

Focus France



- Ambassador interview • Business, art, culture
- Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce



‘Serving in a beautiful place’

Ambassador of France to Malta Brigitte Curmi outlines her diplomatic and personal experiences in Malta.

How would you judge your first few months as Ambassador of France to Malta?

First of all, let me tell you that I'm a happy ambassador in Malta. Having spent almost all my diplomatic career in the Arab World, I find it very natural to serve in this beautiful place, in the heart of the Mediterranean, so much at the crossroads of all what is at stake in this region.

On a professional level, I find a lot of interest working with my Maltese counterparts on issues such as Europe, migrations and the different crises in the region, just to name a few.

On a more personal level, I enjoy living in a country where you can find so many layers of history, culture and civilisation. I would like also to take the occasion to express my thanks for the warm welcome of the Maltese people.

Your surname, ‘Curmi’, gives the impression that you are of Maltese origin. Despite this not being the case, is it facilitating your mission in Malta?

Indeed, I am not Maltese but very happy to be considered as one of your family. In fact, this surname adds just a little to the hospitality I received in Malta. Maltese people are curious about France and the French and I really think that it's very easy to find common ground to work together and look for shared initiatives to promote a better world, in particular in the Mediterranean.

Politically, it seems that the relationship between France and Malta is on solid ground, with the two States sharing a common vision on issues such as migration and climate change. Are there other areas where the two States could be closer?

The bilateral relationship was always good with Malta, but today, it is at its highest level. We share a common vision in many fields and it is always possible to do better. All the work undertaken together allowed us to

share views and align our positions on more and more issues regarding European policies in particular. For instance, our two countries share a common goal on digital taxation, that is, that companies need to pay taxes where profit is being registered. That is a very important stance, and we will pursue the discussion about how to implement that kind of measure at the European level in a way that is balanced and harmonised.

“Malta is a key partner in the French efforts to promote some hope in this tormented region”

French President Emmanuel Macron was recently in Malta for the South EU Summit. How can south EU member states – including France and Malta – contribute to a stronger Europe?

A stronger Europe needs a decisive and clear roadmap, one the European citizen is able to understand and own. A stronger Europe must be more competitive and show solidarity on issues such as climate change, defence, foreign policy or migration. A stronger Europe is needed to be heard on the international level and to promote our shared values. A stronger Europe is needed to strengthen the multilateral agenda, which is very much at risk nowadays.

Regardless of the size of each member state, it is only through our common efforts that we will be able to influence international policies.

Concerning the Mediterranean, Malta is a key partner in the French efforts to promote some hope in this tormented region. The islands organised a very fruitful forum on Youth, Education and Mobility in prepara-

tion for the Summit of the Two Shores held in Marseille, gathering 10 countries around our shared sea. We have a lot to do together and this is just the beginning.

While some 200,000 French tourists visit Malta every year, 20,000 Maltese tourists reciprocate – and most of these stick to the usual itineraries such as Paris and Marseille. Which other areas of France are ripe for exploration, and could better connectivity between Malta and France increase tourist traffic?

A total of 20,000 Maltese visiting France is not bad. But, indeed, we need to do more to promote tourism to other cities and regions than Paris or Marseille. We are lucky enough to have a very diverse country, full of touristic and cultural opportunities. The Maltese are open to French culture and patrimony, as we saw their solidarity when Notre Dame burned so sadly recently. I am ready to organise in the next coming months an event, in collaboration with the Maltese French Chamber of Commerce to exhibit the thousand and one possible destinations France.

Last April, the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce organised a business forum, with the theme ‘Doing Business with France, then and in today’s environment’. How can the two countries achieve better commercial outcomes together?

First of all, let me express my gratitude to the MFCC. Our embassy is active, but small. It is very important for us to be able to count on the MFCC every time French entrepreneurs visit Malta or when it comes to new opportunities for French companies in Malta. There is a solid commercial history between our two countries. We have to preserve it and, at the same time, we need to do more to integrate other members in the MFCC, representing the new economy at a time where the archipelago is positioning itself on innovative technologies.

Conversation is key to strengthening relationships – and language is the basis of any conversation. What attempts are being made to increase the take-up of studying French in Malta?

Conversation is essential for a better understanding between populations, not only between Malta and France, but in general. The Alliance Française, present in Malta for the past 60 years, is already doing a lot. We can do even more, especially to keep the French language alive after secondary school. President Macron opened the subject with Prime Minister Joseph Muscat during his last visit. I seize every opportunity to discuss with the Maltese authorities – for example with the Education Minister – and look for ways to developing a curriculum in French in Malta, particularly important today that your country is an observer at the International Organisation for Francophony (IOF) since 2018.

We are also looking for innovative ways through a public-private partnership to open a class or a section in an already existing school.

There are also various artistic collaborations between France and Malta. Are such collaborations also serving as a gateway to a better mutual understanding?

Culture and arts are the very essence of the human being. It's a language in itself, understandable beyond words and translation. Artists are the best actors when it comes to expressing deep identity and complexity. Malta is a natural place for creation given its very rich history and the diversity it was exposed to and still is. I hope we can develop more projects together during my stay in Malta. I do believe this is vital to understand each other. I would like also to widen the scope a little bit and include people of the other shore of the Mediterranean in common projects. *Rendez-vous en 2020.*



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Celebrating a milestone

Our anniversary epitomises 30 years of relentless voluntary work, says **Joseph Bugeja**, president, Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce.

This year, the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce is celebrating its 30th anniversary. It is indeed my pleasure, as president of the Chamber, to contribute to this year's edition of *Focus France*.

Our anniversary epitomises 30 years of relentless voluntary work focused on promoting and facilitating commerce and networking between the Maltese and French business communities. It also marks a good milestone into the Maltese French Chamber of Commerce's existence, while affording us with a timely opportunity to look back and assess our performance and achievements.

As a voluntary team, our council can proudly state to have been a very important loop in the business chain that has embraced the excellent relationships between the two States. It's a period which has seen our Chamber's role grow steadily into one of repute and respect from the members, other Chambers and the business community at large.

Our role has been instrumental to support the various initiatives taken by the number of French ambassadors who have held office in Malta. Throughout the existence, our Chamber has co-operated and worked closely with six ambassadors, with the incumbent Ambassador, Her Excellency Madame Brigitte Curmi, being the seventh.

“Voluntary work entails commitment, passion and dedication”

Needless to say, voluntary work entails commitment, passion and dedication. These three attributes represent the foundation of our success as a council and provide further impetus to drive our organisation further in the years to come. At this stage, I would like to sincerely thank the founder members and past presidents of the Chamber as well as various other council members for dedicating their precious private time, extensive experience and genuine dedication towards achieving our various goals over the past years.

Set up in October 1989, the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce's statute includes various objectives which the Chamber aspired to achieve upon its setting up. Today, one can concisely define such objectives in one overall ambition: to cooperate with authorities, organisations and constituted bodies in Malta and France in all matters favouring commercial, industrial, financial and tourist exchanges between the two countries.

It is very difficult for me to mention all contributors to the Chamber's various initiatives over the years. But certainly, it would be amiss not to mention the significant contribution that all the resident French Ambassadors gave to the Chamber over the past 30 years. I am extremely proud, as president of the Chamber, that we managed to forge very strong ties,



Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce president Joseph Bugeja



based on mutual trust and respect, with the various Ambassadors who supported the Chamber from its very foundation.

The success of our Chamber also depends on the continued cooperation and support from the Maltese Ambassadors nominated to represent the Republic of Malta in France which continues to develop through the existing very good relationship with Her Excellency Ms Helga Mizzi. Our close relationship with the Ambassador was definitely instrumental to create the ideal working environment including business delegations in Paris and other business cities.

The existence of our Chamber could not have been possible without the numerous loyal members that have continued to support our initiatives throughout many years. We are extremely thankful for their continued support. Special recognition goes to our corporate sponsors who year after year continue to believe in our mission – RCI Insurance Limited (subsidiaries of RCI Services Limited), Bank of Valletta, Speedcast and the Malta Government Investments Limited (MGI).

We are very pleased to note that the number of members has been constantly increasing over the past years. In fact, the chamber has now reached a total of 96 members comprising both Maltese and French representation through various companies and professional individuals.

The forum provides an excellent opportunity not only for the Chamber's members to meet and network but, more importantly, it serves as a great platform to discuss the current business relationships between Malta and France, French business in Malta and how stakeholders can collaborate more together to reach better commercial outcomes.

France remains one of Malta's main trading partners. The most dynamic sectors contributing to the growth of bilateral trade between Malta and France include the boating sector, ICT and electronic goods, optical instruments, pharmaceutical products, automotive and food and beverage sectors.

Only a few years back, France was the country to which Malta exported most as well as the second highest country Malta

imported goods from. Trade between the two countries remains healthy with statistics showing imports from France amount to over €134 million and exports of over €120 million. Our bilateral relationship was further underlined by EU membership. Furthermore, the signing of a Double Taxation Agreement between France and Malta, in force since 1983, has provided the necessary impetus to strengthen such a financial arrangement. Thus, amendments were made in 1994 and 2008 which changes were intended to generate more economic activity, encourage trade and investment and thus strengthened the already good relationship between the two states.

The Maltese government has also made a conscious effort to increase Malta's visibility as an investment opportunity in France. Commendable work in this area has already been undertaken by Malta Enterprise.

Finally, I would like to re-iterate my gratitude to my colleague council members, members of the Chamber, as well as the supporting entities for their contribution throughout all these years. Notwithstanding our Chamber's diminutive nature, each and everyone of us should be proud to have somehow contributed to change the paradigm of our economic reality.

anniversary

Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce celebrates 30th anniversary

The most recent statistics show that Malta has seen €134 million in imports and over €120 million in exports to and from France. In fact, exports in goods and services from France to Malta have increased by 144 per cent whereas from Malta to France, the increase was of 32 per cent.

These figures emerged from a business forum themed 'Doing Business with France, then and in today's environment' organised by the Maltese French Chamber of Commerce, a forum that also coincided with the Chamber's commemoration of its 30th anniversary.

"The Maltese French Chamber of Commerce, with the support of the Maltese and French Embassies, is excellently positioned and holds all the capabilities to connect all the dots to help Malta reap the business opportunities that exist between Malta and France," said Mme Helga Mizzi, Maltese Ambassador in France in her address during the forum which was also addressed by Mme Brigitte Curmi, Ambassador of France in Malta and Nancy Caruana, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry for the Economy, Investment and Small Business.

Ambassador Mizzi added that Malta's heightened efforts to build an outstanding profile in the blockchain, cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence domains, backed by legislation, is something that is being noticed in Paris and is bound to be an innovative aspect of French-Maltese relations in the coming months.

"This is a field, over which I would definitely encourage the Chamber to take a proactive stance and whereas this is very encouraging, I would also like to

see French business interests coming to Malta even in other fields such as aviation. France is also establishing diplomatic representations in Africa, especially in sub-Saharan regions and here. Malta too can play an active role by acting as a bridge for businesses wanting to use Malta as a springboard to these new regions," she added.

Addressing those present, Joseph Bugeja, the Chamber's president noted that this was the first time that the Business Forum organised by the Maltese French Chamber of Commerce has managed to secure the active participation of both Ambassadors, showing the respect and the relevance that the Chamber has managed to garner over the past years.

"The Chamber today has close to 100 members and its work has been mostly made possible thanks to the support from the French diplomatic mission in Malta and also from the Maltese Embassy in Paris.

"Their assistance over the past 30 years has always been instrumental in helping us remain true to our commitment to be of service to the Maltese and French business communities, building bridges and collaborating with successful and fruitful synergies," he added.

The Business Forum included a panel discussion with the participation of Herald Bonnici, CEO of Malta Government Investments Limited, Laurent Zylberberg, Caisse De Depot, Kenneth Farrugia, chief business development officer Bank of Valletta, Philip Martinet, managing director Estate Wines, Bastien Paret, managing director RCI and Stephane Perchenet, deputy director of Business France Agency.



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'Excellent relations'

Malta and France have found a very good balance of combining what is important to us bilaterally, with providing solutions to our region and the international community more broadly, says Ambassador of Malta to France **Helga Mizzi**.

Two years as Ambassador of Malta to France – what have been the highlights to date?

These two years have been a most rewarding experience as the terrain is very fertile for increased cooperation. Very good results were attainable with a good amount of effort and enthusiasm, and of course the support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion in Malta. During my term in office thus far, I have noticed a quality shift in Malta's profile in France.

