind the café but the major portion of this valley is an unspoiled wilderness. Its inaccessibility to humans has contributed to the survival of a rich biodiversity and the gorge supports ecologically significant plant communities. The bed of the valley is an example of a habitat termed *maquis* - a zone of shrubby, mostly evergreen plants and small trees of the Mediterranean region. The valley, together with the nearby coastal cliffs of Ta' Ċenċ, supports important nesting sites. It was one of the last breeding grounds of the barn owl and the jackdaw, both now extinct on Gozo. The valley is still a stronghold of the blue rock thrush, the national bird of Malta.

### To Xewkija

Take the steep uphill road from the beach which leads to the outskirts of the town of Xewkija, a distance of about 1.5 kilometres. Rambling along this road you get many opportunities to admire the wonderful gorge to your right and its exuberant



# The Saltpans of Gozo

## Route

- » VICTORIA
- » GHASRI GORGE
- » SALT PANS
- » XWEJNI BAY
- » MARSALFORN
- » VICTORIA

- 
- » The magnificent Citadel
  - » Picturesque Ghasri Gorge
  - » Spectacular saltpan complex
  - » Tranquil valleys and countryside
  - » Beautiful bays

This triangular walk starts and ends at Victoria (aka Rabat), the capital of Gozo. The walk passes through tranquil and scenic countryside to reach an extensive system of saltpans cut into limestone shelves, along the wild northern coast. These are graphic reminders of earlier, harder times when salt was obtained from seawater using a process of evaporation from shallow basins cut by hand in the flat, coastal rock. The cliffs in this area are relatively soft allowing the wind and rain to carve fascinating and beautiful shapes such as deep ravines, steep hills and flat expanses of yellow limestone. The surrealistic views are astounding in this wild and wonderful place; there is nothing quite like this elsewhere in Europe. Other noteworthy features of this walk include peaceful valleys with their wild flowers and small well-tended fields, the dramatic Ghasri Gorge, the beautiful bays at Xwejni and Qbajjar and the seemingly impregnable Citadel.

The overall walk is about 12 kilometres which, without dawdling or coffee break, should take about six hours. Cafés and toilets are to be found at a number of convenient locations along the route. This walk is best done in cooler months, though in summer you may get to see some salt production activity. You have the option of shortening the walk by ending at the coastal town of Marsalforn and taking the bus back from there to Victoria or, if on a day trip from Malta, perhaps taking a taxi or bus service directly to the ferry port.

## Context


Gozo, a small island off a small island, is essentially a limestone rock with limited areas of good soil in its valleys. It has no significant harbours, no permanent rivers, no mineral (except building stone) or forest resources. Not a great basis for providing a good living for its inhabitants! In the absence of other resources the Gozitans made maximum use of their major assets – limestone and manual labour.

With the ready availability of limestone of varying strength and colour the Gozitans have developed renowned skills as stone-masons. This is evident not just



XWEJNI BAY

infilled material remained as an out-of-context hill - a process somewhat like jelly from a mould. The water in the bay is clear and with a reef just offshore this a good place for diving and for those learning to dive.

The peninsula separating Xwejni Bay from the adjacent Qbajjar Bay contains a military battery built in 1716 to discourage invasion through these accessible bays. The battery, originally equipped with six guns, came into use again during World War II as an observation post. The coastline here is now somewhat overbuilt but does contain a number of cafés. Leaving Qbajjar Bay the main path for this walk turns inland at the end of the bay. From this point you have the option of staying on the coastal path which takes you into the town of Marsalforn and provides a lovely vista of Marsalforn Bay . This road takes you through a public garden and then turns right into the bay.



MARSALFORN BAY



VALLEY NEAR THE BRIDGE

# Megalithic Temples and Ramla Bay

## Route

- » VICTORIA
- » XAGHRA
- » ĠGANTIJA
- » CALYPSO CAVE
- » RAMLA BAY
- » XAGHRA

- » Magnificent Megalithic Temple
- » Perfectly preserved windmill
- » Calypso Cave
- » Spectacular views
- » Lovely sandy beach

Gozo hosts a wide range of interesting archaeological sites and features. There are several temple sites on the island, the most important and intact of which is the Ġgantija site, recognised as the oldest free-standing sacred structure in the world. Many beautiful and interesting objects have been found at these locations, particularly at the Xaghra Circle.

