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11 BEACHES IN MALTA AND GOZO AWARDED BLUE FLAG STATUS

The Malta Tourism Authority welcomes with satisfaction the announcement issued today by the Foundation for Environmental Education in which eleven beaches in Malta and Gozo were awarded the coveted Blue Flag status for this year. The Blue Flag programme is operated under the auspices of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) which is headquartered in Copenhagen, Denmark and has members in 77 countries.

For the beaches to qualify for this prestigious award, a series of stringent environmental, educational, safety-related and access-related criteria must be met and maintained.

The beaches that have obtained this prestigious eco-certificate this year are Buġibba Perched Beach, Fond Għadir (Sliema), Golden Sands Beach, Għajn Tuffieħa Bay, Mellieħa Beach, Qawra Point Beach, St George's Bay (St Julian's) and Westin Dragonara Beach Club St Julian's (*managed by Westin Dragonara Resort*) in Malta, and Hondoq ir-Rummien Bay, Marsalforn Bay and Ramla Bay in Gozo.

Blue Flag accreditation is only awarded for one season at a time, based on the beach's performance in the previous year, and as long as the relevant criteria covering water quality, environmental education and information, environmental management, and safety and other services, are fulfilled. Even if awarded the eco-label, the Blue Flag may be withdrawn at any time if the quality of the beach declines.

The fact that several beaches have been found worthy of the Blue Flag status is a mark of quality that clearly demonstrates that the beaches managed by the MTA are up to international standard.

Minister for Tourism and Consumer Protection Julia Farrugia Portelli applauded this recognition and remarked that; "beaches in Malta are an integral part of our tourism product. From stretches of sand ideal for sunbathing, to shallow waters primed for snorkelling, Malta's sea is frequented by hundreds of thousands of tourists every year. We are constantly working on improving our product, whilst looking into sustainable measures for the sector, particularly through these trying times we are facing. Standards, water quality, safety, and public environmental education are always a priority for us, and as a result, 11 beaches in Malta and Gozo have been awarded the prestigious Blue Flag status."

Commenting about this announcement, Johann Buttigieg, Chief Executive of the Malta Tourism Authority stated: “Achieving Blue Flag status for a number of beaches around the Maltese Islands is a recognition of the genuine commitment towards the environment and sustainable tourism that the destination has been investing in for the past few years. The Malta Tourism Authority remains solidly committed towards this initiative for the benefit of the local community and of our visitors from abroad.”

In its announcement, the Blue Flag International Jury further added that is very much aware of the special situation the world is facing today with the coronavirus. Therefore it wished to highlight that the sites that are being awarded the Blue Flag must at all times comply with the national and international health guidelines and legislations regarding Coronavirus. During its season, and when it is opened to the public, as long as the national health measures are in place and it complies with all other Blue Flag criteria, the site can fly the Blue Flag.

The Malta Tourism Authority wishes to thank the Local Councils, the Cleansing and Maintenance Division, the Civil Protection Department, the NGOs who provide lifesaving and rescue services, and all other stakeholders, who worked closely with MTA’s Product Directorate and whose support and assistance made such an achievement possible.

In Malta, Blue Flag and other programmes of the Foundation for Environmental Education are represented by Nature Trust – FEE Malta, which was appointed as the FEE National Coordinator back in 2002.

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