One of the more memorable highlights would be the visit to France conducted by Minister for Foreign Affairs Carmelo Abela, on the occasion of the July 14 celebrations in 2018. The visit culminated in official talks with his counterpart, Minister Jean Yves Le Drian, which served to give our bilateral and regional cooperation a further push and resulted in the signing of an Agreement of Cooperation between the two Foreign Ministries.

On the same occasion, I had organised an event at the Embassy between Minister Abela and the impressively sizeable Maltese diaspora in France.

This community event further enriched the value of the Minister's visit, first of all because the Maltese-French community had been longing for decades for this kind of welcome as part of the Maltese diaspora worldwide. Secondly, this encounter served to further broaden our own concept of Maltese migration, away from the very familiar cases of relatives in Australia, Canada, the US and the UK.

A tangible outcome also resulted from the event, and perhaps I can list this as one of the landmarks of my tenure, as a representative from France was nominated to sit on the Council for the Maltese Abroad, to represent the interests of the community members in France. This was an accomplishment which the community very highly appreciated and one of which I am most proud.

I cannot refer to mentioning results in recent months without mentioning Malta's accession to the Organisation de la Francophonie during the Summit held in Yerevan, Armenia in October 2018. This was a very bold decision by Malta, a country traditionally associated with the English-speaking world, which paid off very positively. We are already reaping the benefits of our membership through cooperation with OIF operators such as TV5 Monde and the Alliance Française in Malta. Apart from the immediate benefits that come with membership, this is a window of opportunity to enhance Malta's presence globally and we are very satisfied that our efforts have already yielded results.

Politically, how would you describe the relations between Malta and France? And on what issues are the two countries on the same page?

Relations between the two countries are at their highest point ever. This can easily be seen from the frequency of high-level visits and meetings held in both Malta and France. I have had the pleasure of welcoming several

incoming Maltese delegations led by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as several other ministers to discuss issues ranging from the purely political, to infrastructure, education, culture, the environment, agriculture, which all contributed to the generation of unprecedented dynamism in our relations.

What is most notable in the way our relations have developed is that we seem to have found a very good balance of combining what is important to us bilaterally, with providing solutions to our region and the international community more broadly.

This applies perfectly to the Mediterranean – a subject which both countries treat as a priority on their foreign policy agendas. We are really working hand in hand in all the bodies of which we are mutual members – Union for the Mediterranean, 5+5, EU MED 7 and Parliamentary Assembly for the Mediterranean – to address long lasting and emerging challenges in this region, that go well beyond the strict parameters of security and stability.

“Keen on a Europe of values and solidarity, one that steers clear from concepts of exclusion and prejudice”

As the most recent examples of shared vision and hands-on cooperation on Mediterranean issues, one could cite the EU MED 7 Summit held in Malta as well as the Sommet des Deux Rives or Summit of the Two Shores held in Marseille, which was attended by Minister Abela as well as civil society representative from Malta.

Held on June 23-24, this summit saw its first political mention in the Declaration adopted at the 5+5 Ministerial Meeting in January 2019 hosted by Malta and attended by Minister Le Drian. During this January visit to Malta, a further round of bilateral talks was held to cover range of issues that are important to the two countries while at the same timekeeping the Mediterranean front and centre of the occasion.

Foremost among the issues discussed between the two Ministers was Libya – a dossier that ranks very high on both Malta's and France's diplomatic agendas. Even on this front, our cooperation been a tangible one based on concrete steps for a possible peaceful way ahead. Prime Minister Muscat participated in the Paris Summit on Libya of May 2018, which brought together the leading political factions in the country and which saw the adoption of an Action Plan that paves the way ahead.

Europe is also an issue upon which Paris and Valletta practically see eye to eye. Both are keen on a Europe of values and solidarity, one that steers clear from concepts of exclusion and prejudice. Above all, both contribute actively to Europe of solidarity and this was clearly manifested when trying to find solutions to the cases of migrants stranded in the Mediterranean over the past year. France and Malta's cooperation was, and very much remains, exemplary.

On the global level, I would identify climate change, stability in the Middle East, and a global solution to migration as primary dossiers of cooperation between Malta and France, and which both invest their energies in the pertinent fora, especially the United Nations.

You recently spoke at a forum commemorating 30 years of the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce. In what ways does the MFCC contribute towards better trade and commerce relations between the two countries?

I find the MFCC to be the best-placed umbrella group, presently in operation, through which we can foster direct and focussed contacts between operators and above all an understanding of the business environment and opportunity in the respective countries.

During the past two years, I have had the pleasure of working directly with the Chamber during seminars and familiarisation visits I organised both in Paris as well as in the cities with most business and investment potential throughout the French territory.

By way of example, on January 30-31, 2018, representatives from Malta Enterprise, Finance Malta, the Malta-France Chamber of Commerce and the Malta Tourism Authority visited Paris and Lille to address business events organised by the Embassy of Malta to France. The focus of the events was that of underpinning Malta's strong economic performance and identifying ways in which Franco-Maltese commercial relations can be further intensified. The Maltese delegation had the opportunity to meet several France-based commercial stakeholders including the Ambassadors' network in Paris, the Lille and Lille-Arras World Trade Centre, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Paris and CCI International Hauts-de-France.

The Chamber's added value lies in their formidable networking capabilities and the profiling efficiency with which they link entrepreneurs to the pertinent authorities or, better still, potential business partners.

I would recommend this kind of format be replicated with other important commercial partners for Malta. Equally important is the openness of the Chamber to new and emerging fields, such as AI and cryptocurrencies and the accent it places on modernising its membership to include these, and related fields.

Recent statistics show that while exports in goods and services from France to Malta have increased by 144 per cent, those from Malta to France have enjoyed an increase of

32 per cent. What is contributing to this growth and which sectors can fare better?

In recent years, overall trade between Malta and France has generally ranged from €450m to €550m in value. In 2018, trade activity was above this average, reaching €563m, of which €294m were imports and €268.8m exports. Last year, the major import products from France consisted of electrical machinery, aircrafts and aircraft parts. On the other hand, exports were mostly made up of electrical machinery and mineral fuels.

It is worth noting that during the first three months of 2019, imports from France amounted to €72.1m, when compared to the €40.8m during the same period in 2018.

On the manufacturing front, a success story of French investment in Malta is ST Microelectronics which can be considered as one of the largest manufacturing plants in Malta measured by the number of employees and exports. Malta's Freeport is presently operated by French container and shipping company CMA CGM.

There has been significant interest and investment from a number of French companies in the financial sector as well as several online gaming companies. Indeed, Malta has witnessed an increase in the number of French companies in the services sector, ICT and digital media.

In terms of enhancing economic activity and investment from France in the future, I





Ambassador of Malta to France
Helga Mizzi. PHOTO: AFP

would look at advanced manufacturing: such as precision engineering, pharmaceuticals, aircraft parts, software development, AI and cryptocurrencies.

The same could be said for aviation, an area in which Malta has set up a centre of excellence for the maintenance and servicing of aircraft, together with the provision of training for aeronautical technicians and mechanics. Malta also has a fast-growing aircraft registry, which is supported by a flexible and competitive legal structure.

The Embassy works very closely with Malta Enterprise, Trade Malta, Finance Malta, Malta Government Investments and the Malta Digital Innovation Authority in bringing to the fore the incentives and business infrastructure that Malta provides to the French investor. Meanwhile, the Ministry's Commercial Diplomacy Unit supports the Embassy with any required assistance for initiatives meant to enhance Malta's profile as a destination for business and investment.

Would better connections between the two countries contribute to growth in tourism between Malta and France?

The two countries are already very well connected, with flights operating daily from the two Paris airports Charles de Gaulle and Orly. Other regional hubs are also serviced by direct flights such as Marseille, Bordeaux, Lyon and Nice to mention but the major ones.

This has resulted in record tourism figures, which we intend to keep building upon.

Last year was a record one, where we registered an extraordinary 200,000 French visitors to Malta, comprising approximately 10 per cent of the entire inbound tourism to Malta.

“Malta is looked at as a model and standard-setter”

The trend in the increase in the number of French visitors appears to be on track as statistics show another increase of 17 per cent in the first two months of this year to 18,000 compared with the corresponding months of 2018. Their total outlays whilst in Malta reached €10.5 million, a six per cent increase within the same timeframes.

These days one can really say that French tourism to Malta is not restricted to any particular period of the year. Our French guests travel mostly to experience our historical and cultural heritage, something they can do all year round and not only in the summer months. The feedback I receive at the Embassy is a very positive one with Valletta, Mdina and Gozo being the preferred sites in light of their unique histories.

I should underline the outstanding work being conducted by the Malta Tourism Authority Office in Paris all year round, to ensure that Malta remains firmly on the tourism radar in France.

AI, blockchain and cryptos are the new kids on the business block. Are Malta and France collaborating in these sectors?

Malta's profile as the Blockchain Island and its ground-breaking moves in the realm of Distributed Ledger Technologies have received increasing attention from France over the past couple of years.

The fact that Malta has actually passed legislation to regulate this domain has attracted several French actors in the field, as not only does Malta offer the comfort of an EU jurisdiction but it also drew up a steadfast legislative framework. The speed with which Malta has been able to do so comes across as very impressive with French actors in this sphere.

In a way Malta is very much looked at as a model and standard-setter not only at grass roots level but also at a national and international one. In fact, Malta was invited to participate in two milestone events in Paris, namely the GovTech Summit and the Internet Governance Forum both held in November 2018 and attended by Prime Minister Muscat and the Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation Silvio Schembri respectively.

What is noteworthy on both fronts is not so much what Malta has managed to achieve for itself in these fields, but the role it can play in sharing its expertise on how such innovative tools can contribute directly to the improvement of citizens' lives.

What were the main outcomes of the South EU Summit, especially regarding the relations between Malta and France?

The EUMED7 Summit in itself was a further platform for Malta-France coordination on issues that impinge on stability and growth in our shared neighbourhood as well as matters related to the European Union such as the Multiannual Financial Framework, social rights, the eurozone. Stability in the Mediterranean, the situation in Libya and the prevailing scenario there also featured among the issues that saw agreement between Malta and France, together with the other five members.

In terms of Malta-France relations, the Summit resulted in a very significant meeting between the Hon. Prime Minister and the President of the French Republic Emanuel Macron at the Auberge de Castille. While the two meet regularly in European Council Meetings, as well as other international gathering worldwide, the fact that the official talks were held in Valletta adds striking momentum to excellent relations between the two leaders but also the countries themselves.

Potential for collaboration

I hope to be a bridge between Malta and France in order to bring innovation, leadership and prosperity to the forefront of the European tech scene, says serial entrepreneur and award winning fintech expert **Abdalla Kablan**.

With blockchain and AI getting on the main stage, would you say that we are now at a crossroads?

I wouldn't say that we are at a crossroads, but I would rather think of it as a convergence of both disciplines. Generically speaking blockchain and artificial intelligence are contradicting in nature and they work on completely different paradigms but merging both of them will turn out to be quite promising.

AI helps in analysing and understanding large amounts of data – however this does not mean that there will not be any form of data misuse, breaches or hacking. The blockchain, by definition is not able to analyse data or recognise patterns – but it can protect data related to an AI system as it provides decentralised database. This means enhanced security, auditability and transparent operations.

What decisions have to be made so that such technologies are developed in an ethical manner?

I personally believe that coming up with the right regulatory frameworks where relevant, and the appropriate strategies and policy measures is quite important to safeguard the interests of consumers, investors, and to ensure the integrity of the products that are being developed.

“Being small allows us to be agile and nimble”

Blockchain, AI and IoT are usually regarded separately – but can convergences be made, and to what benefits?

The emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT), has created promising new opportunities – but also created a number of challenges. We are creating new complex networks or interconnected devices that can share infinite amounts of information. In conjunction with appropriate AI architectures and optimised machine “learning” models, this will help in the creation of products that will make our lives better, more efficient, and more convenient. But if it's not well planned it may also eventually lead to an accurate imitation of the human brain. Hence having the right measures in place from a regulatory, and ethical standpoints is quite crucial.

Despite advancements in AI, will humanity still hold the reins to creativity?

The human brain is probably the most sophisticated system in existence, but human psychology is quite complex. Despite being fully cognisant about our unpredictability, we are adept at taking strategic shortcuts at appropriate times, which makes it abundantly clear that it is our ecological smartness and creativity that has got us to where we are now.

AI, like other forms of modern technology, can go on to become incredibly



Abdalla Kablan

beneficial for us. Whether or not that happens is in the realm of conjectures, given the inevitable human tendency to misuse just about anything that makes our lives easier.

As responsible developers of technology, we may want to ensure that our comfort-driven instincts do not take precedence over our larger commitment to inclusive economic growth, more compassionate societies and a better world at large.

