

Malta's fortified towns and their role in Malta's tourism strategy

Leslie Vella
Chief Officer Strategic Development/Deputy CEO
Malta Tourism Authority
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Maltese Tourism at a glance

2017

Tourists	2.3 million tourists
Cruise passengers	0.67 million
Overnights	16.5 million
Expenditure	€1.95 billion
Growth vs World:	+16.4% vs +6.7%
Growth vs Europe:	+16.4% vs +8.4%
Growth vs S. Europe/Med:	+16.4% vs +13.3%
% share tourists by air:	97.9%

Tourism Policy Guiding Principles

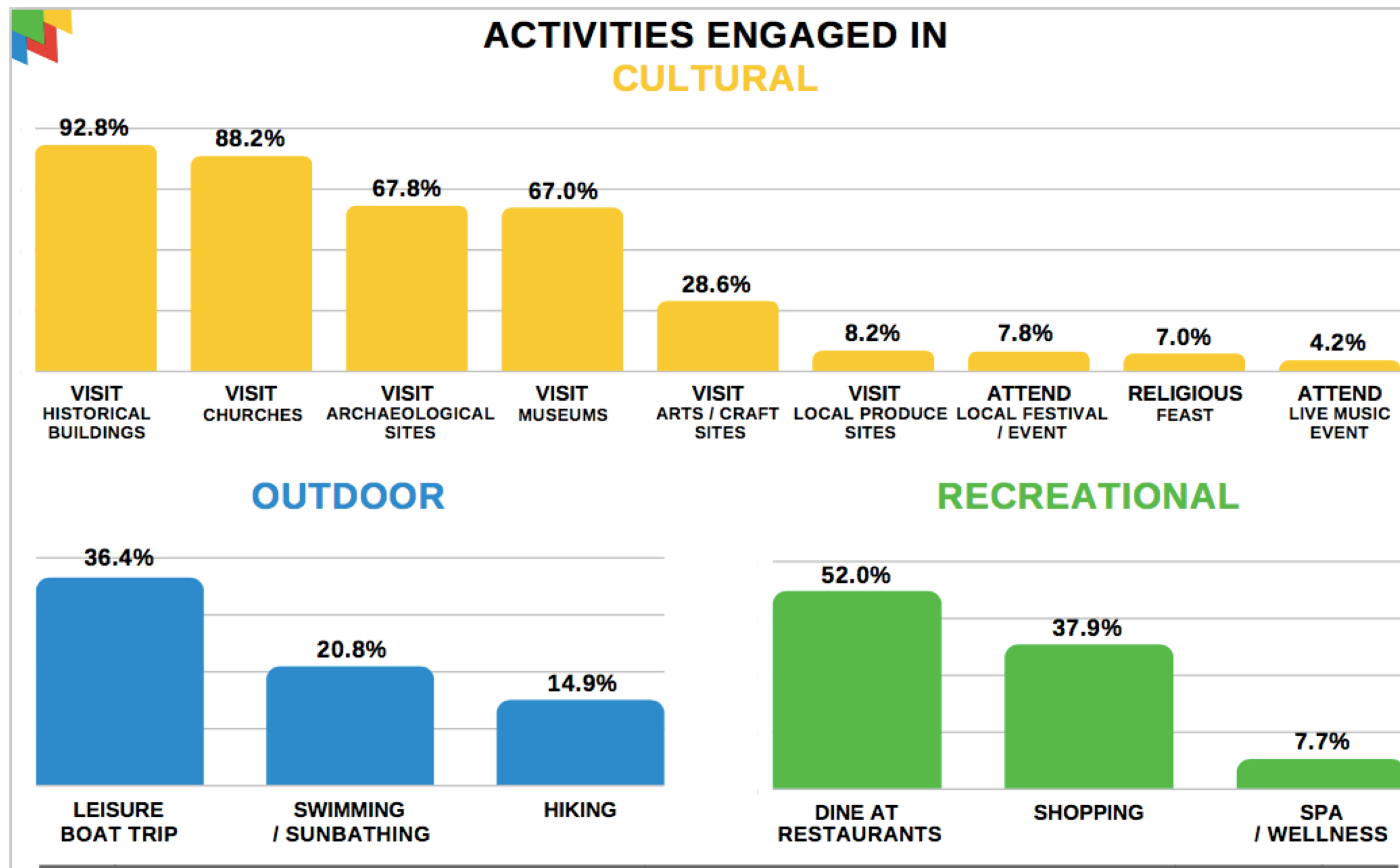
The Tourism Policy for Malta is guided by three fundamental principles namely:

