

# A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: The parish priest and the Porsche

 By [Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster](#)

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In a local twist on the trope of the actress and the bishop, Maltese social media is running high about the Gozitan parish priest who was led through the streets of the village in a parade. In a weird 21st century confabulation of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey, the priest did it standing up in a Porsche. That was pulled on ropes. By 50 children. What's wrong with this picture?

“ *Malta: when the church embraces kleptocratic culture. Parish priest standing in a convertible Porsche Boxster S being pulled through his village by children. Source and video: <https://t.co/PRBaxz17HN> [pic.twitter.com/xjwkL74xr3](https://pic.twitter.com/xjwkL74xr3)— MatthewCaruana Galizia (@mcaruanagalizia) [November 12, 2018](#)* ”

There is much that this incident tells us about the Maltese sister island of Gozo so it deserves to be unpacked.

## Unbridged community

For starters, Gozo is the second largest of the three inhabited islands in the Maltese archipelago. Although there is increasing chatter about building a tunnel linking Malta and Gozo, Gozo's predominantly rural – and therefore still largely unspoiled – weekend-away attractions are accessed by a scenic 15-minute ferry ride between the Maltese port of Cirkewwa and Mgarr harbour across the channel.

Gozo's 30,000 residents form their own distinct population with a different cultural identity; Gozitans speak Maltese differently, behave differently, and live a slower, gentler existence paced according to the ferry rhythms of an "unbridged" community (as we say in island studies). If Malta is like going back 30 years in time to South African eyes, then Gozo is like going back 50 years.

I was reading an interview with Ann Monsarrat who settled on Gozo nearly 50 years ago in the early 1970s with husband Nicholas (author of *The Cruel Sea* (1951) and more relevantly *The Kapitan of Malta* (1973)) who reminisced as follows: "In the villages many houses were without electricity and for many families their only supply of water came from the village pump. America was still sending food parcels to the older inhabitants.

Kerosene for cooking and light was delivered door to door by donkey cart. Children, especially the boys, left school at a very early age, often at ten or eleven, to help in the home and fields and many women rarely left the house except to go to church." Although that Gozo has been transformed by progress, it's salutary to consider that this mode of existence is still within a generation or two of living memory.

The second item worth comment, is the role of the Porsche in the pageant. The Maltese (and I am including Gozitans here) are mad about cars and the per capita distribution of vehicle ownership in general – and luxury motor ownership in particular – is amongst the highest in the EU. Additionally, Gozo is rumoured to have the highest per capita vehicle ownership in the world!



## A South African's guide to moving to and making it in Malta: East of the sun (Part 1)

Marcus 'The Maltese Falcon' Brewster 10 Aug 2018



## Conjuring trick

In a related matter, it was reported last month that there was a massive discrepancy (of about 100,000 vehicles over a multi-year period) which went from Malta to Gozo on the car ferry but which never made the return journey. Even making allowances for new car deliveries to the smaller island, on the statistical surface, the mystery of the missing cars in such great numbers presents an intriguing conjuring trick that would baffle even David Copperfield!

One of the solutions to the puzzle lies in the island ferry's unusual fare system – tickets are not needed for the departure leg from Malta, you are only obliged to purchase your ticket (effectively a return pass) at the ferry terminal in Gozo. So, the head and car counting system tell us that 100,000 cars travelled from Malta to Gozo freely but didn't pay for a ticket on the trip back.

It would be convenient to posit that this statistic said something about the dishonesty of the residents of the larger island of Malta coming over for their day-trips and long weekends away. However, even the most sedentary armchair detective could infer the opposite – that the offence was perpetrated in reverse and that the deviousness is indicative of the Gozitan character!

Could it not be Gozitan residents, commuting daily to Valletta, who are more likely to have a friend/relative working at the Mgarr ferry port who, in such a closely-knit community, would turn a blind eye to fare-evasion?

Either way, it's now clear why the priest's Porsche was harnessed to 50 schoolchildren. The community was obviously taking no chances that the car would suffer the same mysterious fate as the 100,000 other missing vehicles. Bless them!

## ABOUT MARCUS 'THE MALTESE FALCON' BREWSTER

marcusbrewster is a brand synonymous with PR excellence in SA. An industry innovator, leader, and inspiration, Brewster affiliated his multi-award winning boutique firm with larger Level 1 BBBEE marketing/comms agency MediaRevolution for scale in 2016 and went on to launch Marcus Brewster International in Europe the following year. Marcus currently lives on - and actively promotes - the Mediterranean island of Malta. For African, S. African and European PR enquiries, contact [marcus@marcusbrewster.com](mailto:marcus@marcusbrewster.com) or WhatsApp on (+356) 9931 3322

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