

Valletta

Byron visited it;
Turner painted it;
Disraeli summered there;
Oliver Reed died there.

Il-Belt, the capital of Malta, was designated the European city of culture in 2018. The most humble city of Valletta, principally baroque until the second world war, christened Superbissima because of its palaces, forts, bastions, streets, piazzas, churches, gardens, sculptures and monuments.

In summertime, when you enter the city gate, you are greeted by quietness, a sense of peace, of calm created by buildings and citizens, who celebrate their destiny. The visitor is surrounded by architecture worthy of time, deserving of the senses, to appreciate the magnificence and beauty of the surroundings. At the same time, a detailed examination displays the ability of the Maltese in catering for practicality. One is struck by the height and width of many of the doorways, a reference to the days in the sixteenth century, when the Knights were prodigious in their armour and headwear.

The quaint old buses, Bedford 1950s vintage, have been replaced; green is the order of the day. Within the city, electric taxis, the latest advance for energy saving and health, confuse elder citizens, who see no harm in walking from Floriana to the termini of walls, and the extremes of the Grand Harbour.

The City from the Grand Harbour

Pale gravy stone,
washed and dabbed
with ochre and umber,
defines the buildings of
Valletta, against a rich
ultramarine sky.

An occasional spotting of
fire, regal blue and milk white,
offering contrast and coolness.
The sea beneath, a deep
night, the merest of tones
separating the streaks of waves.