

EXPLORE 

NOTRE DAME GATE & the Cottonera Military Hospital

Notre Dame Gate is one of seven gates built into the 9km-long fortified Cottonera Lines. Initiated by Grand Master Fra Nicola Cottoner in 1670 following the Ottoman capture of Candia (Crete) it was meant to protect in-depth the Three Cities of Vittoriosa, Senglea and Cospicua against a renewed Ottoman attack. Notre Dame Gate also known as Porta della Maria Vergine delle Grazie; Zabbar Gate and Bieb is-Sultan was to serve as the main entrance into the fortified conglomeration from the east. It stands in the middle of Notre Dame Curtain from which it takes its name and is flanked by Notre Dame and St. James Bastions facing the ancient town of Zabbar.

This grand gate remains to this day as the highest point in Cottonera from the roof of which one can enjoy breath taking vistas of most of the island and from where in the past military signals were relayed between the eastern coastal defences and Valletta proper.

It stands on five levels consisting of two lateral underground chambers, two ground level barrack blocks, a grand gate house built on two levels and a spacious open veranda and a signalling top.

Its architectural style follows that of the high-baroque period at which time it was built. It is lavishly decorated with Corinthian pilasters, heavy mouldings and fascias, symmetrical niches and apertures, a prominent balustrade, trophies and finials. This impressive assemblage is then surmounted by an enormous inscription in marble which denotes the foundation of the fortified lines. The plaque itself is crowned by a heavy bass-relief depicting a trophy of arms and two putti surrounding an alcove which shelters a heavy bronze effigy of Grand Master Cottoner, founder of the Cottonera Lines.

Notre Dame Gate remained in constant military use for almost 300 years. It was garrisoned by Hospitaller, French Republican and British troops many of whom have left their indelible marks of their presence in the shape of numerous graffiti carved in stone. Perhaps the most notorious amongst these were the British 24th Regiment of Foot (South Wales Borders) of the Zulu wars' fame who had stayed in the gate's barracks on their way to South Africa in 1874.

Following the nearby building of the Cottonera Military Hospital in 1870, the gate gradually started serving as an adjunct to the new military medical establishment. Following the debacle at Gallipoli in 1915, thousands of badly wounded troops were brought to Malta for treatment and convalescence and some of these were accommodated at Notre Dame Gate for the duration of the Great War.

In the ensuing world war, although receiving a direct hit which perforated one of the barracks roofs, the gate suffered little damage as opposed to the extensive material loss suffered at all of the Three Cities.

Today Notre Dame Gate serves as the headquarters of the Malta Heritage Trust – Fondazzjoni Wirt Artna and is available for visiting on an exclusive basis every Wednesday as part of a guided tour of the gate and the nearby former Cottonera Military Hospital. This tour also gives access to parts of the Cottonera Lines, the early 18th century gun powder magazine and WW2 defences.



**GET TO SEE
TWO OF THE LEAST
KNOWN HISTORIC
MONUMENTS
IN MALTA**





Visitors' Information

Getting there:

By Bus: Bus no: 4 stopping in Cottoner Road 3 minutes away from Notre Dame Gate following directional signs.

By Own Car: Please drive to Vittoriosa/Birgu onto Notre' Dame Gate. Ample free parking is available in the immediate vicinity.

Geographic Coordinates: X35.8805253, Y14.5270415

Address: Notre Dame Gate, St. Edward's Road, Vittoriosa BRG9038

Available Times:

Every Wednesday a guided tour in English takes place between 10.00 - 12.00hrs (except on public holidays).

This tour will give you access to:

NOTRE DAME GATE: all five levels including the gate house, terrace, bomb proof chambers, the extensive naval and maritime wall graffiti and the belvedere from where you can enjoy splendid views of most of the island.

COTTONERA MILITARY HOSPITAL: including the staired main entrance, the World War One Exhibition, the Chapel housed in an original 17th century gun powder magazine and a walk along the upper part St. James Bastion.

Admission: €15 Adults & €5 children 10-16 years accompanied by an adult (includes coffee break).

By booking only - send an email to info@wirtartna.org or by phone +356 21800992 (10.00 - 16.00hrs) Monday to Friday.



In collaboration with St. Edward's College, Malta



- Visit Malta's best surviving baroque gate house
- View splendid and obstructed views of the island the Grand Harbour
- Experience 300 years of continued military development of the Cottonera Lines
- Learn about Malta's role as the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' in World War One
- Relax in one of the prettiest architectural gems in Malta

