

THE TATTOO

THETATTOO@GMAIL.COM

MAKING A PERMANENT IMPRESSION SINCE 1994

VOLUME 12 No. 30

Unwinding in Gozo's timelessness

By **MARESSA ZAHRA**
The Tattoo

I decided I could have just as well thrown my shrimps in the water. The fish managed to fool me and make a feast out of it. They ate all the shrimps on my fishing rod, without me even noticing them.

According to my expert boyfriend and his mom, the fish ate the shrimps from the side and were too small for me to feel the pull.

No, I definitely have no talent for fishing.

But hey, that's just one of the delights I discovered on my vacation to Gozo, the sister island of Malta, and here they are, in random order of importance.

Jellyfish

If you've ever gone swimming, you must have been warned about these pink mushroom-shaped bodies. If you're going to come swimming in the Mediterranean Sea this year, beware – there's a total infestation of them around.

You're most likely to get stung, and their sting is uncomfortable, they say.

I have never experienced one, though I always happen to be with people who do.

At Gozo, both my boyfriend and his father got stung. I was swimming exactly near them. Did I get stung? No! Jellyfish don't wanna come near me. Sigh.

I ask if the fish happen to eat jellyfish. Perhaps they think they'll catch



Maressa Zahra / The Tattoo

A popular Mediterranean swimming and diving beach in Gozo, above, is Tax-Xwejni, which in Maltese means "a small ship."

my disease and fish will fool them easily, too? Just joking.

Junk Food

I guess this is both a life-saver and a life-taker. But on vacations I eat so much of it, I expand, literally.

This was no exception. I only have to say I gained half a kilo in four days. You got the knack of it, didn't you? And I thought I could exercise self-control easily!

Sight-seeing

I've been so much to Gozo in my

life (it only takes 20 minutes on board of a ship to arrive from Malta) that I tend to dismiss the amazement of the place. There's something for everybody, no matter if you are the fun-loving type, the cultured-historical type, or anywhere in between the two.

I must admit I am more the former type, so I confine myself mostly to the paradisiacal beaches there. Though in Malta, I definitely prefer the sandy ones, in Gozo, I always want to be at some rocky one, because they are too beautiful to be true. But I always have to remember they are real and not a

postcard picture.

When I was not swimming, I loved to take a tour into the island's cultural life, which is almost entirely made up of churches and a temple – Ggantija – similar to Stonehenge. The churches are magnificent. Though some are smaller in size than the Maltese ones – almost chapel-sized, they are spectacular to see and a real feast for the eyes.

Lifestyle

Life always changes when you're on vacation, but what I noticed with

amazement was that most of the time, I did not even know what the time was, and I was comfortable about that. This may sound silly to some of you, but if your life revolves round a clock like mine does, you'll understand.

For some time, I was able to live life freely – comfortable in the knowledge that I had absolutely nothing to do, and all the time in the world to have fun.

And have fun I did.

Well, okay, yes ... the fishing disappointment still lurks behind me, but I can live with it.



Maressa Zahra / The Tattoo

This castle in Gozo was used by the Knights of St. John and then by the British when they were Malta's rulers. Today it's a disco, or nightclub.



Kathryn Middleton / The Tattoo

Hawaiian palm trees highlight the Pacific sunset

Having it all in Hawaii

By **SEAN SOLTYS**
The Tattoo

You can't beat the paradise of Hawaii.

My family's taken many great vacations over the years, but our trip to Hawaii – filled with spectacular sights and exhilarating experiences – topped them all.

From the views off 500 ft. cliffs overlooking water, parasailing 800 ft. in the air and catching a wave in Maui's surf, Hawaii was an awesome experience.

Instead of island hopping like some travelers, we chose to remain on Maui for the duration of our stay. Besides the fact that it costs an arm, a leg, and a few toes for a family of six to catch a flight every few days, we heard that Maui was the most authentic island of them all.

We weren't disappointed.

We stayed on Maui for 11 days in the wonderful town of Ka'anapali at a resort named the Ka'anapali Ali'i. "Ali'i" means "royalty" in Hawaiian and that's exactly how they treated us. Our condo had three bedrooms, a kitchen and dining room, a living room, two bathrooms, and our own lanai, which is a private porch.

Luckily, the condo had more televisions than Best Buy, so I was able to keep up with all of the important sports news throughout the trip. Even in paradise, priorities are important.

I went snorkeling at many great locations around the island. One of the most crowded snorkeling places was right at the end of Ka'anapali beach at a rock named "Black Rock."

I'm not going to share with you what color the rock was, but I will say the snorkeling was indeed popular.

With more humans floating around than fish, the snorkeling was decent, but not top notch. I saw only one turtle and a limited number of fish. I might have enjoyed it more had I not had an unexplained goggle malfunction within 15 minutes that left me unable to snorkel.

Probably the best snorkeling I saw in Maui was at a very remote and hard to find black sand beach named, naturally, Black Sand Beach.

Instead of a crowd, there were only about five people snorkeling – six if you count the man with a Speedo and goggles in the shallow water. It may have been empty because the rocks covering the sea floor made it a poor beach for swimming.

When my dad and I swam around a large rock formation that separated the beach from the scuba area, we were amazed by all the colorful fish and the large sea turtles. As we swam into a little area surrounded by rocks on three sides, there were at least four turtles, each about four feet long, within 15 feet of us.

At one point, my dad looked to his right and discovered that a turtle was swimming right next to him, prompting him to scream underwater and swallow a mouthful of salt water.

What's Hawaii without catching a wave?

Along with my sisters and my dad, I took surfing lessons. After the initial "safety lesson" on shore, we set out to hang 10.

During the "safety lesson," I learned two valuable lessons:

Sitting on a surfboard for over five minutes can be extremely uncomfortable, and using a surf-school's supplied rash-protecting shirt is a bad idea if you have a sense of smell.

