

History and Archeology

Engage in exploring the hidden gems of Buskett, including different buildings of considerable historical and archaeological interest. The most synonymous landmark of Buskett is the Verdala Palace which was originally built as a countryside retreat in 1586 by the 51st Grandmaster of the Order of St John, Hughes Loubenx de Verdalle.

During the Knights' rule, irrigation systems, engineered water culverts, and fountains were also built. Cart Ruts, Punic Tombs, two underground Flour Mills, and four farmhouses may also be sighted. Just before arriving at the car park you will see another landmark, the alcove that includes a fountain which is nourished by a natural spring known as Ta' Sala. Outside the grotto, there is a large stalactite that is said to have been brought from the Great Cave. If you take a look on top of this same grotto, you may also notice that there is a small hunting lodge commissioned by Grandmaster Jean Parisot de la Valette.



Ecological importance

Are you interested in the ecological importance of Buskett? The ecosystem at Buskett includes the flora (plants) and fauna (animals), which enrich our world and are crucial for human wellbeing and prosperity. Both flora and fauna are vital for food production, maintaining clean air and water, and sustaining biodiversity in a changing climate. You may appreciate that along the paths of Buskett you will come across decaying trees and leaves. It is interesting to note that these are intentionally left along Buskett as this whole cycle becomes a vital part of this woodland's biodiversity. In other words, they provide a home for insects as well as fungi. In turn, these are a source of food for birds and small mammals.

Another aspect of ecological importance are the rubble walls. It is imperative not to disturb or disassemble as they provide soil stabilisation and shelter for various fauna and flora. May we remind you not to cause disturbance, unnecessary trampling, picking of flowers and collection of fruits such as pecans, and aromatic herbs (Bay laurel).

Remember, we are inheriting Buskett from past generations, so enjoy your walk and together we can conserve these breathtaking vistas and serene landscapes which are always sought after by children and adults.



GENERAL LEAFLET ABOUT THE

Buskett
Woodlands

Buskett is a Natura 2000 site which has circa 473,694 square meters of semi-natural woodland. It is protected as a Special Area of Conservation with a high landscape value and has been recognised by law as a tree and bird sanctuary within an area of scientific and ecological importance. Buskett and the Education Centre are managed by Ambjent Malta, a government department within the Ministry responsible for the Environment.

Some recommendations while at Buskett:

Soft Adventure

When walking or hiking, hear the gentle rustle of the leaves, birds joining in with their songs creating a lively chorus, rustling of grasses, chirping/trilling of insects, each adding its own note to nature's orchestra. This is the Maltese flora and fauna and so we are all invited to take action to safeguard the variety of life on earth: our Biodiversity.

You are being encouraged to stand under a tree and look up; reflect and observe the sunlight playing through the leaves and deeply breathe in the tree's gift of oxygen. Touch the bark of the tree – is it smooth or bumpy? If you happen to be in the months of October and November, observe and smell the musk of the male carob trees along the paths.

Try practicing silent walking for mindfulness by staying away from your mobile phone so that you can engage your senses: touch, smell, sight, and sound of nature. Buskett offers a healthy and safe environment for the people to relax and rest. If you happen to be visiting Buskett after a heavy rainfall, observe and listen to the water flowing as it can help you, amongst others, destress and improve overall mental wellbeing.

Along the path, photography enthusiasts may capture unique picturesque scenarios, flora and fauna to share with family and friends.

Cultural Activity

Appreciate that the woodland is found within the "Wied il-Luq" valley system and together with "il-Bosk", "Verdala" and the karstic plateau known as "Ta' Laroka" and "ix-Xagħra tal-Bosk" were curated and transformed into gardens by the visionary Grandmasters of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John in Malta.

Throughout your walk, you will encounter a diverse mosaic of habitats; a testament to nature's exquisite artistry. The valleysides support Maquis vegetation, dominated by Lentisk which mainly occurs on uncultivated field terraces. You may note that some of the very few remaining patches of wild woodland characterised by trees bearing hard, leathery, evergreen foliage, with groves dominated by centuries-old Holm Oaks. Along with the wild woodland, you can see the planted woodland consisting mainly of Carob, Olive, Aleppo pine and Bay laurel. Deciduous or flowering trees such as White poplar can also be found accompanied by centuries old wild Narrow-leaved Ash trees.

Moving away from the heart of Buskett, you will come across the ancient cart ruts, originally used for transportation activity that dates back over four millennia. Adjacent to these cart ruts lies "Għar il-Kbir," translating to 'the great cave,' a site featuring an intricate network of caves partially concealed by caper plants, once inhabited by Troglodytes, also known as cave dwellers. In the same vicinity, the rock-cut Punic tombs referred to as "Ta' Żuta," dating approximately to 600 BC, offer a glimpse into burial customs from ancient times.

Wildlife Watching

You might be lucky to meet several animal species of conservation concern, such as the Bladder Snail and the Painted Frog which is the only amphibian that is native to the Maltese Islands, living in surface water bodies, both stagnant and flowing. You may also observe other fauna such as the Maltese wall lizard, the chameleon, the hedgehog, the Etruscan shrew, butterflies, woodlice, spiders, bees and beetles. You may try counting them 😊

The woodland itself and nearby open spaces are also important as a refuge for birds of prey, many of which are of international conservation importance.

Bird Watching

You are encouraged to visit Buskett as a bird sanctuary that offers a resting and feeding place to different migratory birds, in different seasons. You can experience Winter residents such as Woodcock, Song Thrush, Blackbird, Redwing, Fieldfare, Ring Ouzel, Goldcrest and Firecrest. In Autumn, you may watch the Robin, the Bee-Eater and other raptors such as Honey Buzzard and Marsh harrier; whereas in Spring you can see the Hobby and the Common Kestrel. Bird watching can also be fun in Summer as one can meet the Eleonora's Falcon, Turtle Dove, Woodchat Shrike, Spotted Flycatcher, and the Common Crossbill. Certain passerines such as the Blackcap and Spotted flycatcher are rare breeding visitors so if you happen to capture the moment, please share it with us.

Contact information

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Woodlands

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