France is the world's sixth largest economy, while Malta is the EU's smallest member state. But within the AI and blockchain contexts, does size really matter?

Size does not really matter in the digital world – however we have to acknowledge the weight and diverse competencies of all jurisdictions. When it comes to blockchain and digital innovation, Malta has been the trailblazer from the very start. The Maltese government has taken the brave and right decision to regulate technology arrangements such as DLT and services around them way before many other countries even looked at them. The world is now realising that Malta was right, as we have paved the way for companies to seek regulatory certainty while keeping on inno-

vating, and we have also allowed consumers to have assurance in the products that they are using.

However we are part of a much bigger union, the European Union, and other member states such as France have an undeniable wealth of experience and a long history of proven innovation coupled with infrastructure that supports it.

Being small allows us to be agile and nimble, and it also allows us to have a first-hand account of the state of affairs when it comes to technical challenges of regulatory implementation. Hence, as professionals, when we are asked to share our experience and knowledge with other member states we have always welcomed the opportunity and never shied away from pushing our initiatives on a European level.

How can France and Malta collaborate in AI and blockchain?

Recently I had the honour of being invited by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to participate in the French Government's Future Leaders Program. A program that is well designed to expose selected professionals from all around the world to elements of the French industry that are relevant to their fields. In that experience I have met with some of the top French thought leaders, policy makes, ac-

ademics, professionals, and regulators relevant to AI and blockchain.

I was pleasantly surprised and delighted to know that there is so much in common between the Maltese initiatives on the AI strategy front and on the blockchain and Virtual Assets regulations. I have also learnt quite a lot from the French model of doing things. It was evident that there is immense potential for collaboration, and I hope to be a bridge between both countries in order to bring innovation, leadership and prosperity to the forefront of the European tech scene.

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The Baroque French Connection

Since its inception, the Valletta Baroque Festival has enjoyed close connections to French music and artists. **Jo Caruana** chats to the festival's artistic director, **Kenneth Zammit Tabona**, to find out more.

Kenneth Zammit Tabona admits that – like many people – he has gone on a huge journey of discovery when it comes to Baroque music. In fact, in the eight years since the launch of the Valletta Baroque Festival, he has devoted much of his time to learning and understanding this important period in musical history, especially its French roots.

“When we decided to go ahead with the first edition of the Baroque Festival in 2013, conductor Brian Schembri – who is based in Paris – helped me to make some important French contacts. We didn't know yet if it was going to be a success or not, but ours was a new festival and people were interested,” he said

“There has been a huge rediscovery of music and the correct styles of playing – this has translated into more historically informed performances”

Zammit Tabona recalls meeting some fantastic people over the years, many through the Réseau Européen de Musique Ancienne (the European Early Music Network) – an association of around 90 members from about 25 different countries, all of whom are artistic directors of Baroque music festivals in Europe. Its main aim is to act as a network for its members, encouraging the exchange of knowledge, information and co-operations in the early music field.

Of course, France is also home to some of the top baroque festivals in the world, including the Montpellier, Ambronay, and Saintes.

“Ambronay is one of the oldest festivals in Europe with a great concentration of Baroque players in France.

“France certainly attracts those with a love of Baroque music because there is always so much going on and many events to look forward to.”

Various French artists of renown have performed at the Valletta Baroque Festival, including leading French ensembles like Les Surprises, Correspondances, and Dynastie.

“They are truly top international artists. I often spot them when I am watching Mezzo TV, and this is always a reminder of how lucky we are to have such artists – who are wanted by the most reputable festivals in the world – perform in Malta.

“There is a close connection between France and Baroque music,” continued Zammit Tabona. “Baroque music was a political tool, developed to portray the grandeur of the French Republic. For the nobles of the Ancien Régime, music was commissioned to portray their



PHOTO: BENJAMIN CHELLY

power. Also, King Louis XIV (the Sun King) used Jean-Baptiste Lully as his court composer, with the main aim of using Baroque music to reflect his magnificence. Some of the grandest French operas emanated from Versailles, because if you weren't in Versailles in the 17th and 18th centuries, then you were no one. So the music we hear today very much has the stamp of the Sun King, and therefore of France itself.”

However, as the artistic director explains, there is still plenty we don't know about Baroque music – French or otherwise.

“So much has come to the fore from private archives in recent years, including music that has been archived for some 200 years, in a home, basement or palace. Thus there has been a huge rediscovery of music and the correct styles of playing – this has translated into more historically informed performances. We're now reaching the crest of the wave and the public's appetite for it has been incredible. When you think how popular Vivaldi is now, for instance, versus 40 years ago when he was completely unknown, it really is something to reflect upon.”

As a result of this and the swathe of music that has been discovered, Zammit Tabona explained that we do know more about the composers of the day now.

“It is fascinating that we have been able to find out so much about the music, as well as the history that goes with it,” he added.

The upcoming Baroque Festival – which opens on January 10, 2020 – will be another opportunity for audiences to enjoy watching French artists in Malta. The grand opening concert, for instance, is sponsored by the French Embassy, and will star the world-renowned Les Musiciens du Louvre and soprano Vivica Genaux, directed by Thibault Noally. Other artists such as Jean Rondeau – one of the Europe's top harpsichord players – will then feature in concert with France-based Thomas Dunford at Verdala Palace, performing music by composers from the court of Versailles on January 23 at noon. Rondeau will then perform Concertos for Harpsichord from the Bach Family later that same day at 7.30pm, this time with the celebrated Ensemble Dynastie at the Manoel Theatre.

“The next edition of the Valletta Baroque Festival promises to be another celebration of fascinating history, glorious music and the opportunity to continue discovering the French Baroque connection.”



Vivica Genaux. PHOTO: RIBALTA LUCE STUDIO



Kenneth Zammit Tabona

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Despite its compact footprint the Renault Captur, starting from €14,900, inclusive of scrappage scheme, exudes a real sense of interior space which is underpinned by the forward position of its windscreen and its generous interior dimensions.

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Furthermore, the Renault Captur GT Line, is equipped with the Renault R-Link touchscreen multimedia tablet (optional for Iconic trim) – you'll also benefit from Bluetooth connectivity, audio-streaming and six Arkamys hi-fi sound speakers.

The Renault Captur is acclaimed as a B-segment benchmark, when it comes to driving pleasure. It consequently delivers best-level dynamics, from road holding to engine response and agile handling.

The petrol and diesel engines available for the model benefit from the very latest Renault technologies and will return best-in-class fuel consumption and CO2



emissions, starting from as low as 110 dCi 90.

The Renault Clio, starting from €11,100 inclusive of scrappage scheme, benefits from the use of finishing materials previously reserved for Renault's higher-end models. All the upholsteries are new and special attention has been paid to the tactile and visual quality of the plastics' grain-effect finish.

The chrome trim features are more subdued, matt finish and the colours are more refined. In short, the Renault Clio forms a higher end package which strikes a desirable balance between seductive exterior styling and a high-quality interior finish.

The Renault Clio comes equipped with two multimedia systems, being the Media Nav Evolution and Renault R-Link Evolution, which are available for all equipment

levels. The smart R&Go multimedia system is available for the Expression trim.

Interested to know more? Kind's has a limited zero per cent initial deposit offer available with Clio and Captur stock vehicles, limited stock available. Visit Kind's, in Lija or Gozo and ask the sales team for further information.

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Mazars Malta, one of Malta's leading multi-disciplinary audit and advisory firms, forms part of Mazars, a multinational group with French roots specialising in audit, accountancy, taxation, as well as legal and advisory services.

Mazars bears the name of its original founder, Robert Mazars, who started his practice near Rouen, in Western France, in 1945. Mazars remained a local firm until the 1980s, when then CEO Patrick de Cambourg started to internationalise the firm, expanding the business from 33 employees in 1977 to the global firm of today, which employs more than 23,000 professionals in 89 countries through its member firms. Nowadays, Mazars operates as a single entity in the form of a fully integrated partnership.

Mazars' roots in Malta go back to 1998, having started its journey as a small firm known as Attard Giglio + Co. Over the years, Mazars Malta has established itself as a business advisory driven firm with a strong reputation for providing personal services and quality advice.

Today, the firm operates as a one-stop shop with a niche focus on specialist knowledge in the gaming, insurance and financial services sectors. As an integrated member firm of Mazars, Mazars Malta is also in a position to draw upon the experience and resources of the multinational group.

Strong values have been at the heart of Mazars Malta since its creation. These provide an ethical point of reference for the partners and the team in their interactions with clients, local and foreign authorities, and other players in the sector.

Mazars Malta managing partner Anthony Attard explained that the firm's strength lies in the holistic approach it adopts towards understanding its clients' business.

"The one-stop-shop model we have adopted is run by a dedicated group of professionals who are responsible for maintaining an ongoing relationship with the client," he said.

"We act as trusted advisors, and are the primary point of contact for the client, putting all of Mazars' experience and expertise at their disposal in terms of support, insights and solutions. We also ensure that all of the firm's specialist services are delivered in a manner consistent with the client's needs, and in as seamless and integrated a fashion as possible.

As advisors and auditors, we foster state of the art accountability, efficient and agile structures and organisations, enhanced performance, and the creation of long-term value for our clients".

For more information visit www.mazars.com.mt.

(Content provided by Mazars Malta)

news

Freeport makes waves in challenging environment

Malta Freeport Terminals has extended its network to the Caribbean and US after taking on the service operated by CMA-CGM and Marfret in a challenging container shipping industry characterised by change.

The Malta-based port now services five additional ports in North and Central America: Pointe-à-Pitre, Fort-de-France, Houston, Veracruz and Puerto Moin which complement Malta Freeport's present network to South America covering countries in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Uruguay. The Freeport also welcomed the first ever LNG-powered container ship to visit Malta, mv Containerships Polar, during the vessel's maiden voyage from Asia to Rotterdam. The LNG-powered vessel is operated by CMA CGM, one of the Freeport's shareholders, which Malta Freeport CEO Alex Montebello described as "a pioneer in environmental protection". Indeed, in the coming years CMA CGM is expected to take delivery of 20 vessels powered by LNG. Nine of these will carry as many as 22,000 TEU containers.

Progress at Malta Freeport has been facilitated by a strategic decision to invest further in the facilities. Last year alone, the Freeport invested €31 million in 15 Kone Rubber-Tyred Gantry Cranes (RTGs) as well as in other yard equipment including 67 new tractors and trailers.

Refrigerated facilities have also been enhanced, with the Freeport offering 1,582 reefer points at both its terminals and it is in the process of installing further 180 across three new platforms.

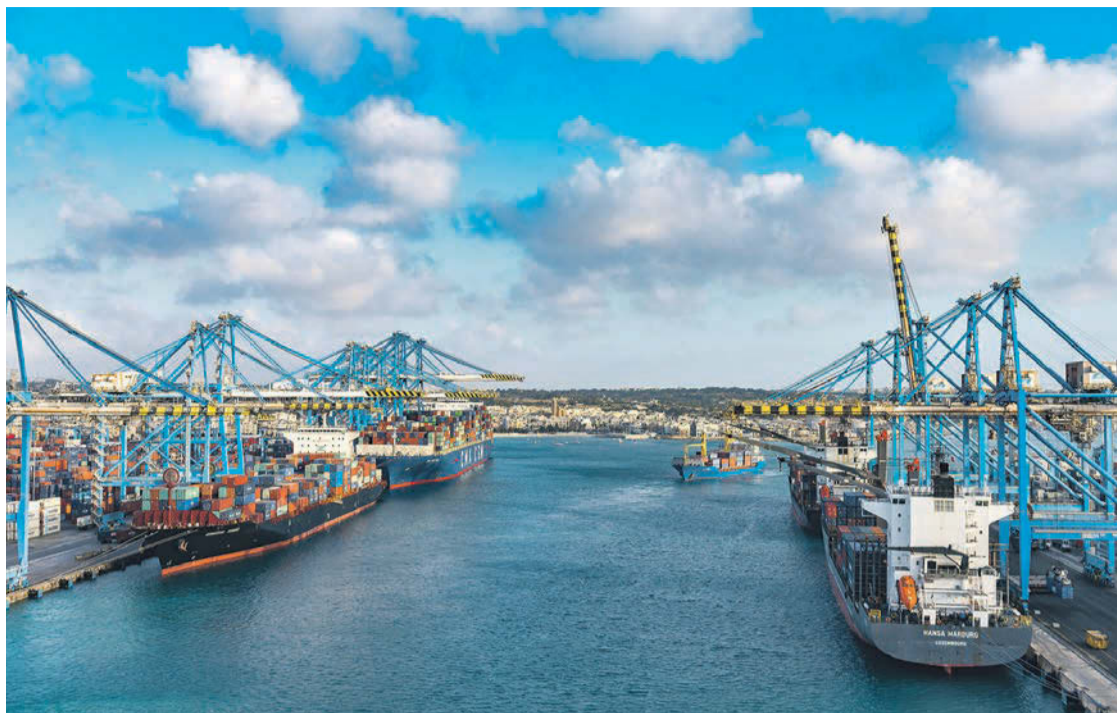
However, Malta Freeport is not only a major transshipment hub providing connections to 115 ports worldwide, 59 of which are in the Mediterranean; it is also an important player in Malta's economy, linking the island with the rest of the world and contributing two per cent of the nation's GDP.

