

colours of malta



travel and incentives

"The difference between the ordinary and extraordinary is the little 'extra' "- colours of malta

The Barrakka Gardens

Named the Upper Barrakka and the Lower Barrakka, both gardens offer a stunning view of the Grand Harbour. These beautiful gardens are located on the outer part of Valletta's fortified walls.

The Upper Barrakka garden, especially, is a must. Built on top of a demi-bastion, both locals and foreigners relish spending hours taking in the sights. A number of statues and monuments adorn the gardens, including one dedicated to Winston Churchill.

These colonnaded gardens perched high above Grand Harbour were created in the late 16th century as a relaxing haven for the Knights from the nearby Auberge d'Italie. They provide a shady retreat from the bustle of the city, and the balcony has one of the best views in Malta.

The terrace below is occupied by the Saluting Battery , where a cannon once fired salutes to visiting naval vessels. A monument dedicated to Captain Ball is located in the centre of the Lower Barrakka Gardens.

The battery has been restored, and a cannon is fired every day at noon and 4pm with great ceremony. It's well worth making time to see this – children will enjoy it.

Try to time for your visit for a tour – the enthusiastic, costumed guides explain how the cannon is loaded and fired.



ALEXANDRO IOAN. BALL EQ. BAR.

Historical Value of the Gardens

Perched on the Bastion of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Upper Barrakka Gardens offer a splendid panorama of the Grand Harbour.

Originally the Barrakka was out of bounds for the locals. The Knights of the Order used it as a prime venue for socializing events. The arches that stand prominently to this day were constructed by Fra Flaminio Balbiani, a knight of the Italian Langue in 1661; they were once roofed over but conspirators convened here in 1775 to overthrow Grand Master Ximenes. Their plan was foiled but Ximenes ordered the removal of the ceiling.

The Upper Barrakka only became accessible to the public with the fall of the French occupation in 1800.

Once past the main portico, your attention will be drawn to the round, centrally positioned fountain. A life-size bronze sculpture of Lord Gerald Strickland, Prime Minister of Malta from 1924 to 1932, stands prominently above it. This was created by well-known sculptor Antonio Sciortino in 1945. To the left of the pond is a rather plain looking tomb-memorial to Sir Thomas Maitland, the first British Colonial Governor of Malta. A copy of another of Sciortino's works - *Le Gavroches* shows a young lad in tattered clothing, leading two younger children by the hand, similarly clad in rags - and depicts misery at the turn of the twentieth century. The original is to be found in the Museum of Fine Arts.

To the left of the garden's portal is a limestone monument that is crying out for restoration. It was erected in memory of Surgeon John Bathurst Thomson M.D, who died of cholera prematurely in Valletta on September 18th, 1850 aged 36.

A bronze bust by Vincent Apap was erected in its present location as requested by the subject of the sculpture itself – Sir Winston Churchill.

Several monuments are to be found along the archway. At the leftmost end is an elaborate memorial to Sir Giuseppe Niccolo Zammit – his robed, limestone effigy sits atop an elongated pedestal with a lion on either side. Dr. Zammit was appointed by Maitland to serve as Judge in the Superior Court and in 1818, the title of Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George was conferred upon him.

Poised on a limestone platform, a sphinx-like creature faces the grand harbour in remembrance of Captain Rinaldo Sciberras, who died in Battle during an assignment in India.

Finally, an obelisk-like monument recalls the memory of Lieutenant-Colonel Clement Martin Edwards, "who died at Valletta after a severe and protracted illness on the 17th March 1816 aged 36 years." A plaque placed on the arches near this monument commemorates famed Italian inventor, Guglielmo Marconi.

A marble slab near the *Le Gavroche* sculpture celebrating the life and achievements of Albert Einstein was inaugurated by the Albert Einstein Academy foundation on July 15th, 1988.

Amongst the Maltese personalities commemorated with a plaque is Francesco Saverio Caruana – a clergyman who famously played a pivotal role in the peoples' uprising against the French occupiers. In 1831, Caruana was appointed Bishop of Malta.

Another slab commemorate Maltese citizens who left their native land to seek their fortunes elsewhere (Maltese: *Tislima lil eluf ta' Maltin u Ghawdxin li marru jghixu f'art barranija matul is-sekli dsatax u ghoxrin*) and wartime heroes who lost their lives in battle. Another plaque honours the successful completion of Operation Pedestal: *B'Tifkira tal-Konvoj ta' Santa Marija fit-18 ta' Awwissu 1942, li tant ghen lill-Maltin u l-Inglizi fil-Glieda tagħhom kontra n-Naziżmu u l-Faxxiżmu.*, meaning: In memory of the Santa Maria Convoy that reached Malta on 18th August 1942, and helped the Maltese and the British in their struggle against Nazism and Fascism"

Another plaque celebrates Dr. Ruzar Briffa (1906-1963) – a dermatologist-turned-poet who found the Upper Barrakka gardens profoundly inspirational. The writing on the plaque states: *Lill-Poeta Rużar Briffa li f'dan il-Ġnien tħabbeb mal-Poeżija*, meaning: "To the Poet Rużar Briffa, who in this garden fell in love with poetry")

Two flights of steps lead to another level that was designated as a Saluting battery by the British Services in 1924.

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Dinner at the Lower Barrakka

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Dinner at the Upper Barrakka

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