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Old towns as tourist attractions

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I have recently visited Mdina and was impressed by the general atmosphere of upkeep and cleanliness that the place is showing nowadays. The Old City has become a major tourist attraction and the efforts and money thrown into its upgrading and restoration in recent years have not been in vain.

One now expects that similar efforts be taken to restore other equally meritorious towns in Malta and Gozo. Valletta, the capital, is being tackled but there seems to be a lack of prioritisation in the planning of the projects. For example, the part of Valletta that needs to be given early consideration is certainly its entrance and the environs. What tourists get when they go through the existing City Gate is of inferior quality, bordering on the vulgar. Architecturally, it is glaringly out of character to the rest of Valletta as an old Baroque city. It is a sorry substitute to the elegant old Porta Reale that we can now admire only in faded photos.

Other towns, especially those in the south of Malta, with a history as interesting as that of Valletta and Mdina readily come to mind as potential candidates for an embellishment and restoration drive.

Vittoriosa (Birgu) has an important past. Sir Temi Zammit states that already in 1523 the town of Borgo was the commercial centre of the island. It grew up "under the shade of Castel Sant' Angelo and rivalled the Città Notabile in importance". Of Senglea, (L-Isla), with an equally significant history, Zammit writes that in 1553, "The new Grand Master turned his whole attention to the fortifications of the harbour, and caused an elaborate bastion to be built at Isola

Point within which a new city began to rise. This city, known as Senglea to commemorate the Grand Master, was built on a regular plan." Senglea was, in due course, to serve as the model when some 14 years later La Valette planned the construction of the new capital city.

Such a cluster of ancient towns distinct from each other by virtue of space and distance, as well as different backgrounds and characteristics, but with a common historical heritage would become a major attraction to the discerning visitor seeking cultural interests.

All this brings me back to my introduction regarding my last visit to Mdina. I have perforce to make a negative remark on what I saw. It was painful for me to note the great damage that the horse-drawn cabs are causing to the new paving at Mdina. This most recent project, rightly described as "massive and costly" by a former minister, is in danger of being ruined altogether if proper action is not taken in time. The attached photo clearly demonstrates the extent of the degradation already taking place.

Hope springs eternal. When shall we see a real change in this country in the way of tackling major projects of this nature? Proper planning needs to be comprehensive to cover prior and post implementation. It is no use (and in the end very costly) to abandon projects altogether once the ceremonies of inauguration are over, which, unfortunately, is our curse.

Comments

vincent a galea (8 hours, 56 minutes ago)

Sometimes one wonders whether the authorities really care! All they are really intersted in, and capable of , is collecting taxes!! See the present concern and flurry on increasing the water and electricity charges!!!

Embellishing the Islands will also increase the countries coffers! It will attract tourism, our number one money earner and which definitely needs a boost, and maybe relieve somewhat the dependence on our well-earned cash for survival!

Valletta definitely leaves much to be desired! It is definitely the main tourist attraction. Let's forget votes for a moment and clean up the terrible atmosphere (SUK!) that welcomes one outside the main entrance. Let's rebuild the old PORTA REALE and the OPERA HOUSE, both in their original prestine glory! And this shoould be carried out without further ado!! (WHAT'S HOLDING THE REBUILDING OF THE OPERA HOUSE? MYSTERY!!)

Then and only then will the PEOPLE OF MALTA be convinced that we have a Government that means business!