The Freeport also takes its own environmental impact very seriously and the new RTGs are fitted with safety alarms that are considerably quieter than the beeper alarms currently in use on older cranes. This new technology will be installed throughout its fleet of RTGs, reducing noise pollution significantly. It is also working with the local community to embellish the neighbouring seaside village.

Montebello said: "The global shipping industry is changing, and we are changing with it, equipping ourselves with the best facilities and becoming as efficient and environmentally

friendly as possible. Challenging times lie ahead, but we also hope to take advantage of opportunities that come our way."

(Content provided by Malta Freeport Terminals)



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What's on in France

From photography and opera to medieval re-enactments, dance and jazz, France is a very busy stage this summer.



Le Gacilly Photo Festival

Peoples and Nature Photo Festival

June 1 – September 30

Held at Le Gacilly, the Peoples and Nature Photo Festival is a socially aware event at the crossroads between the art world and photojournalism. Created in 2004 by Jacques Rocher, now president of the Yves Rocher Foundation, the festival invites visitors to think about the future of the planet and sustainable development issues.

For four months, the festival showcases hundreds of large format photographs in the parks, green maze, squares and flowery streets of the small town. Each new edition celebrates a guest country and revolves around a theme related to the social and environmental concerns of our society.



Chorégies in Orange

June 19 – August 6

Chorégies in Orange is an annual summer event that offers popular operas, classical music concerts and other lyric art performances.

Now the oldest festival in France – dating from 1869 – Chorégies in Orange is held at the perfectly preserved Théâtre Antique, which has capacity for 8,600 people. The theatre's surviving 37-metre high stage wall guarantees exceptional acoustics.



Jazz à Vienne

June 28 – July 13

An annual event since 1981, the Jazz à Vienne festival takes place in various locations around the town, including the Théâtre Antique, the Jazz Mix, the Club de Minuit, an Italian-style theatre offering an international line-up and on the Cybèle stage, where regional artists mix. The Jazz Parade and the Caravan'Jazz also travel around the communes near Vienne.

Saint-Denis Festival

June 3 – July 3

A month-long celebration of classical sounds, every year – since 1970 – the Saint-Denis Festival takes over the basilica of Saint-Denis and the House of Education of the Legion of Honour – two exceptional examples of the city's architectural heritage – for a series of symphonic classical music concerts.

International conductors and soloists perform alongside prestigious Parisian orchestral acts such as those of Radio France (National Orchestra of Radio France, Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France) to enchant the audience.



Festival de Nîmes

June 23 – July 20

Since 1997, the Nîmes arena has been hosting rock and contemporary music concerts every summer. World-famous artists have performed here, including the late David Bowie, Placebo, Muse, Noir Désir, David Gilmour, Ben Harper, David Bowie, The Cure, Depeche Mode, The Prodigy and Lenny Kravitz.

Organised by FM Productions in collaboration with the city of Nîmes, the event features around twenty artists each year. The festival has been of consistently high quality over the years and continues to draw large crowds. This year's headline acts include Elton John, ZZ Top, Mark Knopfler and Supertramp's Roger Hodgson.



Avignon Festival

July 4 – 23

Founded in 1947, Avignon Festival is one of the biggest international contemporary live performance events. The festival lines up some 40 shows, including theatre, dance, visual arts and music.

Each instalment of Avignon Festival is put together with the help of an associate artist, working together to map out an artistic territory. Beyond their own creations, their enquiries, practices and passions freely inspire the whole programme of events.



Carcassonne Festival

July 2 – July 31

The Carcassonne Festival is one of the most anticipated musical events in the region. Held on the hilltop medieval city, the festival treats visitors to hundreds of performances of contemporary music, theatre, opera and dance. The festival draws around 250,000 visitors every year, to enjoy line-ups such as Elton John, Johnny Hallyday, Scorpions, Indochine, Moby, the Smashing Pumpkins, Supertramp, Deep Purple, Olivia Ruiz and many others.

Calvi on the Rocks

July 5 – 10

Held in an exceptional setting around Calvi's town centre, beaches and citadel, Calvi on the Rocks is an annual celebration of electronic music, artistic performances and Corsican traditions.

Electro afternoons with DJs are held every day on Calvi's beaches. The programme of activities alternates between siestas, mojitos, and enjoying iced tea and Corsican specialities.

Paris Jazz Festival

July 6 – July 28

Taking place outdoors between mid-June and late July, the Paris Jazz Festival is a magical celebration, with some 30 concerts on the verdant lawns of the Floral Park in Paris. The line-up focuses on jazz, world music and Afro-American music (soul, blues). Didier Lockwood, Rhoda Scott, Erik Truffaz, Cesária Évora, Marcus Miller, Rokia Traoré and Manu Dibango have all performed at the Paris Jazz Festival in previous years.

As well as concerts, there are many activities during the day such as workshops to make instruments from salvaged objects, introductions to percussion and conferences.

Express Trailers experiencing increased volumes between Malta and France

The demand and supply of many products is usually seasonal or linked to specific periods of time. However, when it comes to imports and exports to and from France, Express Trailers has been experiencing an increase in volumes across all sectors, confirming the importance of France as a major business partner for Malta.

Currently, Express Trailers' service caters for most types of cargo including dry, chilled or frozen food products, packaging and specialised cargo such as pharmaceuticals as well as personal effects, motor vehicles, and works of art.

Express Trailers has been operating freight services between Malta and France for over four decades. In fact, since 1978, Express Trailers has been managing entire supply chains, offering groupage services and full trailer loads, both for import as well as for export.

Express Trailers started its service to and from France with one depot in Paris. Eventually, growing demand led the company to explore the addition of new routes. Today, Express Trailers operates a weekly service that connects Malta with its three depots in Paris, Lyon and Lille.

The company operates in France through three depots: Paris, Lyon and Lille. This gives the flexibility to offer a service across all the French territory and businesses exporting to Malta are today enjoying a service that is faster and nearer to any consolidation points for onward shipment to Malta. Moreover, a new state of the art cross-dock warehouse in Goussainville in Paris has greatly improved collections, with a faster and wider reach all over France.

The service comes with its fair share of challenges, but Express Trailers is fully equipped to handle all kinds of shipments and volumes, as well as the risks associated with this industry.

One of the most recent challenges was the first mile collection which was becoming more difficult due to a lack of drivers in France. However, the company managed to counter this by deploying vehicles with



better capacity and by including more milk run routes.

The handling and transportation of perishables such as food and pharmaceuticals are also far from a simple process. They not only require skill, precise and timely operating procedures but also the deployment of fully monitored, temperature-controlled and GDP-compliant transportation services that satisfy the increasing demands of clients doing business with their French counterparts. These also need to meet all requirements in terms of regulation, security and quality handling.

Express Trailers is also a member of the Maltese French Chamber of Commerce

and therefore, has always harboured a special interest in developing the service route between Malta and France from a transportation and logistics perspective.

Express Trailers' experience was already telling that there was going to be an increase in trade between Malta and France and consequently, an increase in the demand for transport and logistics services.

Therefore, three years ago, Express Trailers decided to add Lille as its third depot in France to service the rising number of customers doing business with this region. It also consolidated its business collaboration with several transport and logistics operators in France to be able to

secure a continued effective, flexible and responsive offer in multimodal road, air and maritime transport.

Over 40 years of experience working with France have earned Express Trailers a lot of know-how about the French market and this has enabled the company to apply a low-risk, efficient and complete service to all customers. Today, anyone who wants to do business with France knows that their products and cargo will be in the safe hands of a company with acquired experience, an obsession for excellence and with long years of proven expertise.

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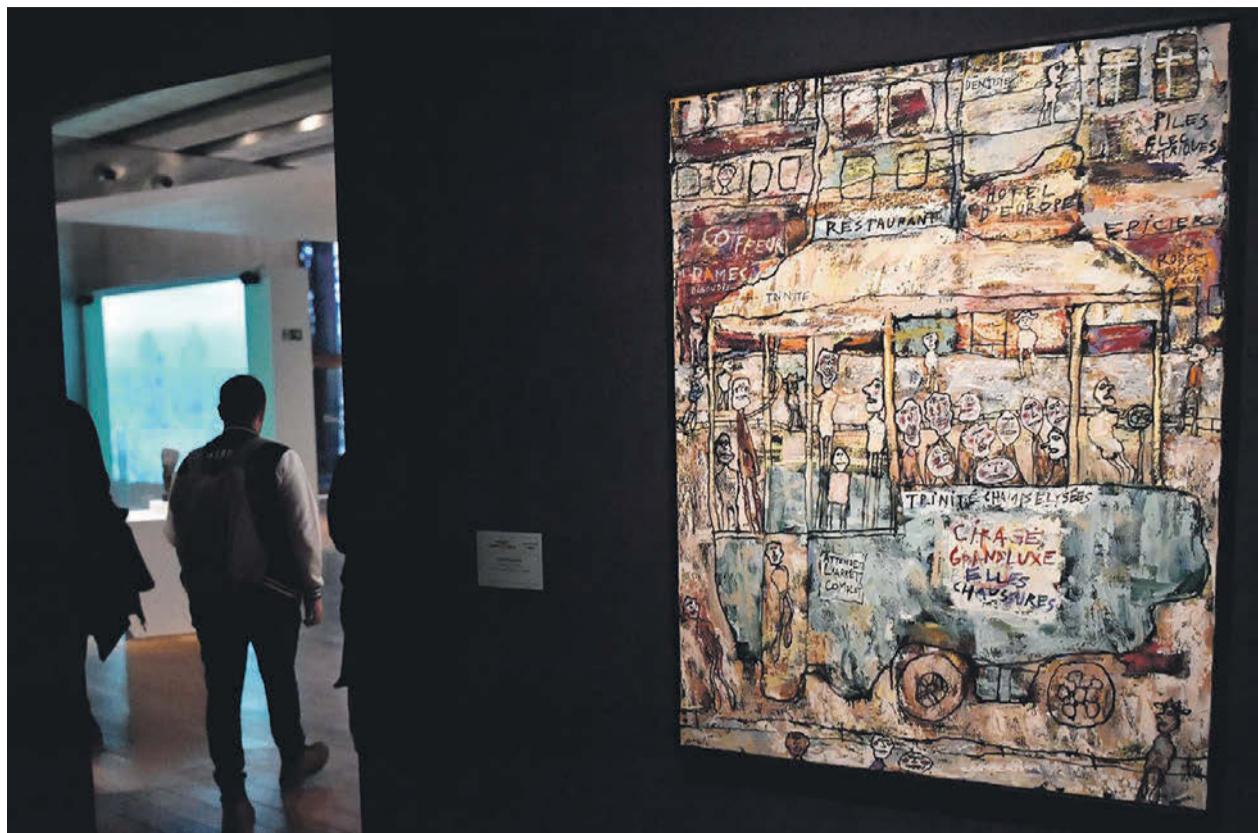
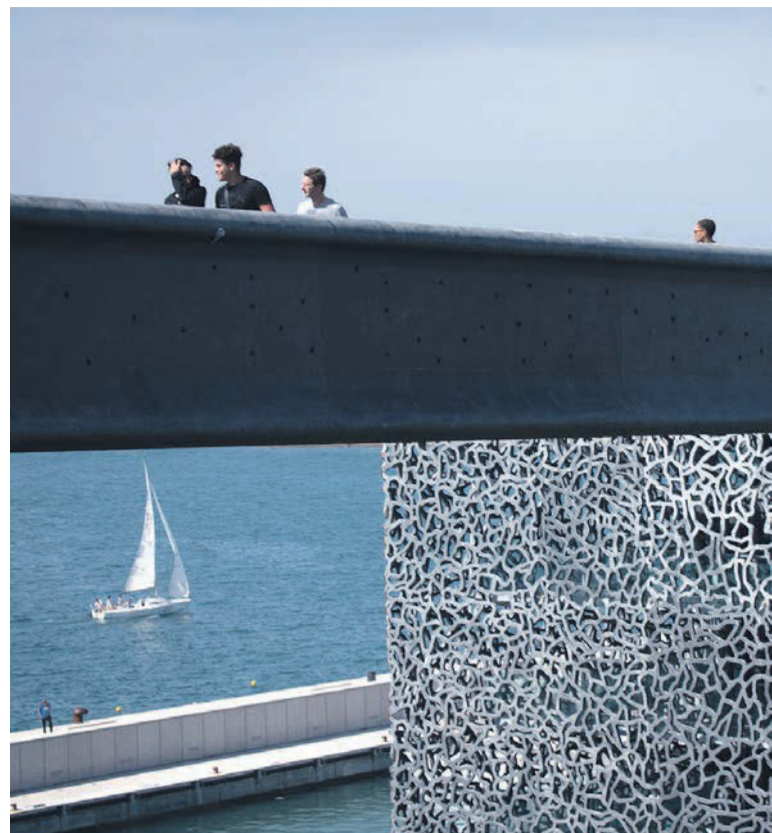
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Jean Dubuffet's painting *Trinite-Champs-Elysees*.

