



MALTA GOES RURAL

Maqluba (Siggiewi - Qrendi)

walk

Tips for the road

- Plan ahead and follow all the signs throughout the route. This is the **Gray Walk** so please follow the gray signs. It is very easy to get distracted by the surrounding scenery while taking your country walk. Short cuts are to be avoided as many fields are privately owned. You will encounter many 'RTO' signs meaning 'Riservato'. The markings indicate private property.
- Maltese is the official language of the Maltese Islands and an official EU language. The Maltese language is spoken only on the Maltese Islands. Road signs in Malta are in Maltese. Some basic translations that will help you throughout the walk: *Triq* - Street, *Vjal* - Avenue, *Sqaq* - Alley, *Cnien* - Garden, *Sigra* - Tree.
- Please keep in mind that in the Maltese Islands cars drive on the left-hand side.
- In some of the walks you will come across churches and other places of religious devotion. Please keep in mind that these are places of worship and due respect must be given if approaching or entering such places. One should not wander in such places if an official religious function is underway.
- Be Prepared... be sure to wear a comfortable pair of walking shoes and clothing which is appropriate for the time of the year. Allow enough time to complete the walk in broad daylight. Make allowances for time required for resting, taking photographs and observing nature and/or places of interest.
- Bird trapping and hunting are practised in the countryside. There are, however, strict regulations determining areas where such activities are permitted and the time of the year when no such activities are allowed.
- Cliff tops are magnificent areas but they also present potential hazards. Always keep a safe distance from the cliff edges, especially on windy days, or if the ground is covered by loose gravel or is slippery due to rainfall.

- In some valleys and gorges, mobile phone reception may be poor or there may be none at all.
- Respect the fragility of the countryside. Do not climb over rubble walls or throw stones into valleys or over cliffs. Refrain from taking any 'souvenirs' back home with you. Do not disturb animals, plants or their natural habitats. Leave only your footprint behind you and nothing else.
- Be culturally sensitive and respect local customs. Take photographs but respect the privacy of others.
- More information on places of interest such as churches, can be found on the informational panels that are installed along this route.

Emergency Number: 112



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Our walk starts in the Siggiewi main square. Siggiewi is an interesting village in its own right, and one that offers a good starting point for many countryside walks. The main square of the village is wide and it provides one with a number of interesting points to visit.

At one corner, facing downhill there is the main parish church, dedicated to St. Nicholas of Bari. At the centre of the square there is a stone statue of the same saint. On each side of the square one can see two small churches. Facing the parish church, on the right hand side, there is the church dedicated to Our Lady. At the other end of the square there is another church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist.

Our walk starts near the church dedicated to St. John the Baptist. Keeping to the left-hand side we start walking towards the other end of the village. You might encounter other ramblers walking in the opposite direction. They are following the Grgenti Walk (Green) which starts in the Buskett woodland and ends in Siggiewi. If you have not yet followed this walk, we invite you to try it out. Walking along Triq il-Lewża, one starts to notice that this area of Siggiewi still retains characteristics of the old medieval setting, with narrow lanes and winding streets. This street flows onto Triq il-Knisja, and on the left-hand side one notices a low wall, with railings and the ruins of the old parish of Siggiewi which has been restored recently. Keep on walking along this street, and take the left-hand turning into Triq l-Hmqabba. Keep to the left-hand side of the road, until you reach the roundabout; then take the third turning off the roundabout. This is a slightly busy country road, and one should pay attention to the traffic. Keeping to the right-hand side of the road, take the second turning on the right.

This part of the country lane takes one through fields lined with rubble walls and leads to a small hamlet (follow signs to). This is Hax-Xluq, and besides a number of farmhouses, there is the medieval church dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady. Once a much larger village, today this picturesque hamlet is a snapshot of times gone by, with farmers working their fields and villagers tending to their flocks. Spend some time to rest in the shade and admire how life looked some years back.