- Managing Visitor Numbers
- Raising the level of Quality across the entire tourism value chain
- Reducing Seasonality

These three principles form the basis of the continued and successful sustainable development of tourism activity to the Maltese Islands over the forthcoming years

The attraction of increased volumes and shares of culture-seeking tourists is considered of paramount importance when executing strategies in line with these guiding principles.

The activities of Malta's culture seekers



The direct relevance of Walled Towns to Tourism

- In a destination which focuses so much on its rich history, the presence of not one but many well preserved, living, walled towns in close proximity to each other is an asset which can never be underestimated.
- Malta's history has been dominated by its strategic military value in the centre of the Mediterranean and this means that defensive architecture is a sine qua non to the history/culture-seeking tourist visiting the islands.
- As distinct from watchtowers, castles, entrenchments, gun batteries and artillery walls, walled towns represent the apex of historical defensive structures in that they provide an all-encompassing experience in which the defensive structures are firmly integrated with the very urban fabric of the towns they were built to protect.

Malta's walled Towns: More of the same or individually unique?

- Although all the walled towns in Malta feature a lot of common elements, care must be taken to use the principle of competitive advantage to project them as uniquely and distinctly as possible from each other.
- Trying to attract tourists to visit variations of the same theme in different localities will only be counter-productive in the long run.
- So far, such distinct positioning is not easy to apply and project.
- Some ideas for consideration:
 - Inland vs Maritime Walled Towns
 - Towns by major function: Valletta: Administrative, Floriana: Suburban, Cottonera: Maritime/Ship repair, Mdina: Church and Nobility, Gozo Citadel: Island sanctuary
 - Links to different periods: Valletta: Knights, Floriana: Bastion Gardens, Cottonera: British up to WW2, Mdina: Classic up to Medieval, Gozo Citadel: Cross section of Gozo's history

Walled Towns as a Visitor Experience

- From the tourism perspective it is not enough to assume that a walled town is going to successfully attract tourists.
- Ideally the walls should be fully integrated into the visitor experience rather than merely serve as a backdrop.
- Apart from elements such as maintenance and interpretation, the walls surrounding a fortified town must be made as accessible as possible so that both locals and visitors would be able to appreciate their majesty and their importance to the town's history. Entire sections of the impressive Cottonera Lines are still out of bounds for example.
- However accessibility and maintenance are only mere components of a holistic strategy aimed at attracting relevant tourists to the walls and the walled towns which also includes events, festivals, re-enactments and other activities aimed at renewing the link between the town and its fortified walls.

Walls as a defense mechanism to modern development

“I also value the Victoria Lines because they have probably, unwittingly, constrained development in Malta to the southern half whilst ensuring that the northern half remained relatively emptier. Having been built to resist invasion from the north to the south, their major achievement has been to suppress development from breaching their unbroken line and invading the north! For this we should be grateful as it has ensured that in spite of living on one of the most densely-populated territories on the planet we still have a beautiful, open countryside which is there for all to enjoy.”

<https://leslievella.wordpress.com/2013/03/03/the-great-wall-of-malta/>

Walls as a defense mechanism to modern development

- At a period of high economic growth characterised by an intensive construction boom which is affecting huge changes on the Maltese landscape, our walled towns continue to stand sentinel against the more rampant construction projects.
- In terms of personal observation, I would state that the huge construction projects which are being witnessed in areas ranging from towns to resorts and villages all over Malta have generally not taken place within the walled towns.
- This implies that the status of these towns and the belief in their continued preservation still stands strong.
- In many respects, the walls built to defend them are still fulfilling a defensive task by keeping the massive development out.

Walls as a defense mechanism to modern threats

- It is therefore important that the walled towns never lose their symbiotic link with the walls which embrace them.
- Walled towns devoid of or detached from their walls become as vulnerable to modernisation and development as the rest of the country
- Tourism can prove to be a strong force to help sustain this important relationship.



Thank you

leslie.vella@visitmalta.com

