

Destination South Malta

The South of Malta is a gold mine when it comes to cultural, religious and historic heritage as well as landscaping. Malta has so far failed to make sure to preserve and maintain these attractions at the required level. Furthermore, the authorities seem to have failed to acknowledge the importance of some of these sites which are in a concerning state.

There seems to be reluctance in acknowledging the importance of the South in this sense. Probably this is attributable to the fact that this would lead to having to commit Government to an investment to ensure adequate maintenance, environment and education surrounding these areas. The South can provide Malta with the competitive advantage in attracting certain tourism niches. In spite of this, the marketing strategy of Malta continues to focus on volatile attractions. It is not clear whether this is due to the need for short term results or else because there is a lack of foresight and long term vision in this sector.

The improvement of the environment in the South is not only a tourism issue but also an issue for a better standard of living for us Maltese; residents in the South and the Maltese tourists visiting these unique areas. The industrialisation of the South was not countered by an investment in ensuring a quality environment. The funds allocated to the local councils are far from enough in embellishing the areas, in maintaining them clean and in ensuring that certain areas are not abused of. A better environment is not only an attraction for tourists but also an attraction for quality investment which would in itself embellish even further these areas.

The investment needs in certain areas in the south are not only required for the embellishment but also for the generation of employment and for the servicing of community needs in the area. Certain localities such as Marsaskala are still not well served in certain needs. This despite that Marsaskala has one of the fastest growing resident populations in Malta.

The generation of employment close to home is also an important factor. There are various reasons for this. Many argue that nowhere is far in Malta, yet in a recent survey it was established that most of us spend as much as other European countries in commuting. Hence, we might be losing some of our advantages due to traffic issues. So being closer to home renders us more efficient whereby we can utilise our time better. The generation of employment close to home is also important in order to be more family friendly whereby certain needs can be catered for by being close to home. This family friendliness would increase the supply of employees as more housewives would be willing to go out to work. The benefits of all this is also for the businesses as the employees would be in a position to be more flexible towards the needs of the business.

The reality is that all this is not happening in the South of Malta. Some simple measures can be taken at the immediate:

- Assist and encourage the Church in maintaining the religious and historical heritage sites;
- Educate and train local organisations on how to attract funding in order to maintain and develop certain funds;
- Move towards Public Private Partnerships in investing in rendering cultural, historical and natural heritage into an attraction;
- Ensure regular cleaning and maintenance through appropriate funding of local councils;
- Ensure the management of certain sites is decentralised and passed to the local councils;
- Positively discriminate in incentives for environment friendly investment in the area;
- An information campaign aimed at informing and educating our children and youths of the importance of certain sites and how they can reap the benefits off this heritage.

These are the most obvious and simple measures that one can take in the utilisation of the South Gold mine. There are various measures that need to be taken. However, these measures need to be taken following a master plan incorporating the vision of rendering the South a Tourist Destination per se.