The stretch of road in front of the church leads to an intersection, dominated by a stone statue of Our Lady. Take the country lane facing you, turn left and then turn right following signs to. You are now walking in the open countryside. Fields are well-tended and you will probably see one or more farmers in their fields. At the end of this country road you have the option to take a small detour. Take the first road to the right and after a couple of metres you will find the church of Our Lady of Providence. There is a great devotion amongst Siggiewi towards Our Lady of Providence. The area, a typical wayside countryside chapel, was restored recently. Of some interest are the portico of the church, quite unique locally as well as the half-face statue on the top, showing that the church was hit more than once by lightning strikes.

Retrace your steps, and continue walking by following the road on your left. Follow the country road all along until you reach an opening dominated by another small country church, namely that of St. Nicholas. In the area there used to be a medieval hamlet called Hal Niklusi, with the church catering for the spiritual needs of the community living here.

Take the path to the left of the church, after a few metres turn left and continue walking till you reach the next marker, then turn right. This country road will take you around the fertile fields of the area, leading you to the outskirts of the village of Qrendi. Soon you will see the small church dedicated to Our Lady of Graces. Further down the hill you will reach an open space, dominated by a chapel dedicated to St. Matthew. Situated on top of the Maqluba Valley (the name means upside down and thus the name of the area), the chapel is a typical wayside chapel and the second one we will visit during this walk. The area was recently restored in order to give more prominence to the chapel.

In reality there are two chapels here. The older chapel (on the left) is on the edge of the sinkhole. It is probably one of the oldest chapels still standing in Malta and was probably built during the 16th century. Records show that it was already standing in 1574/5. The other chapel, much bigger and which is used nowadays, was built between 1674 and 1682.

The Maqluba Valley is a Natura 2000 site. This sinkhole is typical and if you take a short stroll down it, you can see many Carob and Sandarac Gum Trees (one needs to pay attention here. The path can be slippery and uneven steps lead to the edge of this natural depression. Ideally one should not venture down on his own). The Sandarac Gum Tree (in Maltese, Siġar tal-Ġargħar) is the national tree and in Malta there are only four places where this tree grows naturally, which are L-Imġiebah, Buskett woodland, il-Wardija and here at tal-Maqluba.

Legend has it that the sinkhole was created after God got angry with the people living here because of their lifestyle. God warned the people through a good woman living close by, but the people did not heed these warnings. God thus decreed that the land swallow the hamlet sparing none except the good woman. Angels were then dispatched to dispose of the hamlet into the sea thus forming the nearby island of Filfla. The truth is that the sinkhole was created on 23rd November 1343, during a severe winter storm, possibly accompanied by an earthquake. It is a natural depression formed by the collapse of the underlying limestone strata. This doline is now a sinkhole, collecting rainwater.

Here it is possible to rest. Enjoy the peace of the area in the shade of the carob trees. Once rested, return to the open space in front of the church, cross the street, and then turn on the right, you are now in Triq San Mattew. After about 250 metres, there is a right-hand turn, into Triq Sant'Anna, which leads you to a small church, dedicated to St. Anna. Continue walking uphill towards a small square. Take the street facing you, called Triq il-Paroċċa, and walk along it until you reach the Qrendi parish church, dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady.

You have now reached the end of this walk, which has taken you around two villages and their rich countryside. Spend some time in Qrendi talking to the locals and maybe have a coffee in one of the two magnificent band clubs. Once rested, you can catch a bus back home.

Qrendi is the starting point of another of our walks, the Hal-Millieri Walk (Yellow) which will take you through three beautiful villages, that of Qrendi, Mqabba and Zurrieq. We invite you to try it out some day and experience the life of these three villages, which are so close to each other, yet so unique.

Bus route No 62 operates the following route:
Valletta - Floriana - Hamrun - Marsa - Qormi - Zebbug - Siggiewi

Busses No 71 and 72 operates the following route:
Valletta - Floriana - Hamrun - Marsa - Luqa - Kirkop - Mqabba - Qrendi

Length of walk approx 6km

* It is the responsibility of individuals to approach outdoor activities with caution. Walking and any other countryside activity can be strenuous or dangerous and individuals should ensure that they are fit enough before embarking upon it. The MTA will not be held responsible for any loss of personal items and injuries of individuals following this walk.

The bus route number can change. Check the Arriva website (arriva.com.mt) before starting this walk.

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