This walk takes you past several important archaeological sites, including Ġgantija, Santa Verna and the Xaghra Circle. You will have a better appreciation of the sites if you also visit the Archaeological Museum in Victoria which exhibits many of the wonderful figurines found during archaeological excavations on Gozo. Starting in Victoria our walk takes you to Xaghra, going up a steep incline with wonderful views of the central valley and passing a cemetery for plague victims. Entering Xaghra you pass the megalithic sites of Santa Verna, the Xaghra Circle and, best of all, the 5,000-year-old Ġgantija Temple complex. You then turn north to the coast to visit Calypso Cave, with panoramic views overlooking the dramatic boulder scree, sea and cliffs. You then ramble on to Ramla Bay with its beautiful red sand and unspoiled natural environment. The return route takes you back on country tracks through a tranquil valley towards Xaghra, where you may visit impressive underground caves. You can also visit the beautiful parish church in the town centre of Xaghra and the impressive 250-year-old Ta'Kola windmill. You can take a bus back to Victoria from near the Xaghra parish church.

This is a medium-difficulty walk which has a couple of moderate climbs, though on good paths. The walk itself is about 12 kilometres long which, if done without stopping, should take around six hours. However we recommend that you visit the Ġgantija Temple complex and other interesting features along the way. Taking those visits into account and a stop for coffee, the overall walk should take about seven hours. If you start with a visit to the museum in Victoria it is a full day. You will also be visiting the beautiful bay of Ramla l-Hamra (Ramla Bay) so why not take your bathing costume for a refreshing swim and make it a whole day's outing? The

walk is well served with cafés and public conveniences at Victoria, Xaghra, Ġgantija, and, except in bad weather, at Ramla Bay.



#### VISITING KEY SITES

The Ġgantija temples, the Gozo Museum of Archaeology, the Ta' Kola windmill and other visitor attractions are normally open Monday to Sunday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm. The entrance charges are reasonable and you can purchase single or combination tickets, with reductions for seniors and students.

*Details at [www.gozo.gov.mt](http://www.gozo.gov.mt)*

< PILLAR FROM ĠGANTIJA

## Context

Modern archaeology has shown that on Malta and Gozo, people without a written language or knowledge of metal or wheels had constructed large, highly sophisticated structures, several hundred years before the Egyptians even began work on the pyramids. The temple-building period started around 3,600 BC, while the earliest signs of human activity on Malta date back to about 5,000 BC. The Stone Age Maltese built their temples singly or in groups, decorating and enlarging them during a period of over 1,000 years. Their decorated interiors were originally thought to have been inspired by the great Greek civilisations of Crete and Mycenae but it is now clear that Malta's temple culture had flourished and died before those Greek civilisations were born. The temple culture came to a mysterious end around 2,500 BC. It is not known whether these people died out or were absorbed by invaders from various parts of the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age. This walk includes a visit to the temple complexes of Ġgantija, which are among the largest and best-preserved examples of this culture.

The Ġgantija monument consists of two temples, built side by side and enclosed within a boundary wall. The southern one is the larger, older and better preserved, dating back to approximately 3,600 BC. This temple rises to a height of six meters and like other Megalithic sites in Malta, faces southeast. Traces of the plaster that once covered the irregular wall still cling between some blocks. The structures are impressive for having been constructed at a time when no metal tools were available to the local inhabitants and before the introduction of the wheel. Small, spherical stones have been found around the site and these are believed to have been used to aid transport of the enormous stone blocks required for the construction of the temples. Excavations at the site have unearthed many small statues and figurines which give tantalising clues to the religious rites practiced in the temples. Archaeologists believe that these figurines and statues were

# Nadur and its Bays

## Route

- » NADUR
- » SAN BLAS
- » DAHLET QORROT
- » QALA
- » NADUR

- » Majestic unspoiled coastline
- » Great plant diversity
- » Spectacular views
- » Tranquil valleys

This wonderful walk takes you through some of the most unspoiled habitats and landscapes on the Maltese islands. It starts and ends at the charming village of Nadur, in the east of Gozo. The route takes you from the village square out into the lush tranquil valley of Wied San Blas. Crossing the valley you enter a sinuous, exciting path that takes you through wild countryside at the foot of high cliffs. Admiring the wonderful views and the rich variety of wild plants among the cliff-side boulder scree you ramble downhill to the small bay of Dahlet Qorrot, where fishermen have carved storage rooms in the limestone cliffs. After a short ramble along the coastal limestone shelf you turn inland and uphill to pass through an unspoiled wilderness area, with breathtaking views. You return to Nadur along minor country roads, passing the outskirts of the peaceful village of Qala. If you are returning to Malta after the walk you may prefer to walk directly from Qala to the ferry port at Mgarr (two kilometres) rather than finish the walk at Nadur.

This is a very pleasant and exciting walk, mostly along good paths but with some very steep, but short climbs. The walk of about ten kilometres should take about five hours. In fine weather you might think of bringing your swimming gear to have a swim at the bay of Dahlet Qorrot. Be sure to carry water and a snack with you as there are no cafés or shops once you set out from Nadur. Wear good shoes and take a camera to capture the wonderful views. There are public toilets, cafés and bus stops in Nadur and public toilets at Dahlet Qorrot.

