



BLUE FLAG

MANAGEMENT OPERATIONS 2015

Malta Tourism Authority

<http://www.mta.com.mt/blueflag>



Blue Flag Beaches in the Maltese Islands

Għadira Bay Mellieha



Background Information

The Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) has taken the role of Beach Management following two beach replenishment projects conducted by the Authority; namely St George's Bay and Bugibba Perched Beach. Following the success of these two beaches, the MTA widened its beach management operations to other coastal stretches mainly: Golden Bay, Mellieħa Bay, Qawra Point and Fond Għadir rocky coast. During 2014 and 2015, the Authority has turned its focus

towards the south of Malta to include pilot project management at Pretty Bay Birżebbuġa and at Ta' Fajtata in Marsascalea.

Beach Management

The beaches managed by MTA strive to meet international standards in safety, bathing water quality, services and environmental awareness. The sustainable management approach, abiding by the international Blue Flag Programme Criteria, resulted in the achievement of international and national Quality Awards. Awards include the Blue Flag (BF) that requires applying 100% of the BF criteria and the Beach of Quality (BOQ) that requires over 70% of the same criteria. Through sustainable beach management operations locals and tourists can benefit from the good use of the coast while respecting the natural environment.



The positive results that were obtained year after year encouraged private entities to work for similar achievements. Paradise Bay Resort Hotel and Westin Dragonara Hotel received the quality awards of Blue Flag as well. This beach status encouraged also the Ministry for Gozo, who is working hard to obtain an award for Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay and Marsalforn Bay. The Ministry is also experimenting in beach management on Santa Maria and Blue Lagoon beaches on Comino. Two beaches, Għajn Tuffieħa Bay in Mgarr Malta and Ir-Ramla l-Hamra Gozo, managed by Gaia Foundation, also received the Blue Flag Award. A total of sixteen beaches were managed on the Islands in summer 2015.



Ghadira Bay - Mellieħa

Beach Management awards have to be applied for every year. It is the aim of the Authority to retain the current awards and upgrade them in quality and quantity. The Blue Flag Programme is operated by FEE (Federation for Environmental Education) represented in Malta by Nature Trust. Malta joined the BF Programme in 2006 with St George's Bay awarded Blue Flag in 2007 and Bugibba Perched Beach in 2009. In 2015 Golden Bay received a Beach of Quality while the Blue flag was awarded to the following beaches:

1. St. Georges Bay
2. Buġibba Perched Beach
3. Mellieħa Bay
4. Qawra Point



Buġibba Perched Beach

5. Ramla l-Hamra (Gozo)
6. Għajn Tuffieħa
7. Fond Għadir
8. Paradise Bay Resort Hotel

In 2016, MTA will take Blue Flag a step further for another Blue Flag beach. Beach management at Golden Bay has repeatedly met 100% of the Blue Flag criteria and its sand dunes and the surrounding environment are on the pathway to recovery. Therefore, it is now time for Golden Bay to achieve such status.



St George's Bay- St Julians

The BF Programme helps in highlighting the beach product - a major element of Maltese tourism - to international recognition. It helps to encourage achieving higher results in water quality and the overall awareness of the coastal ecosystem.

At Pretty Bay a jellyfish net was installed in the sea, beach management signs, a lifeguard tower and clinic were installed and waste separation bins were distributed along the beach.

Marsascala rocky beach was furnished with a lifeguard tower, new picnic tables, open air Gymnasium, kids play area and other recreational spaces. Toilets, showers, railings and walkways have been upgraded by MTA and the beach is accessible with ramps that lead to the rocky shore.



Ta' Fajtata - Marsascala

Other beaches managed by MTA are:

- Fajtata Rocky Beach Marsascala
- Pretty Bay Birzebbuga

Beaches managed by the Ministry for Gozo with assistance from the MTA are:

- Marsalforn Bay
- Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay
- Blue Lagoon
- Sta Maria Bay



Pretty Bay- Birzebbuga





All beaches are furnished with:

1. Information and ecology boards
2. Shaded lifeguard platform
3. Clinic room
4. Various walkways
5. Safety flag system and flag poles
6. Lifeguard emergency equipment
7. Notice boards with Code of Conduct and activities
8. Waste separation and organic waste bins
9. Bridges, Ladders of various forms and sizes
10. Showers
11. Beach Libraries
12. Separate Gents, Ladies, Disabled users WC cabinets
13. Swim zone perimeters (Installed by the Ministry for Transport)
14. Beach ashtrays and portable hand ashtrays for "Butts off the Sand" campaign

Additionally:

15. Sand wheelchairs for disabled users were at Mellieha Bay, St Georges Bay, Golden Bay, Pretty Bay and Ramla I-Hamra in Gozo.



16. Safety swimmers pull ropes were installed by Gaia Foundation at Golden Bay and Għajn Tuffieha.

Blue Flag Operations

MTA's Blue Flag beaches operate eight hours a day seven days a week between mid-June and mid-September. MTA extends its operations as deems fit.