People walk on a pedestrian bridge leading the Fort Saint-Jean to Mucem.

Between sky and water

The Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations in Marseille is a place of dialogue and exchange between past, present and future.

Since its opening in 2013 as part of Marseille's designation as European Capital of Culture for 2013, the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations (Mucem), has established itself as the only major museum devoted to the Mediterranean.

Suspended between sky and water, floating at the entrance of the Old Port of Marseille, the Mucem is a bridge that leads visitors to trace and analyse this basin of fertile civilisation, as well as the tensions that cross it until the contemporary era. It's a place of dialogue and exchange between past, present and future.

In its exhibitions and cultural programmes, Mucem proposes a multi-disciplinary vision combining anthropology, history, archaeology, art history and contemporary art, in order to show the facets of a Mediterranean world in permanent dialogue with Europe.

In 2018, Mucem confirmed its popularity with 1,335,000 visits – up six per cent from 2017. Of these, 501,342 discovered one or more exhibitions and 48,568 participated in the artistic and cultural programming.

Currently showing: Temporary exhibitions

TUNISIAN MOMENT – THE ARCHIVES OF THE REVOLUTION
Until September 30

On January 14, 2011, President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled Tunisia after 23 years of unchallenged power. 29 days earlier, December 17, 2010, following the self-immolation of a

young street vendor, the country began to ignite and an unprecedented revolution began.

Spontaneous, independent of any ideology and without political guides, the Tunisian revolution found expression in the image and inaugurated accordingly “the marriage of new technologies and the street” as well as the era of digital communication, introducing a new type of thought and new artistic expressions.

The exhibition presented at Mucem is an adaptation of the exhibition inaugurated on January 14, 2019 at the National Museum of Bardo in Tunisia.

RELIQUARIES FROM A TO Z
Until September 2

Since February 2018, Mucem has been dedicating a new space to the presentation of its collections: located at Fort Saint-Jean, the room of the collections questions in a fun way the funds of the museum through thematic exhibitions presented in the form of alphabets, to be renewed every six months.

After the exhibition *Love from A to Z* and *Animals from A to Z*, Mucem is showing *Reliquaries from A to Z*.

This new exhibition presents some 70 pieces from a collection of nearly 500 reliquaries, acquired in 2002 from a collector.

This selection is a testimony to the variety of forms, techniques and importance of reliquary use in the European Christian world (from Germany to Italy and Spain to Jerusalem) from the 17th century to the first third of the 20th century.

JEAN DUBUFFET – A BARBARIAN IN EUROPE
Until September 2

Painter, writer and the inventor of Art Brut, Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) was a major player in the 20th century art scene.

In the aftermath of World War II, this elusive and controversial artist brought into play a radical critique of the art and culture of his time, making invention constantly renewed the pillar of creation and thought. Borrowing from anthropology, folklore or the field of psychiatry, it continues the activity of decompartmentalisation operated by the avant-gardes of the inter-war period.

This exhibition shows how Dubuffet interweaves in his work his painting and writing activities with the research he has devoted to what he calls the Art Brut. She presents her artistic production in all its diversity, paying particular attention to showing the objects and documents resulting from the surveys implemented by visiting ethnographic or folk art museums.

ISLAND TIME
Until November 18

Islands evoke emotions, experiences and varied knowledge: memories, desires, readings, images or fears are forces that go beyond the physical geography. More than a marginal exception, this exhibition considers insularity as an experience and a tool for understanding the world, well beyond the Mediterranean.

A man walks past an artwork by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei entitled *Dropping a Han*.A visitor passes in front of a painting by French artist Jean Dubuffet (1901-1985) titled *Dubuffet – A Barbarian in Europe* at the Mucem museum in Marseille. PHOTOS: AFP



Dynasty Urn (2016) at Mucem.



called Ontogenese during the exhibition Jean P...

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Simone Mahler is a French cosmetic brand with over 60 years of experience in the field. Simone Mahler's cosmetics use patented ingredients that are tried and tested for their effectiveness at the in-house research and development laboratories in Bordeaux, France.

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Simone Mahler Aestheticians are trained to use specialised manual movements for face and body treatments to maximise the effectiveness of the products being used.

Simone Mahler is an eco-friendly brand that is certified by Eco-cert. The Eco-Cert certification is holistic – the process starts from sourcing active ingredients used in the products all the way down to the packaging and the use of refillable jars. These product refills have a double saving in the reduction of plastic waste and in cost savings for the final consumer.

Simone Mahler made its debut in Malta in 2015 and is distributed by Beautimport Ltd, through various professional beauty salons in



Malta and Gozo. For more details and information about the brand, to find your nearest Simone Mahler Salon, or for trade enquiries contact Beautimport Limited on 2169 6661 or e-mail info@beautymalta.com.

(Content provided by Beautimport Ltd)

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From left: French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau look up for a family photo ahead of the Paris Peace Forum 2018. PHOTO: AFP

Giving peace a chance

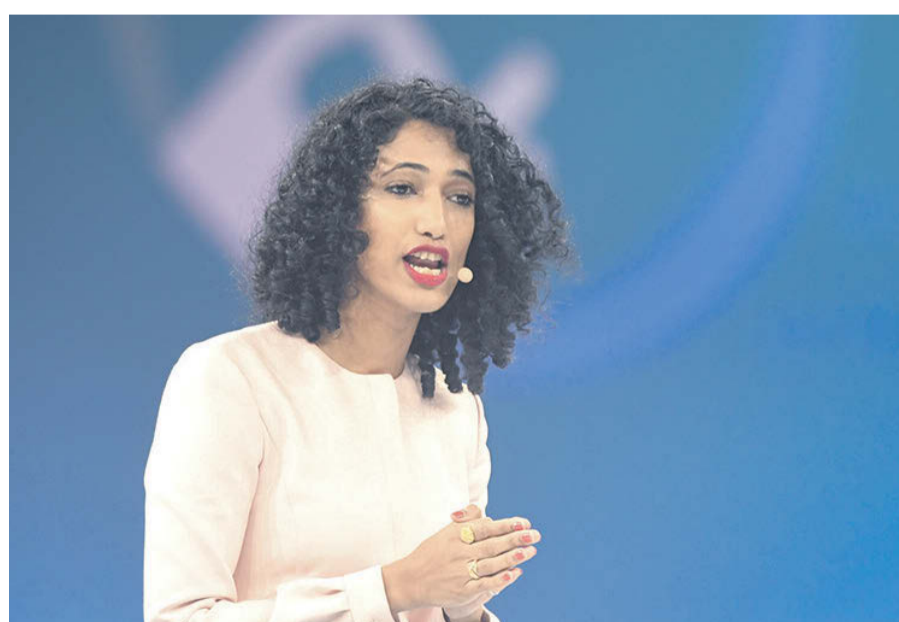
The **Paris Peace Forum** calls for better governance for a world at peace.

This year's edition of the Paris Peace Forum, being held from November 11-13, aims at pushing forward new rules and solutions to address the global challenges of our time by bringing together diverse actors who are at the forefront of making change.

The initiative is based on a simple observation. Global problems without cooperative solutions lead to conflicts. The challenges the world faces – climate change, terrorism, migration, cyber insecurity and the like – ignore borders. Addressing them requires collective action. However, collaboration is increasingly difficult as countries are turning inward. Today, the international community fails at producing the needed solutions.

“Global problems without cooperative solutions lead to conflicts”

States are competing hard for advantage, and populism is undermining the institutions and mechanisms for collective action. Democratic spaces are shrinking, and inequalities are widening. Military expenditures are growing fast while the United Nations budget is cut. International norms, in particular human rights, are disregarded. The internet is becoming



Trisha Shetty, a social activist and lawyer from Mumbai, India and founder of SheSays, speaks during the opening session of the Paris Peace Forum 2018.

a jungle where data is hacked, and fake news spread. International justice is being questioned. And we are losing the race against global warming.

The situation is not conducive to peace. It leads to new conflicts on all continents.

Peace is made up of all the solutions that help reduce international tensions: cooperation to fight climate change and mitigate resource scarcity, institutions to

channel power rivalries and better administer global public goods, regulation to address abuses of power and inequalities, intergenerational bridges and gender equality to create more peaceful societies. In other words, peace will only be durable if effective global governance underpins it.

The mission of the Paris Peace Forum is to contribute bridging this governance gap. To do so, it convenes all stakeholders

to advance concrete solutions where there are none.

Multilateral organisations with universal membership – UN, WTO, IMF, World Bank, and the like – or a regional focus – OSCE, African Development Bank, ASEAN, and others – have legitimate mandates for the creation of rules and mechanisms to solve transnational problems. The Paris Peace Forum picks up the slack when these institutions – or other international organizations – cannot act or when the solutions proposed are insufficient.

The Paris Peace Forum is multi-stakeholder. It fosters hybrid coalitions by bringing together old and new actors of global governance: states and multilateral organisations, but also local governance, NGOs, companies, foundations and civil society at large.

The Paris Peace Forum is project-oriented. It showcases and supports concrete projects. They are either normative – instruments of law, standards and good practices – or capacity-building – new institutions, mechanisms and solutions.



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The 1939 Citroën Traction-avant cabriolet de luxe owned by Oliver Agius. PHOTOS: TONY VASSALLO, WILLIAM PACE, STEPHEN MICALLEF, STEVEN MALLIA

Finding the French gear

Malta is not only home to one of the rarest French cars in the world, a 1904 La Licorne, but also boasts a stable of classic French models, says **Joseph Busuttill** from the Old Motors Club.

Nowadays, if you take a random look along the road you will spot a French Citroën, a Peugeot, or a Renault at regular intervals. They hold their head up high among the numerous vehicle imports from other countries that find their way to the island.

It was not always that way though, for in the past, a French car on the road was like the sighting of a rare bird. For historical reasons, British vehicles by far ruled the roost especially in the pre- and post-World War II periods, when the presence of the British services here was at its highest. Italian cars came next, owing to geographical proximity and popularity. Consequently, French vehicles were left to play second, nay even third, fiddle in the national orchestra on four wheels performing on local roads.

French cars of yesteryear, some of which are still to be found in Malta, were stylish, strong and sturdy, manufactured to stand the test of time. One of these is a white 1939 Citroën Traction-avant cabriolet de luxe, the last in the series prior to the beginning of World War II. A limited edition of 30 models was produced to be given as perks to the elite of the Citroën management in France and abroad.

The proud owner is Oliver Agius, who as a teenager had fallen in love with a similar model belonging to his uncle. Alas, the vehicle was sold and disappeared without trace. Agius made it his mission in life to trace such a model, spending decades searching high and low, until he eventually got to know of such a Citroën stored in a garage in the Paris suburbs.

"This particular Traction-avant found its way to a Citroën director in Berlin before the start of the hostilities. Aware of its uniqueness the owner had stored it well under wraps in the divided city for 40 long years. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, it was taken back to Paris," Agius said, adding that he immediately went to the French capital to inspect it, and after several rounds of tough negotiations, bought the car.

Agius said the Citroën was in a very good condition and able to take its rightful place on the road.

"There was no need for any touching up, and has since remained in its as-found state – the only thing done here was the new number plate."



William Pace's collection of Renault cars.

Despite the ripe, mature age of 87, Agius still enjoys driving his Citroën, so much so that he even entered it for the Valletta Concours d'Elegance earlier this month – although at the 11th hour he could not make it there himself owing to a bad cold.