You can reach Nadur by bus either from Mgarr or Victoria. There are regular buses all year round – check [www.arriva.com.mt](http://www.arriva.com.mt) for the latest timetable. Alternatively you could take a taxi for the short distance from Mgarr to Nadur, but it's best to agree on the price in advance.

## Context

The warm Mediterranean climate of Gozo, its physical isolation from other landmasses and its limestone base have combined to form interesting and rare habitats with endemic species of plants and animals. The island's rocks are

# The Round Gozo Coastal Walk

## Route

- » **A** MĠARR TO XLENDI (*Walk 1 and 2*)
- » **B** XLENDI TO SAN LAWRENZ (*Walk 3*)
- » **C** SAN LAWRENZ, ĠHARB TO MARSALFORN (*Walk 4 and 5*)
- » **D** MARSALFORN TO MĠARR (*Walk 6, 7 and 8*)

There is something satisfying about a walk around the entire coast of an island and that is particularly true for this circular walk. There is at present no single recognised or best route for such a walk around the island of Gozo. In this section we suggest the coastal route shown on Map 10, which will take you past many of the key features of interest on Gozo. The main exceptions are the Citadel of Victoria and the Neolithic Ġgantija temples in Xagħra.

A coastal path on Gozo (or to be more accurate a path that allows you to ramble around the island by a route near the coast) is by no means obvious. Long sea inlets (e.g. Xlendi) and hills in unsuitable places (e.g. Marsalforn) combine to make this a challenging (but fulfilling) walk. There are quarries to be avoided and areas in private ownership where public access is not always permitted. In addition, care must be taken in selecting and using paths that pass near or through sites of high environmental or archaeological value. It is also worthwhile to pass through interesting villages and visit features that are close to the route. We consider the walking route shown on Map 10 (at the back) to be enjoyable, safe, interesting and practical.

The overall walk of about 50 kilometres is geared towards those who subscribe to the view that the path is the objective, not the destination, and so we recommend it should be undertaken over a number of days. Gozitans and Maltese may decide to do the walk in short sections, spread over weeks or months. Foreign visitors will be attracted to undertaking the entire walk during a single visit to Gozo. The decision on what sections to undertake and over how many days will vary with personal circumstances but will be influenced by weather, accommodation requirements and baggage. As there is so much to see, examine and enjoy along the route it is recommended to foreign visitors that the walk be spread over a minimum of four days, with at least four nights spent on the island. You can of course add on as many nights as you like, before, during or after the walk. To get full enjoyment from your trip you should stay at least a week on Gozo, allowing some days in between walks for relaxation.

## Accommodation and Baggage

Foreign visitors will normally have so much baggage that it is not practical or desirable to carry it on a long walk such as this. As distances on Gozo are not great you could opt to base yourself at one hotel for the duration of your visit and to travel by a combination of bus, taxi or walking to the starting and end point of each day's walk. Alternatively, you may prefer to select hotels along the route and to have your bags moved on by car to your next hotel. On our website we provide a recommendation on a detailed self-guided route with suitably located accommodation which will take in the whole coastal walk and also allow you to visit the Citadel and the Ġgantija temple complex.

## The Walk

The suggested coastal route is shown on Map 10, a double page map at the back of this book. The map is also available on our website at [www.walkgozo.com](http://www.walkgozo.com) and this will allow you to print the map at various scales or to transfer it to your smartphone, laptop or iPad. As this is a circular route you may start at any point you like but we have chosen to begin and end at the ferry port of Mġarr as this facilitates arrival and departure from Gozo and has excellent bus connections to Victoria. Using the map, you can undertake the walk in any way that suits you, although we describe the clockwise route. You can even be adventurous by going in an anti-clockwise direction but it is easier to follow the directions by going clockwise, as a walk described in one direction may prove quite difficult to follow from the opposite direction. The Ministry of Gozo has embarked on a project to provide signs at various key junctions along the route and once these are in place the route should be much easier to follow.

The Gozo coastal walk will lead you past many impressive and interesting features, almost all of which have been described earlier in the individual walks (numbers 1 to 8). To avoid repetition, the description of the coastal walk in this section contains information related, in the main, to the route set out on Map 10. To learn more about the features encountered on the route, we suggest you refer back to the text of the individual walks.

The coastal walk, for descriptive purposes, is divided into the following sections:

- A Mġarr to Xlendi (Walk 1 and 2)
- B Xlendi to San Lawrenz (Walk 3)
- C San Lawrenz, Għarb to Marsalforn (Walk 4 and 5)
- D Marsalforn to Mġarr (Walk 6, 7 and 8)

### A. Mġarr to Xlendi

The route starts beside the Seaview Restaurant (Pizza Marina Pub)  located just opposite the ferry terminal in Mġarr. Take the concrete road immediately to the left of the restaurant which leads gently uphill. After a short distance the road turns and forks.