All beaches are manned during the above periods by:

1. Qualified lifeguards and first aid personnel
2. Experienced beach supervisors
3. On-site beach cleaners



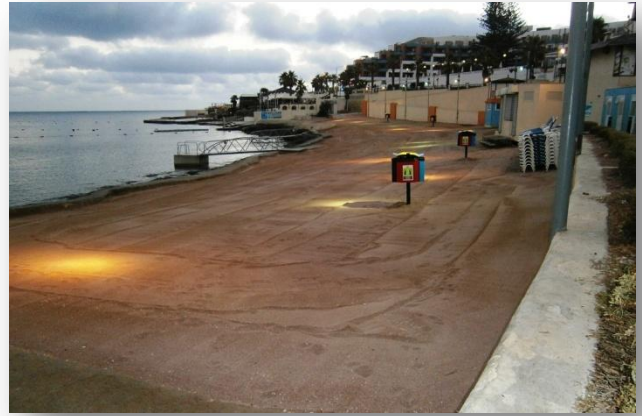
Fond Ghadir Sliema



St George's Bay- St Julians

Bathing Water Quality

Bathing Water Quality was tested from every beach, every week by the Environmental Health Department (Ministry of Health). The water was checked for the physico-chemical and micro-biological properties and the results were mostly excellent throughout summer. During 2011 bathing water quality results took a leap and exceeded every record with “Excellent” results every week. In 2015, Malta now stands as one of the top EU countries for excellent bathing water quality.



Bugibba Perched Beach

Sand Sifting

Sand sifting by machinery is done once a week, sometimes twice in peak summer. A total of 80 sand sifting operations on the 5 sandy beaches managed by MTA took place in 2015. These were performed in the early hours of the mornings. The sand sifter was accompanied by an MTA supervisor to ensure optimum results. Manual sand raking is done daily by the beach maintenance team of the Cleansing Services Department.

Beach Supervision

Beach supervisors, mostly second year university students, are interviewed and recruited every year to supervise all beach operations and see that beach users abide by the Code of Conduct for their own benefit and the benefit of the beach environment. Prior to the start of the season, beach staff attended an in-house seminar with talks from Nature Trust, the Health Authorities, Beach management consultants and experienced MTA staff. All supervisors are given a uniform, identification tag, sun cream and a cap while all inexperienced entrants are, for some weeks, placed with experienced supervisors before being allowed to beach supervise by themselves.



The beaches are divided into 2 regions, each supervised by a Head Supervisor – namely the South with Sliema and St Julians, and the North with St. Paul's Bay. Supervisors are provided with an instructions file on Standard Operating Procedures, emergency contacts and contact numbers, By-laws of local councils where applicable, as well as the more frequently asked about situations regarding top-less bathing, pets, gazebos and tents on shorefront. Moreover, at Għadira Bay supervisors are equipped with two way radios and a binocular.

Beach Cleaning

Beach cleaning is done by staff from the Cleansing Services Department (CSD) of the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA). Daily tasks include: the removal of dead sea grass (*Posedonia oceanica*) and other flotsam that is beached on a daily basis; raking of the sand early in the morning; hand picking of litter from sand, rocky areas and sand dunes; emptying of waste bins, emptying of separated waste and the general upkeep of the coast.

Beach Safety

A new safety flag code was introduced this year as issued by the International Lifesaving Federation (ILF) and all beaches were furnished with a new flag system. These are operated by the lifeguards who introduced further information along the beaches.

Involvement of other entities

Beach management involves the cooperation of various other entities whose input is crucial. These include the Tourism Directorate Workshop of the Ministry for Tourism, Local Councils, Lands Department, Cleansing Service Department, Ministry for Transport, Ministry for Gozo and the enforcement unit of the MTA.

Beach Activities and Projects

The Blue Flag Programme necessitates the organisation of a number of Environmental Educational Activities on every beach. The MTA works beyond the required criteria and organises activities with experts who can offer professional guidance. Marine biologists, divers, archaeologists, professional trekkers, photographers, ceramists, lecturers and astronomers are involved to offer assistance for good results every time.

Hundreds of children from Malta's summer schools, scores of adults through mailing lists together with physically or mentally impaired people are involved in MTA Blue Flag activities every year.

Activity themes for the past years included: Love your Beach – Do not Litter, Conservation of Malta's Natural Habitat, Conservation of Malta's Marine Environment and this year's was Conservation and Sustainable use of Coastal Areas.

Beach Management and Blue Flag Awards help in giving our beaches a professional outlook on an international level standard. It is of great benefit to the beach users including the local public as well as the foreign visitor. Blue Flag can be effectively used as a tool in the marketing of Malta as a holiday destination where beaches, together with the accommodation sector and the ancillary services, form the major part of the overall product. The population is an integral part of the Maltese touristic product and needs to be kept informed and educated in keeping our beaches in a pristine condition as possible.



Marsalforn Bay Gozo



Għadira Bay - Mellieħa

Westin Dragonara Resort Lido awarded a Blue Flag



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Island's Edge Lido at the Paradise Bay Resort Hotel awarded a Blue Flag