Another outstanding French classic still plying the local roads is a black 1957 Peugeot 403 belonging to young Dedrick Zammit. Similar to the Citroën, this model also has an interesting story.

"Originally the Peugeot was bought by a certain Edward, who was a Lyceum Hamrun teacher. He was the best friend of my maternal grandfather Paul. When Edward was unable to drive any longer, he sold it to my grandfather who used it for 15 years, taking great care of it, for the vehicle, besides being a rare model in Malta, still possessed all its original parts," explained Zammit.

"When my grandfather passed away and his will was read, the Peugeot was left to me, the grandson, with the condition that until I come of driving age, the classic car would be in the hands of my father David, his son-in-law.

"My father kept the vehicle in impeccable condition until I took it over, and hopefully, the Peugeot will remain in our family for more generations to come."

William Pace is driven by one obsession in life – driving his small fleet of ever-increasing classic Renault cars. The latest count shows he has a grand total of 22 classic vehicles of various models of this marque. These include a Renault Dauphine, five Renault 4, three Renault 5, two Renault 6, two Renault 8, one Renault 9, four Renault 10, three Renault 12, and the latest addition, a Renault Alpine.

"A French car on the road was like the sighting of a rare bird"

"My obsession with Renault cars started in my early teens, when my father Carmelo bought a Renault 10 in 1966. Serving in the British Navy, he would be away from Malta for lengthy periods. The car was parked outside the home, and I used to ferry my mother to driving lessons during the day. During the night, I used to drive my older brother Joseph to the unofficial races at the then abandoned airfield at Ta' Qali," Pace said.

He enjoys all his Renaults to the full, rotating them frequently and participating successfully in local and international events. Some years ago, he took part with his 1962 Renault 4 in the

annual Renault Festival in Thenay between Paris and Lyon. There were 1,400 Renault classic cars from all over the world competing in the festival – Pace won the Best Car in Show Prize. Earlier this month, he participated in the Valletta Concours d'Elegance with his 1976 Renault Alpine, picking up the Best Preservation Prize.

Tucked serenely away in a spacious garage in the sleepy village of Mellieha, sometimes making an occasional ramble in the northern countryside, is one of the rarest French cars in the world, a 1904 La Licorne, that stood out for its advanced and innovative technology. The Paris company originally called Corre la Licorne was founded in 1901 and folded up in 1949. According to reliable local and foreign research, only one such 1904 model is in existence.

Bought in Malta in the early 1900s by a shipping entrepreneur, Philip Bianchi, it was eventually sold to Captain John Bonavita who lived in Attard, and who rarely used it.

Stephen Micallef, born and raised in the car industry, also lived in Attard. On frequent visits to his grandmother, his eyes would fall on her wedding day photo in the Licorne, and he started to pester Captain Bonavita to sell him the car, which by then had been lying idle for more than 50 years. The owner initially sent him packing, but the persistent, confident lad with the gift of the





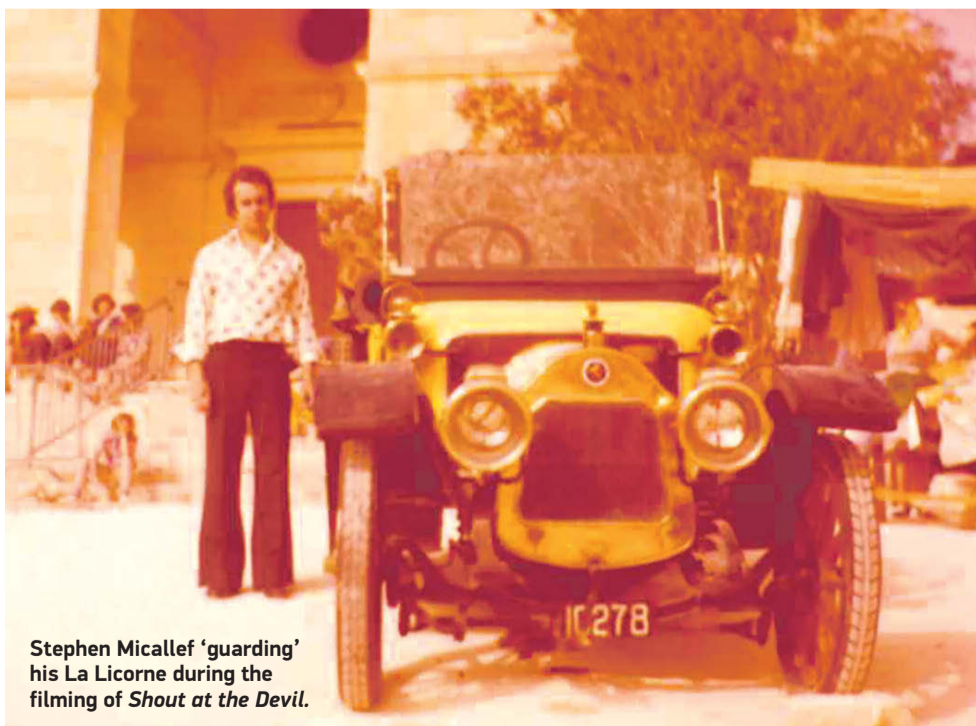
Dedrick Zammit and his 1957 Peugeot 403.



The 1904 La Licorne being harnessed in St Paul's Bay in 1976 for the film *Shout at the Devil*.



Stephen Micallef with his La Licorne in 1975.



Stephen Micallef 'guarding' his La Licorne during the filming of *Shout at the Devil*.

gab won the day, and eventually Stephen, with the help of his uncle, bought the Licorne. He was only 15 years old.

The first big task for the new young owner was to get the inactive vehicle out of Captain Bonavita's narrow garage in San Anton Street, push it up the road along Main Street, and then into the Micallef family garage in Zebbug Road. Micallef looked around and called upon five of his best friends to give him a helping hand – being also his school mate, I myself was one of the fortunate chosen few.

It took us more than a couple of hours to inch our way towards the destination a few hundred yards away, as with velvet gloves, we handled the revered vehicle with the due care it deserved, well aware that any undue pressure or mistake could have fatal consequences on the moribund motor car. For our efforts, Micallef would allow us unlimited access to the garage to see the subsequent works in progress, as he toiled to bring this famous French iconic motor back to life.

Over a number of years, he brought the old timer back to its pristine condition, doing the vast majority of work himself, whether mechanical, panel beating or spraying, in a significant nut-and-bolt restoration project. It had retained much of the original parts, but some wooden

areas needed replacement. For example, the wooden frame of the canvas roof had to be redone by a cartwright. The five wooden wheels were in good condition, but their tyres required replacing, and this was carried out specifically for Micallef by Dunlop in the UK. The original dark green colour was replaced by yellow.

This thoroughbred vehicle became the target of foreign film companies that queued to have the La Licorne in their productions. But Micallef was adamant that such use would damage the car, and he refused even the most advantageous offer. There was one notable exception, when in 1976, the French icon was harnessed in the film *Shout At The Devil* starring Roger Moore, Lee Marvin and Barbara Parkins. But the owner was always in close attendance to see that nothing untoward happened to the apple of his eye.

Over time, he also received many offers to sell the La Licorne, which he meanwhile had painted back to its original dark green colour, but he did not even bother to listen. However, some years ago he changed his mind, and sold the La Licorne to Paul Debono, who now enjoys this unique old motor in the tranquillity of Mellieha. Hopefully, this majestic, memorable French motoring monument – voraciously ogled by many well-heeled foreign collectors – will remain in Malta.

The lure of the Loire

History, architecture, food and wine flow through the Loire Valley.

For a valley to have Unesco world heritage site status, it must not only be postcard-perfect, but also encapsulate a beautiful conversation, between history and nature, people and architecture, culture and heritage.

And that is what the Loire Valley has been doing for centuries. Formed by years of interaction between the river Loire – which stretches from the Ardèche region to the Atlantic – the land that it irrigates, and the populations that established themselves on its banks, the Loire Valley is a natural, economic and architectural landscape that reflects the riches of the river itself. Its political and social history – especially the Renaissance, when the Loire Valley was a seat of royal power – has also formed the landscape, dotted with castles, fortresses, formal gardens and abbeys, which still stand today as rich heritage.

The Loire Valley lends itself to a weekend break, a long holiday, or a lifetime – such is the richness of its towns and villages that visitors looking for history, culture, food, wine or simply a romantic, lush treat can all be accommodated. Here are the top picks.

Romance in stone

The magnificent châteaux found in the Loire valley form a romantic constellation worth of a Shakespearean tragedy. Mostly built during the middle ages, they served as a focal point around which major towns and villages developed. During the hundred years war between the French and the English, most châteaux and castles were transformed into fortresses – when peace returned, they were remodelled as playgrounds for the aristocracy.

Château de Chambord

The largest of the Loire chateaux, the Château de Chambord is a white limestone masterpiece started by King Francois in 1519 and completed a century later by Louis XIV. An enigmatic work, its beauty is not only architectural, but also spiritual, as a model and evocation of an ideal city.



Château de Chenonceau at sunset.

A breathtaking sight on the left bank of the Loire River, the Château de Chambord served as inspiration for the building of the Château de Versailles. The building is immense in proportion, with turreted towers, vaulted ceilings, a gigantic staircase, 440 rooms, formal gardens and pristine forests, all encircled by a 32-kilometre wall.

Through the tasting glass

Surrounded by vine-covered slopes, the Loire Valley produces some fine wines – which obviously lend themselves to some interesting lunches, dinners and tastings.

A good place to start is at the Maisons des Vins de Loire, in Nantes, Angers, Saumur and Tours. Here you can sample the best-known wines of the region, including Sancerre and Pouilly-Fumé, made from Sauvignon Blanc grapes, and Muscadet, made at the western end of the valley.

“Its political and social history – especially the Renaissance, when the Loire Valley was a seat of royal power – has also formed the landscape”

Beyond the obvious tastings, there are some great wines to discover, including Bourgueil, a red made from Cabernet Franc grapes, and Vouvray, produced from Chenin Blanc grapes.

Pilgrim's progress

Dominating the skyline of Chartres, the Unesco-listed Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres was once an important pilgrimage destination during the Middle Ages and inspired the design of other Gothic cathedrals including Amiens, Reims and Westminster Abbey.

An inspired French Gothic structure, it stands on an elevation, with its soaring spires visible from a distance. Built in the 12th and 13th centuries, the cathedral is finely preserved – visitors can spend hours detailing its ornamental facade and the brilliant stained-glass windows, most of which date from 1210 to 1260.



The Indre River running through Loches.





The skyline of Orléans is dominated by the 13th century Cathédrale Sainte-Croix.

Maid of honour

The second largest town in the Loire Valley, Orléans usually serves as a good base from where to start exploring the rest of the region. But obviously, not before sampling what the town has to offer.

Saved by Joan of Arc, who helped lead the French to victory against the English in 1429, the skyline of Orléans is dominated by the 13th century Cathédrale Sainte-Croix, whose twin towers soar 81 metres high. The collection at the Musée des Beaux-Arts is similarly inspiring, with works by masters such as Tintoretto, Delacroix, Gauguin and Picasso. And if you head out of town, make sure you visit the Château de Meung-sur-Loire, one of the oldest castles in the Loire Valley.

Beautiful detour

Listed as one of the most beautiful detours of France, Loches is a historic town that offers plenty of charm, allure and picture-perfect scenery along the Indre River, a left-bank tributary of the Loire. Situated on a hill above the modern city is the medieval city of Loches, fortified by ramparts stretching for two kilometres. Within this walled city is a medieval mystery tour of cobbled streets, ancient buildings and the Château de Loches, where Joan of Arc had met Charles VII and encouraged him to travel to Reims for his coronation.

A detour of a detour – some 18 kilometres from Loches is Montrésor, listed as one of France's most beautiful villages surrounded by a bucolic landscape.



Saumur Castle and its vineyards.

Château de Chambord makes for a breathtaking sight on the left bank of the Loire River.



Built in the 12th and 13th centuries, the Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres is finely preserved.

europe

Emmanuel Macron in Malta for the Med7 Summit



Prime Minister Joseph Muscat and French President Emmanuel Macron. PHOTO: DOI

The sixth Summit of the Southern European Union Countries (also known as EuroMed or Med7) was held in Valletta on June. This informal group of seven Mediterranean countries, all members of the European Union and of the eurozone, has been meeting every year since 2016 to create an alliance of southern countries sharing common issues.

