

Valletta evenings – A city alive

Bringing new life to the capital

by John Ebejer

THE COMING four weekends will see renewed efforts to bring new life to Valletta in the evenings. The Malta Tourism Authority has launched the 'Valletta Evenings – A City Alive' initiative which brings together a rich programme of leisure and cultural activities.

Valletta's potential for evening leisure is significant. The capital is home to Malta's three most important cultural venues: the Manoel Theatre, the Mediterranean Conference Centre, and the Centre for Creativity.

The cultural programme offered by Valletta is rich and varied. The city now boasts new facilities, which makes it more amenable to evening leisure, namely the new cinema complex and several restaurants.

The new lighting of Republic Street puts buildings (quite literally!) in a new light and creates a new setting which people can enjoy.

Revitalised evening activity in Valletta will provide tourists with a wider choice of evening leisure and enhance the tourist experience. It will also provide greater opportunities for leisure for Maltese and for different age groups. The initiative targets Maltese so that the revitalisation will be more self-sustaining in the long-run.

A rich programme of activities is being offered over four weekends. Street music, entertainment and bands will provide vitality, movement and colour in the streets and squares. Activities with a more popular appeal include a children's corner, *ghana* and Maltese food at the Upper Barracca, and a display of old motors.

Shops will open till 9 p.m. and cafes, bars and restaurants will serve patrons till late.

Music lovers will be spoilt for choice, with no fewer than 15 concerts, performances and recitals over the eight evenings. Classical music features most strongly but jazz and band march music are also included. Theatre also features in the programme.

Valletta's rich historical and architectural legacy is often not fully appreciated. The programme therefore includes walking tours, exhibitions, opening of historic buildings and museums. Tour operators are encouraged to organise Valletta night tours for tourists.

The activities will take place on Friday and Saturday evenings from 6.30 p.m. onwards from April 20 to May 12.

During the four weekends, on Friday and Saturday after 6 p.m., the MCP car park in Floriana is offering reduced rates of 25 cents. A free shuttle service will also be available.

Highlights of events

- Children's corner with animators
 - Evening concerts every Friday at 8 p.m. at Manoel Theatre or St James Cavalier
 - Animated Valletta walk tour for children over 9 every Saturday
 - Old motors and historic motorcycle display every Saturday in Freedom Square or Merchants Street
 - Police Band and display at Main Guard on May 5
 - Choral concerts at St James' church and St Paul's Anglican Pro-Cathedral
 - Big screen for Eurovision Song Contest on Republic Square and beer festival
- (All starting at 6.30 p.m.)

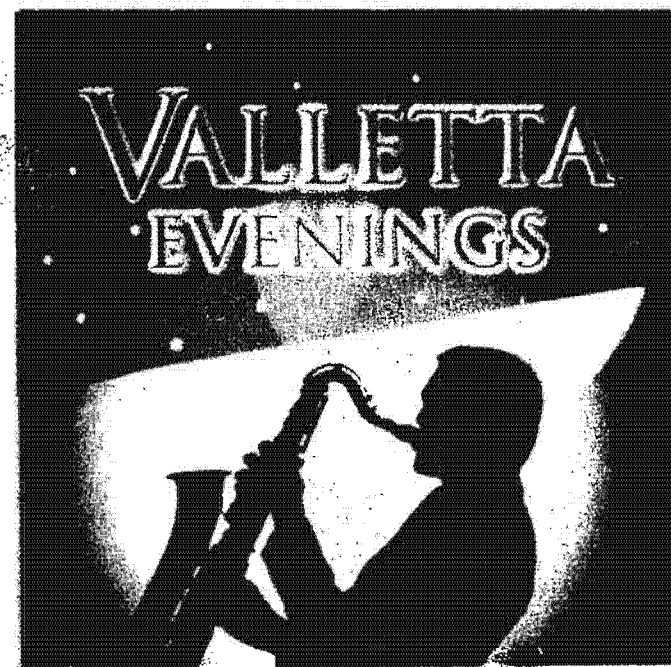
Another activity being organised by the MTA is the Valletta History and Elegance Festival (tomorrow to April 22). This is a separate event, most of which will be during daytime, which will primarily target tourists. Although different, both activities capitalise on Valletta's charm to provide a unique experience for tourists and Maltese.

The Malta Tourism Authority could not have done it alone. The Valletta council, Valletta Rehabilitation Committee, Department of Culture, and the Centre for Creativity have provided support and are actively contributing to the initiative.

The support of organisations representing shopowners and business interests in Valletta is also crucial. The GRTU, the Republic Street Business Community, and the Merchants Street Business Community have expressed enthusiasm for the idea and are also actively contributing in the organisation.

These agencies are doing their bit to revitalise Valletta in the evening. It's now your turn – come and have a good time.

Mr Ebejer is chairman of the organising committee of Valletta Evenings – A City Alive



A CITY ALIVE