With a bit of a push from our instructor, we all managed to get up a few times while my little brother and my mom cheered embarrassingly loud from the jetty.

The next day we rented a surfboard so we could practice our newfound

Islands of Paradise

skills. Although none of us managed to ride a wave completely without the push from our instructor, we all were able to hang 5 or 6 after a few tries.

At 80 degrees, the ocean water was very comfortable, and the large waves in the afternoon not only made for great surfing, but also for great boogie boarding.

We soon got bored with traditional boogie boarding so we tried different variations, such as the classic board-reversal boogie board and the more advanced, lie-on-your-back-and-get-a-face-full-of-sandy-water boogie boarding.

We called it "street boogie boarding." Now that I look back at it, it makes no sense because you can't boogie board on a street. But regardless of our fantasies, it was fun.

Though inviting, the ocean was not the only water to lounge in along the Ka'anapali beach strip. Each of the seven resorts had its own unique pool. After a while, the fairly traditional pool at our condo began to get boring. The other pools looked more appealing, so my sister and I scouted them out to get a sense of the security at each one. All of the pools besides ours required a wristband for swimming, but we were determined to sneak a swim in every one of them.

We managed to pull off our covert swimming caper unscathed in about an hour and a half.

The award for best pool, we decided, should go to the Hyatt Regency. That hotel's huge pool included a waterslide and many caves.

Our award for best security went to the overall worst pool, which was at The Whaler where we ended up sneaking through bushes at the back of the pool to get in.

Of course, we couldn't leave Hawaii without going to a luau.

We chose to go to the concierge-recommended luau at the Marriott called "Drums of the Pacific." After a delicious traditional meal featuring a pig that had been roasted for 12 hours, hula dancers took to the stage. We saw all kinds of Hawaiian

traditions, capped by a great performance by a man spinning lit torches at alarming rates.

Probably the worst choice we made during our vacation was traveling the Road to Hana. Called "the most beautiful road in the world" by some, we were intrigued and felt we needed to do it. Unfortunately, it did not nearly live up to the hype.

It was raining off and on all day as it always does in the rain forest part of Maui, and the sights and hikes were less than amazing.

It took six hours to travel the length of the narrow, winding road, and the best parts were not the sights, but the drinks. On the sides of the roads were little stands where they sold smoothies sweetened with fresh sugar cane juice in local flavors such as papaya, passion fruit, and pina colada.

If the Road to Hana is "the most

beautiful road in the world," I'd hate to see an ugly street. Along the sides of the road were many abandoned, rusty, ruined cars. So if you like pina coladas and getting caught in the rain, I suggest you either travel the Road to Hana or contact Rupert Holmes immediately.

On the last full day of our trip, we went parasailing off of Ka'anapali beach. It was both thrilling and relaxing at the same time. At 800 feet in the air, it's very quiet and there's a great view.

Still, I'm not sure what I enjoyed more – the parasailing or the look on my mom's face when the assistant in the boat told her stories about the ones whose parachutes had fallen off.

Parasailing and papaya, surfing, scuba diving and sea turtles, black sand beaches and fabulous hotel pools – Hawaii has it all.

The long flight: getting there isn't half the fun

By **KATHRYN MIDDLETON**
The Tattoo

"Come on Kathryn, you can't watch TV until you're done packing," my mom yelled.

"Where are we going now?" I asked. My family is always going somewhere, so it's hard for me to keep track.

"Hawaii. Remember?"
No.
"Yes."

After packing and getting everyone to the airport, we were finally ready to get on the plane.

"Mom, I forgot to ask you, how long is the flight?"
"Twelve hours."

My jaw dropped. Is a 12-hour flight worth going to Hawaii?

I stepped on the plane, afraid of the looming hours of boredom that awaited me in the air.

"Welcome aboard!" the flight attendants said, forced smiles pasted across their faces.

I found my seat and squeezed in. My brother was sitting next to me. "Want to play cards?" he asked.

"Sure," I replied. I put down my tray table and he put down his and we started to play black jack. We must have hit the table too hard because the man in front of us said, "Hey, I'm trying to have a nice flight here, and I can't have it with you two banging against the tables!"

"Sorry," I said. My brother and I rolled our eyes and started to play again. Then the same guy stood up and said, "This isn't going to work out if you two keep doing this!"

"Sorry," I said again.

I whispered to my brother that we should stop playing. I was so mad at the guy in front of us because we were barely touching the table the second time and he still got mad at us!

This was going to be a long flight.

As the plane took off, I watched the houses and the cars get smaller and smaller as we went higher. They looked like a little kid's toys. I looked in front of me and saw a TV in every seat.

Everyone was asleep on the plane except our family. I wondered how they fell asleep so fast. No one can go to sleep that fast on an airplane!

I tried sleeping. Nope, I couldn't do it – the seat was too small. I just sat there staring at the black TV screen until we were allowed to turn on electronics.

Finally, after watching five movies and listening to my iPod for three hours, we were almost there. My ears were popping like crazy so I grabbed a piece of gum and started to chew. Unfortunately the gum didn't help, so I just waited patiently until we landed.

As we taxied to our gate, I saw palm trees.

I love palm trees. When we got off the plane, my cousins were there waiting. I was so excited to see them and to be in Hawaii.

We all ran for the car. Driving through beautiful Hawaii on the way to my cousins' house, we all started singing "Dirty Little Secret" in the car.

I knew then that the long flight was definitely worth it.



Tattoo photo

Sean Soltys catches a wave off a beach in Maui.

WWW.READTHETATTOO.COM

The best teen journalism in the world. For questions, comments or to join, contact advisors Steve Collins and Jackie Majerus at (860) 523-9632.