



## **Integration of the geomorphological environment and cultural heritage for tourism promotion: a case study from Gozo (Maltese Islands)**

Paola Coratza (1), Ritienne Gauci (2), John A. Schembri (2), Mauro Soldati (1), and Chiara Tonelli (1)

(1) University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, (2) University of Malta

The paper aims to highlight the unique integration of natural and cultural heritage within the Dwejra area, a site of outstanding scenery located along the NW coast of the Island of Gozo (Malta).

Dwejra displays a great variety of geological and geomorphological features as well as unusual and unique ecological systems, concentrated in a relatively small and remoteness area. The landscape is made of a large set of landforms created by several processes: karst dissolution, forming at least four solution subsidence structures in the area; fluvial processes (marked by the presence of perennial freshwater pools), seepage from cliffs, waterfall and several dry valley systems (widien); marine erosion processes as evidenced by the great variety of features, including with sea-caves, tunnel, arches, stacks and reefs.

The presence of cultural features spanning from rubble walls and rural structures, to cart-ruts of unknown age and structures of the 19th Century enrich the interest in the area and allow it to become a landmark of cultural importance to the history of the island as a whole.

This unique combination of geological l.s., cultural and biological heritage contributes in making Dwejra a site of extraordinary scientific importance and heritage value, an ideal tourist destination for fostering a varied form of geotourism.

In perspective of tourism promotion and geoconservation measures, this paper aims at highlighting how the integration of environmental and cultural heritage aspects makes the Dwejra area a site of remarkable value to be promoted for a more holistic and varied tourism.