The Heads of State and Government of France, Malta, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Portugal and Spain convened for the first time in Malta since their first meeting took place three years ago in Athens. The format of these meetings has proved its worth since then: six summits have been held in the group's various countries since its creation; France will be hosting the next one. During his

address, the French President reminded its pertinence:

"This meeting is extremely relevant, on the one hand because it allows, in a geographical coherence, to represent several political families, but it [also] brings coherence to our positions".

The aim of these regular meetings is to address and tackle the issues shared by the Mediterranean States of the European Union, Croatia and Slovenia excluded. The Valletta Summit enabled the Heads of State to pledge on significant issues such as climate change, migrations, the enhancement of the eurozone, Libya and the European Union's strategy towards Africa, among other topics. They eventually adopted a joint statement, the Valletta declaration. The seven also agreed to

further discuss a minimum wage and a social shield at European level. In addition, the situation in Cyprus, which hosted the last summit in January, was a key element in the discussions between the Heads of State and Government, who all renewed their support to the island country in its conflict with Turkey.

"I would like to reiterate once again my full solidarity with Cyprus and my commitment to respect for its sovereignty. Turkey

must cease its illegal activities in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus. The European Union will not show any weakness on this subject" Emmanuel Macron

The multilateral meeting of Heads of State and Government at the Auberge de Castille was preceded by a bilateral meeting between Joseph Muscat and Emmanuel Macron.

The French President also had the opportunity to discover the Maltese capital, to stroll through

the Upper Barrakka Gardens with the Maltese Prime Minister and to visit Napoleon's famous room at Palazzo Parisio. The two men discussed bilateral and regional issues.

The talks continued between the seven in the evening at Grandmaster's Palace. A week before the European Council took place in Brussels, the heads of State discussed, among other things, positions to be shouldered within the European institutions.

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wine



PHOTOS: JEAN-BERNARD NADEAU, VINCENT BENGOLD



The vine things in life

This year's **Bordeaux Wine Festival** toasted all things grape and good.

From June 14-18, Bordeaux celebrated the similar destinies that its wines and harbour have enjoyed for centuries. They have developed in parallel, learning from one another how to develop, rise to the highest level, and contribute to the city's fame and fortune.

From tasting the region's wines along the three-kilometre wine trail on the banks of the Garonne and talks with producers and wine merchants to concerts and firework displays, here is the Bordeaux Wine Festival in all its highlights.

Tour of the tall ships

Kruzenstern, Tarangini, Belle Poule, Étoile du Roy, Vera Cruz... Just the sound of their names is an invitation to imagine a voyage on the high seas. Most of the ships present were open for tour – a unique opportunity to see how they function, learn about their often turbulent history, meet their crews and

breathe a little of the air of the high seas and adventure that they exude.

Dragon fireworks

Famed all over the world for lighting up the skies on the occasion of spectacular celebrations, the Group F magicians were back in Bordeaux, five years after their magnificent display for the inauguration of the Chaban-Delmas bridge.

Love, love, love

The organic winegrowers held a celebration on Friday 15 June in the evening, in a location that upholds their values: the great hall in the Darwin centre. Paul Daniel, the director of the National Orchestra of Bordeaux-Aquitaine, accompanied the tasting, adding a few Beatles tunes to the symphony orchestra's repertoire, with some excerpts from Sergeants Pepper's *Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

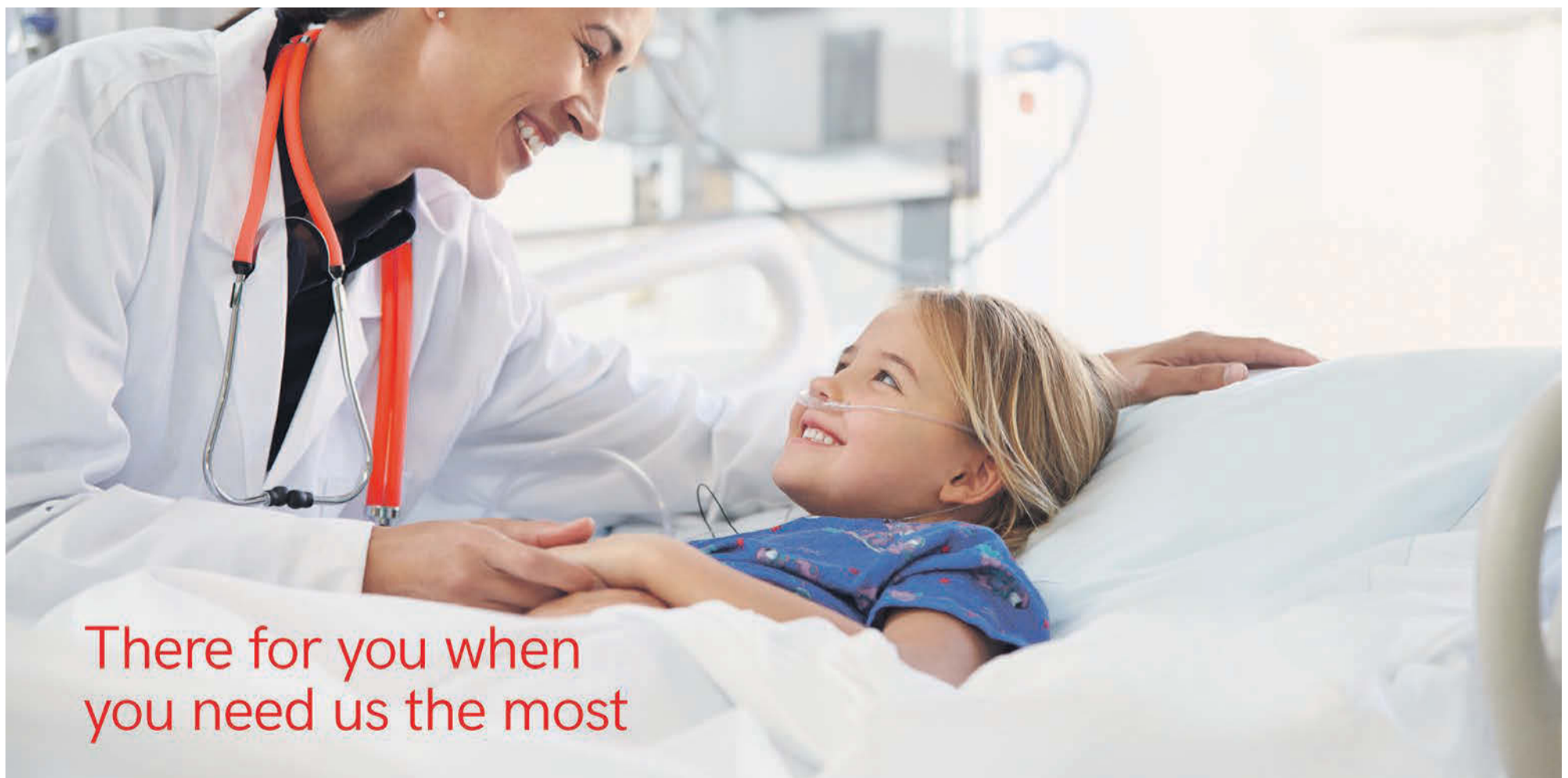
The festival spirit

Throughout the four days, marching bands, choirs, and rock bands performed on stage or parading among the villages. The performers included the famous Bagad Lann Bihouée Breton pipe band, the Jaipur brass band from Rajasthan, the Banda'Leo, and Mezerg with his boomboom piano.

Of rivers and vineyards

In the middle of the festival, under the plane trees opposite the Place des Quinconces, a temporary structure was erected with an exhibition offering a voyage through more than a thousand years of history, which links Bordeaux's wines to the Garonne river, to the estuary and to the oceans. The exhibition trail evoked the appearance of *vitis biturica* in the Roman town of Burdigala, and showed the various vessels that were used to transport wine over the centuries.





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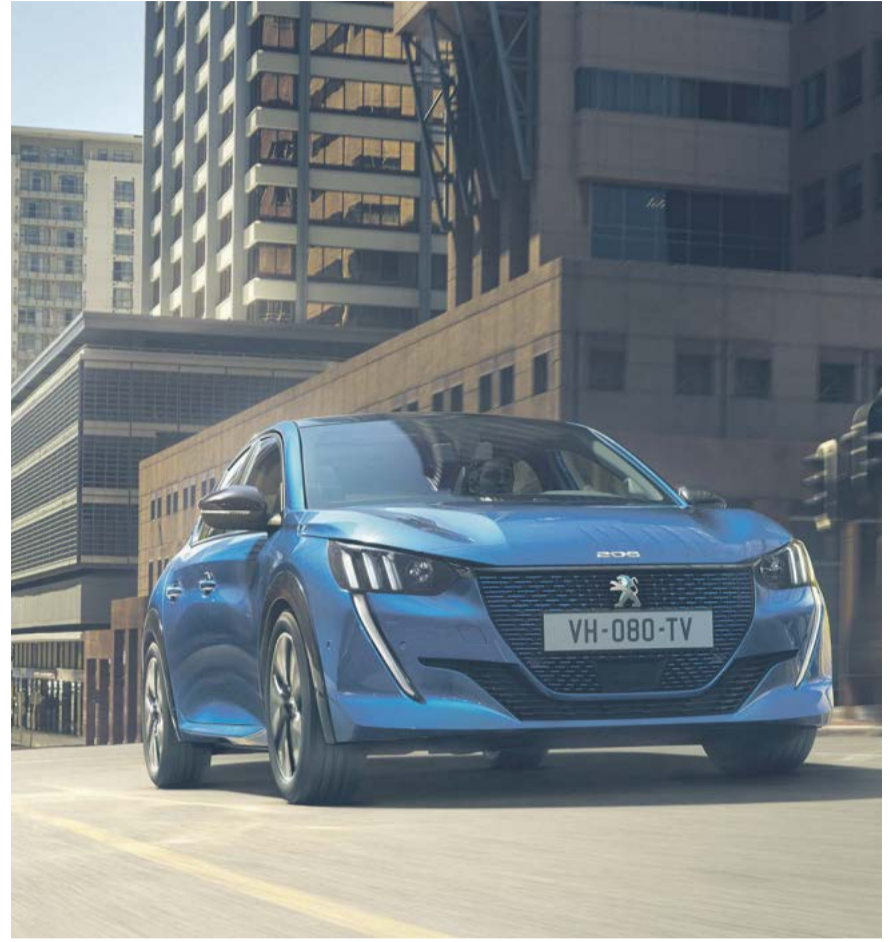
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New models launched

In a B segment tending ever more towards standardisation, to the detriment of notions such as pleasure or youthfulness, the Peugeot brand sets itself apart in introducing the alluring new Peugeot 208.

Because car usage is shifting, because energy transition is a true opportunity, new Peugeot 208 offers, right from launch, three different energy source options – electric, petrol or diesel. Body line no longer dictates vehicle usage.

This new Peugeot 208 generation, which fits perfectly into the brand's upmarket move strategy, is distinguished by its keen design that brings with it a breath of youth and energy.

In addition to original, distinctive styling, the new Peugeot 208 is also breaking ground with a new generation Peugeot i-Cockpit including a 3D head-up display and myriad driving aids normally reserved for higher market segments.

For all those who are ready to give a new lease of life to the automotive world, Peugeot is unveiling the new 2008 SUV.

As an enthusiastic and fierce supporter of Peugeot's brand vision of an exciting future, it is the ultra-modern interpretation of an instinctive and versatile driving experience.

A genuine SUV in its dimensions, it clashes with a particularly powerful and distinctive style.

