

MALTA

City of Valletta

Brief description

The capital of Malta is inextricably linked to the history of the military and charitable Order of St John of Jerusalem. It was ruled successively by the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs and the Order of the Knights of St John. Valletta's 320 monuments, all within an area of 55 ha, make it one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world.

1. Introduction

Year of Inscription 1980

Agency responsible for site management

- Valletta Rehabilitation Project, Ministry of Resources & Infrastructure,
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (vi)

Justification provided by the State Party

The City of Valletta qualifies on all six counts for inclusion in the World Heritage List by virtue of its history and architecture and its function as the administrative, ecclesiastical, cultural and social hub of the Maltese Islands:

- i) due to the character of its civic, religious and domestic architecture, it is a Baroque city par excellence; in fact, this European style is here to be seen at its southern-most extension vis-a-vis the continent and the larger central Mediterranean islands such as Sicily, and absorbed and transformed to suit Maltese craftsmanship and aesthetic taste.
- ii) from early after its foundation in 1566, Valletta set the pace in architectural and artistic developments throughout the country until the first half of this century;
- iii) apart from a history of more than 400 years, Valletta is unique among contemporary European cities owing to the survival up to the present day of the majority of monuments and buildings which give

it its particular character and their concentration within the restricted limits set by its original enceinte or fortifications;

iv) the buildings of Valletta afford innumerable examples of the use of the local globigerina limestone in the erection of buildings intended for civic, religious, cultural and social purposes; the basic techniques of ashlar masonry, vaulting, arches and corbeling are utilised and experimented with successfully to solve all constructional and architectural problems, and to find place and scope for architectural expression in the form of elaborate mouldings, relief work and sculpture;

v) due to the medium durability of the stone of which it is built, Valletta now finds itself assailed by problems which emanate from the chemical composition of the stone itself and from the action of rain and changes of temperature; modern transport fumes also add their share of deleterious action on the stonework;

vi) Valletta is almost synonymous with the hospitaller and military Order of St. John which founded the city in 1566 and developed and maintained it as its headquarters for nearly two-and-a-half centuries; members of the Order were duty-bound to live and act according to the ideals of chivalry and Christian religious beliefs which often in practice boiled down to harassment of lands and shipping of Moslem nations in the Mediterranean and to the search for the patronage of rich European powers to safeguard the Order's revenue from their many properties on the continent, if not to increase it; the Order's rich and varied history during its occupation of Malta and Gozo is mirrored in Valletta's monumental buildings and the outstanding cultural patrimony of works of art and historical records conserved therein.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

ICOMOS would recommend its inclusion as qualifying under criteria 1 and 6.

- 1) the city is pre-eminently an ideal creation of the late Renaissance with its uniform urban plan, inspired by neo-platonic principles, its fortified and bastioned walls modeled around the natural site and the voluntary implantation of great monuments in well chosen locations.
- 6) It is irrevocably affiliated with the history of the military and charitable order of St. John of Jerusalem which founded the city in 1566 and maintained it throughout two and a half centuries. Valletta is, thus, associated with the history of one

of the greatest military and moral forces of modern Europe.

Moreover, the state of preservation of its well-constructed patrimony serves to make Valletta an example of historic conservation on a universal scale.

Committee Decision

The Committee made no statement.

- Statement of Significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- UNESCO official description of the site should be improved: the site has nothing to do with the city of Paola but only of Valletta

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site is adequate
- No buffer zone has been defined. Further work is needed and a proposal is in progress

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained but changes in building heights might in the long run alter the city's skyline configuration
- Major future changes affecting the outstanding universal value include the potential development of the new City Gate and the Opera house

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Special legislation and administrative arrangements : The site is subject to a special scrutiny by the Malta Environment and Planning Authority as regards new development
- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- The legislative position of the coordination body needs to be verified

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre

Management /Administrative Body

- No steering group, a proposal has been made to the Government for the setting up of a National Commission for World Heritage
- Full time coordinator

- Management by the State Party
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Schemes such as rehabilitating timber balconies have been initiated; the office responsible would also be in a better position to implement decisions if it had legal title

5. Management Plan

- No management plan
- The preparation of a plan is foreseen in the future

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- Annual operating budget possible to provide
- Funding is insufficient
- Increased funding possibly through European funding
- Mainly Government of Malta, Government of Italy (2005) and some small business sponsorships
- Bi-lateral cooperation

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 8

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Good: management, promotion, interpretation
- Average: conservation, education, visitor management
- Entities falling under the Ministry for Tourism and Culture such as Heritage Malta and the Superintendence for Cultural Heritage, provide professional guidance when needed

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Qualified professional competency
- There is a great need for training of staff alongside an increase in awareness

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics available by Malta Tourism authority, not provided

- Visitor facilities: interpretation is available in museums
- Visitor needs include overall interpretation of the site
- Trend: stable

10. Scientific Studies

- No research strategy exists for the site

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local communities and local authorities
- Need for local increase of awareness
- Interpretation is provided in museums, guides and information material refer to the World Heritage status
- Local participation: Valletta Rehabilitation Committee gives advice on the management of the site and has representatives from the community including the Local Council, the cultural and economic sectors and art historians.

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 15th (1991); 28th (1994)

Conservation interventions

- A major restoration programme since 1987 by the Valletta Rehabilitation Project. Other Government departments and entities have performed their own restoration programmes. A separate entity, St. John's Co-Cathedral Foundation, was initiated two years ago to manage one of the most important buildings: the cathedral
- Present state of conservation: needs more resources

Threats and Risks to site

- Development, visitor/tourism pressures
- Specific issues if mentioned: there is a lot of pressure to enlarge existing houses for use by the business community

- Valletta is a major tourism attraction and attention needs to be made to safeguard carrying capacities of the main attractions
- Measures planned for in the Master Plan being prepared

13. Monitoring

- No monitoring programme
- Measures planned will be dealt with in the Master Plan being planned

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation
- Awareness of the heritage value of the city has been increased substantially locally and this led to the creation of the Valletta Rehabilitation Project to manage and conserve the site. A substantial amount of conservation and environment improvement projects have been done but much more still needs to be done
- Weaknesses of management are the financial constraints

Future actions:

- Possible European Union funding