



NETWORK OF THE  
CULTURE ROUTE  
FORTIFIED MONUMENTS



L-Università  
ta' Malta

International Conference - Fortified Heritage for Tourism and Leisure

## FORTE CULTURA Malta Symposium 2026

Wednesday 14 to Saturday 17 October 2026

### Programme

The programme dates are final and not subject to change.

Venue for conference sessions: Fort St. Elmo (mornings of Day 1 and Day 3).

#### Day 1 - Wednesday 14 October

##### Conference Presentations + Visit to Valletta fortifications

Morning: Presentations by international and local delegates

Afternoon: Visits to Fort St. Elmo and other Valletta sites

Evening: Welcome Reception and Networking

#### Day 2 - Thursday 15 October

##### Day Tour of Malta Fortifications

Morning: visit to Fort St. Angelo and free time in Birgu

Lunch at a restaurant in Birgu (*at delegate's expense*)

Afternoon: Visit to fortified heritage sites and free time in Mdina

Evening: Dinner at a restaurant in Rabat (*at delegate's expense*)

#### Day 3 - Friday 16 October

##### Conference Presentations + Visit to Valletta

Morning: Presentations by international and local delegates

Afternoon: Walk tour of Valletta

#### Day 4 - Saturday 17 October:

Morning: Visits to other fortified heritage sites in Valletta

These are fortified heritage sites that FORTE CULTURA Symposium delegates will visit during the Day Tour of Malta Fortifications on 15 October 2026. Part of the tour will be on a vintage Maltese bus.

**Fort St. Angelo**: Strategically located at the end of the Birgu peninsula, the fort dominates the Grand Harbour. The first defence structures were built on site in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. After 1530, the Order of St John turned it into their headquarters. The Knights remodelled the building with the construction of a series of artillery platforms and bastions. Fort St. Angelo had a major role during the Great Siege of 1565. For many centuries, the fort protected the harbour, guaranteeing safe anchorage thus promoting mercantile and military activities. The fort is now managed by Heritage Malta. [Click for more information.](#)

**Birgu**: The Knights of St. John made this town their capital upon their arrival in Malta in 1530. It remained so until 1571 when the construction of Valletta was mostly completed. The Knights built Fort St Angelo at the very tip of Birgu due to its strategic position overlooking the Grand Harbour. Modern-day Birgu is home to a population of almost 3,000 citizens. [Click for more information.](#)

**Fort Rinella** is a coastal battery built in 1886 by the British for the sole purpose of housing a 100-tonne gun. Due to its size, the gun could not be operated manually, so a hydraulic system was used to traverse and unload it, making it the first battery to have a gun that worked by mechanical means. The battery was restored and opened as an open-air museum by Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna in 1996. FWA manages several heritage sites in Malta. [Click for more information.](#)

**Mdina**: Mdina sits on top of a hill in the centre of the island of Malta. It is a fortified medieval town enclosed in bastions. It is characterised by narrow winding alleyways and centuries-old houses. [Click for more information.](#)

**Rabat**: A fortification moat and a garden separate Mdina from the town of Rabat. The early beginnings of the town are evident in the catacombs that are a vast underground burial complex used during Roman and early Christian times. Rabat is rich in churches, chapels and historic houses. The historic core of the town is characterised by pleasant winding roads. [Click for more information.](#)



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These are fortified heritage sites that FORTE CULTURA Symposium delegates will visit during the Valletta Walk tour on the 16 October 2026 or during site visits on other days of the Symposium.

**Fort St. Elmo** was constructed in 1552 at the tip of Sceberras peninsula to protect the Grand Harbour entrance. The fort received the brunt of the Ottoman forces who besieged Malta in 1565. The fort's resistance was instrumental for the eventual victory of the Knights. The 17th and 18th centuries witnessed several additions to the fort, including barracks, a church and a lighthouse. Under British rule Fort St Elmo was extensively upgraded for new artillery and even played an important role in the defence of Malta during the Second World War. It now hosts the National War Museum managed by Heritage Malta. [Click for more information.](#)

**Fortress Builders Interpretation Centre** focuses exclusively on explaining the history and significance of Malta's military architectural heritage, from prehistory to the British period. The building forms part of the Valletta fortifications overlooking the Grand Harbour. It is managed by Heritage Malta and is due for refurbishment. [Click for more information.](#)

**Msida Bastion Historic Garden** is a former Protestant cemetery. The bastion is part of the Floriana fortifications overlooking Marsamxett Harbour. Completed in 2002, its restoration was carried out by volunteers of Din l-Art Ħelwa (National Trust of Malta) which now manages the site. DLH manages several heritage sites in Malta. [Click for more information.](#)

**Saluting Battery and War HQ Tunnels:** The Saluting Battery sits on one of Valletta's fortifications bastions. It is the best vantage points overlooking the Grand Harbour. Ceremonial gun salutes are fired twice a day. The War Headquarters Tunnels are a vast rock-hewn underground complex situated beneath the Upper Barrakka Gardens. Encompassing a total area of 35,000 square metres of tunneling, it served as the headquarters for British forces defending Malta during the Second World War. [Click for more information.](#)

**St. James Cavalier – Centre for Creativity:** Construction of the city of Valletta began in 1566. St James Cavalier was one of the first buildings to be built by the Knights of the Order of St John as part of the Valletta fortifications. The cavalier was built as a raised platform on which guns were placed to defend the city against attacks from the landward side. It was renovated as a Malta's millennium project and converted into a cultural centre – the Centre for Creativity. [Click for more information.](#)

**City Gate:** This is the main entrance to the fortified historic city of Valletta. The current city gate is the fifth city gate Valletta has had in around 450 years, with the first gate being constructed in 1566. With an extensive project in 2008, the City Gate area was extensively transformed with the creation of extensive pedestrian spaces, a Parliament building and a performance space in the ruins of the old opera house. The world-renowned architect Renzo Piano was responsible for the project design including the City Gate. [Click for more information.](#)

**MICAS - Malta International Contemporary Arts Space;** The museum is sited at the 17<sup>th</sup> century Floriana fortifications and the old Ospizio complex. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Ospizio served as a house for poor and disadvantaged people. At one time, it also served as a gunpowder store. The current building comes about from the repurposing of over six thousand square metres of fortified heritage landscape. It marries contemporary architecture with the historical fabric of the fortifications. [Click for more information.](#)

**Upper Barrakka:** [Click for more information.](#)

**Lower Barrakka Gardens:** [Click for more information.](#)

**Victoria Gate:** [Click for more information.](#)

*It is intended to include all the above listed heritage sites in the various Symposium tours and visits. Note however that changes to the intended list may be made.*



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