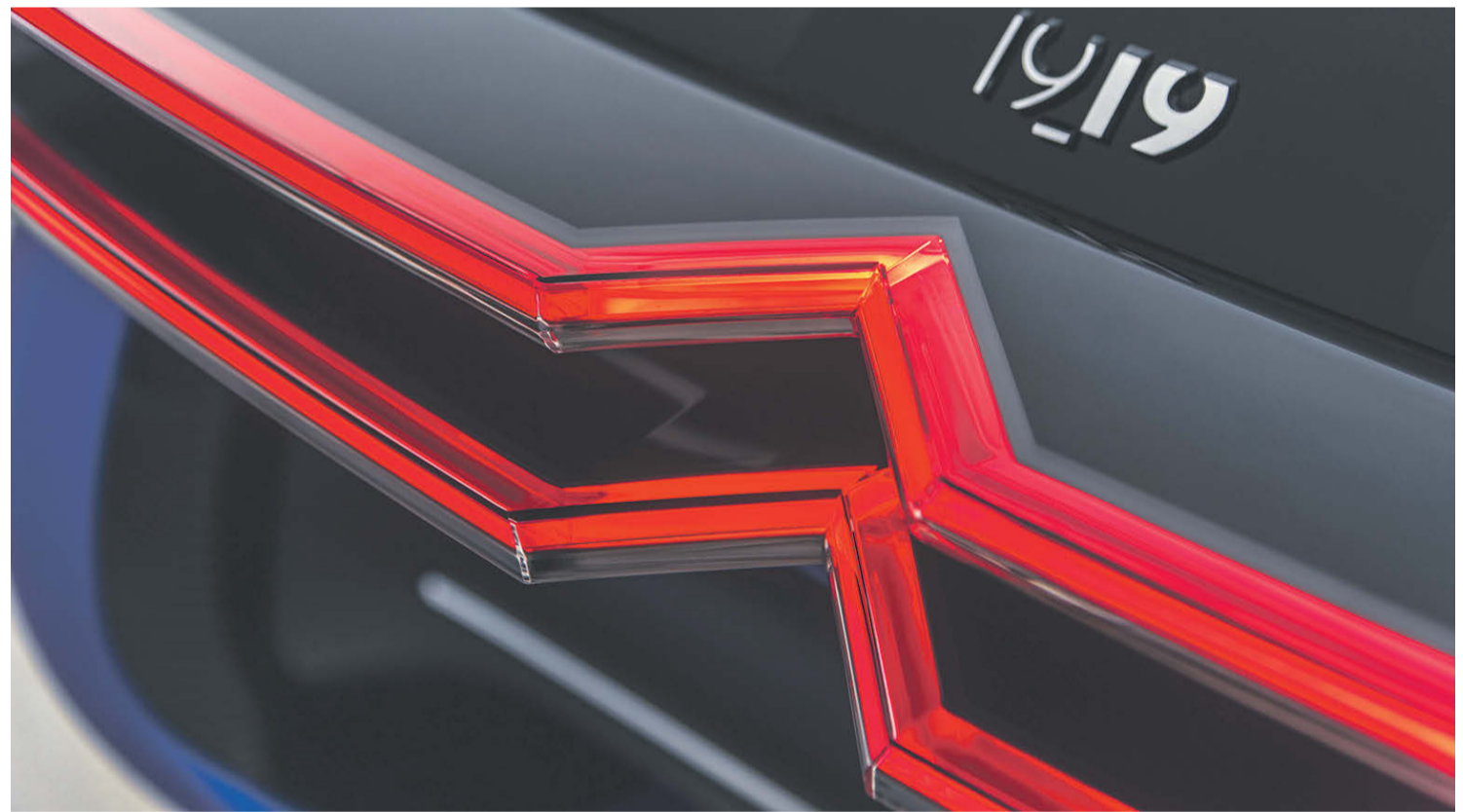
Ultra-technological, it adopts the new generation of immersive Peugeot i-Cockpit 3D, with equipment and driving aids designed by the best know-how Peugeot has to offer.

Being multi-energy, it offers the freedom to choose between three types of efficient engines: electric, petrol and diesel all offering phenomenally stimulating sensations.

Following Ami One Concept revealed last February and embodying the urban electric mobility, Citroën is presenting 19_19 Concept, expressing Citroën's vision of ultra-comfort and extended mobility to escape from the cities.

Two electric concept cars responding to all the needs of the customers willing to be free to move, in a world asking for "always more".

A true brand manifesto, the 19_19 Concept is an unconventional expression that



lies outside traditional automotive cues; a technological aerodynamic object that has exceptional proportions and a spectacular, suspended and transparent capsule design

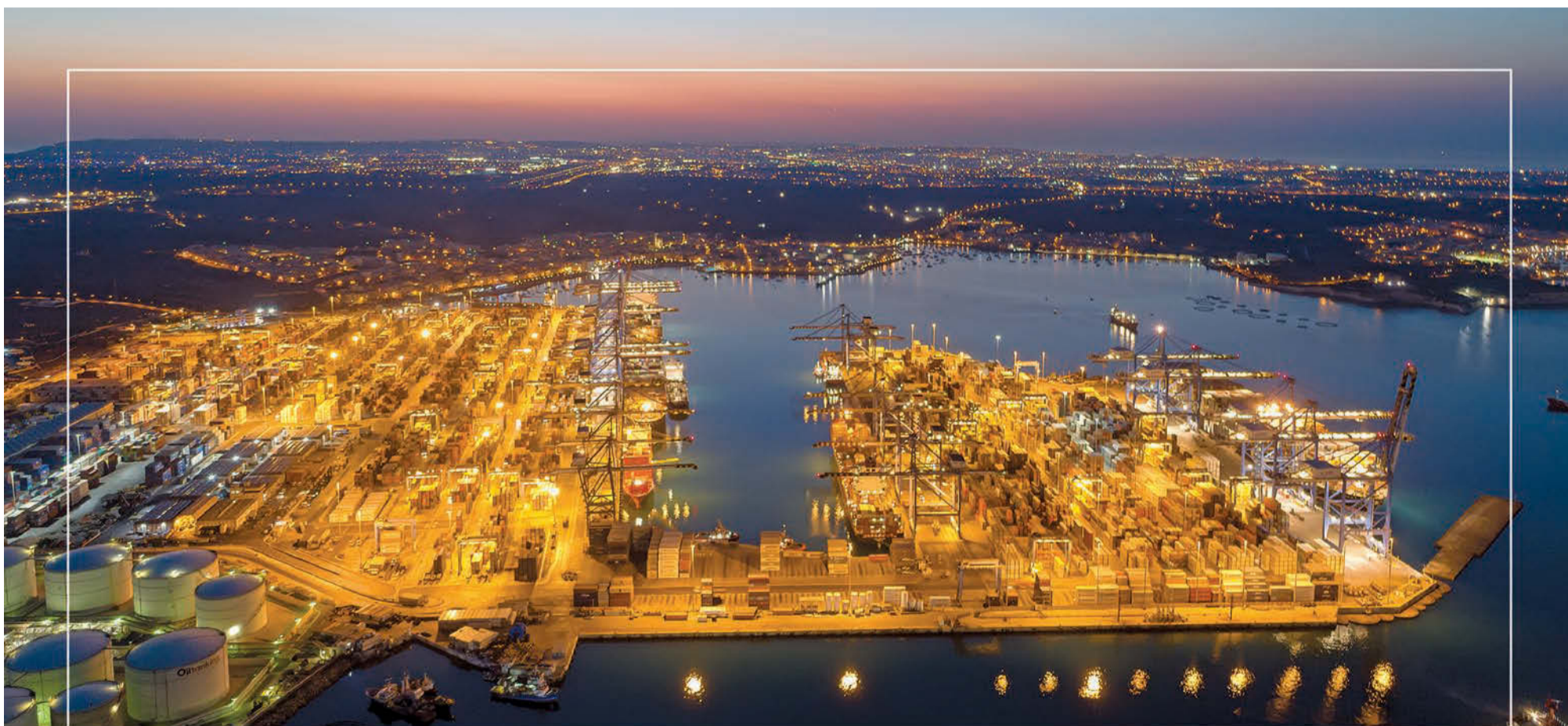
which is inspired by the world of aviation. The new concept car illustrates ultra-comfort at the service of tomorrow's mobility. Through design: a cabin designed as a true

living room in its architecture and materials, plunging each occupant into a cocoon in which each seat is a unique experience of absolute comfort.

Through technologies: a full-electric concept car with a range of 800km, a true magic carpet ride with a suspended cabin equipped with suspension with Progressive Hydraulic Cushions combined with smart active control, and featuring autonomous driving technologies and a proactive personal assistant that interacts unprompted with the passengers, bringing each one a whole new experience of car travel.

For more details and information visit www.michaelattard.com.

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Seeking in nature the best ways of maintaining well-being

In 1982, Gilles Gutierrez set up Texinfine Laboratory (France), an entity mainly devoted to fundamental research into cellular biology and pharmacology, specialised in the discovery and scientific in-vitro validation of plant-derived active ingredients.

Gutierrez's passion for diving led to an encounter with our distant phylogenetic cousin, the brown alga *Padina pavonica*, which can be found along the Maltese coast. The discovery of this calciotropic alga led to the creation of the Institute for Cellular Pharmacology (ICP) Malta in 1997, which marked the beginning of a botanic adventure.

As a supporter of biodiversity and as a biologist, Gutierrez is the head behind the ingenious transfers of pharmacological agents from the plant kingdom to human beings, and many patented inventions whose applications in biotechnology have provided him with many opportunities for private-public partnerships.

The current company's portfolio of products is based on the idea of a phylogenetic compatibility of highly preserved, physiological metabolisms between plants and animals. This phylogenetic approach is as simple as it is genius, as it involves the very basic building blocks of life which are common between all living organism, the genetic information.

A quick look in the phylogenetic tree reveals that long before animals existed, plants had already existed for millions of years, shaping their genome through natural selection. During this time, crucial physiological processes, encoded by specific genes, evolved that provided a considerable advantage for survival. Such genes, linked to highly preserved metabolism pathways, were already present in a common ancestor before the animal and plant kingdoms separated during evolution. It is therefore possible to discover substances in plants that can act on the gene expression in animals, capable of awakening similar genes that have been silenced or damaged during ageing.

Using this approach, Gutierrez, surrounded by a long-standing, multi-disciplinary team, discovered a diverse range of pharmacological agents derived from plants. The first discovery were pharmacological agents, obtained from a Mediterranean alga *Padina pavonica*, harvested in Malta, which is capable of maintaining the osteoblast phenotype in a deleterious environment. Who would have thought that a small brown alga holds the genetic key to fight the deterioration of osteoporosis, cartilage degradation and have anti-ageing properties through collagen synthesis?

The second discovery was an agent derived from the *Opuntia ficus indica*, also collected in Malta, which is capable of initiating the decoupling of the heat shock factor: heat shock protein (HSF: HSP), crucial for the body's stress response. The genetic potential of the prickly pear is now used by athletes, divers, travellers and even partygoers around the world for its outstanding ability to decrease fatigue, muscle ache, sunburn and hangovers. Among these early discoveries are now plants from distant parts of the world, all of which have unique properties, targeting different pathologies in humans like apoptosis, aquaporins or DNA repair processes.

Through its success with its natural extracts, this Franco-Maltese endeavour is nowadays strengthened by successful collaborations with universities in Italy, Malta and France as well as government-based (Direction des Ressources Marines in French Polynesia) and private partners (Singapore, Burkina Faso, Brazil).

Following their philosophy, ICP-Texinfine laboratories are continuously working to discover new therapeutic agents to maintaining health through nature.

(Content provided by Institute for Cellular Pharmacology)



Foreign Affairs Minister Carmelo Abela and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian.

France and Malta, a

This year has been once again another fruitful year for the deepening of the bilateral relationship between Malta and France.

Lots of high-ranking visits took place, both in Malta and in France.

This year started with the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian travelling to Malta on January 17-18 to take part in the Western Mediterranean Forum. Also known as the 5 + 5 dialogue, the forum reunites 10 Western Mediterranean countries, five from the northern shore (Malta, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal) and five from the southern shore (Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia).

Co-chaired by the Algerian and Maltese Foreign Ministers, this year's meeting titled 'Working together: a sustainable future for the Western Mediterranean', focused on regional crises, particularly in Libya, migration and development issues.

Minister Le Drian seized the opportunity to introduce the Summit of the Two Shores project, a gathering of civil society representatives and Ministers of the Western Mediterranean countries taking place in Marseille, France, on June 24. This initiative was launched by President Macron in order to renew the thread of a more inclusive Mediterranean policy and to engage his counterparts.

Malta became highly involved in the preparation of this Summit: the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade promotion organised the Youth, Education and Mobility Forum of the Mediterranean, on April 24, at MUZA. Ten Maltese citizens were chosen to bear the archipelago's point of view on the Mediterranean region, addressed the issue of young people's employability, access to mobility programmes, smart cities, multicultural schools and the part to be played by the media and social networks.

During his visit, Minister Le Drian also held bilateral meetings with Minister Carmelo Abela and Minister Michael Farrugia. Together, they discussed cooperation in the fight against terrorism, Brexit and the rule of law. The Minister reiterated his desire to see a sustainable European response based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity when deal-



Minister Nathalie Loiseau. PHOTO: CLIFTON FENECH/DOI

ing with migration. He also pledged for the respect of the right to asylum and called for an efficient fight against human trafficking and smugglers.

Two months before, Nathalie Loiseau, the then-French Minister for European Affairs, visited Malta at the invitation of her Maltese counterpart, Minister Helena Dalli. On November 2, they took part in a citizens' consultation on the future of the European Union, with Michael Farrugia and the Secretary of State for Social Dialogue, Aaron Farrugia, attending as well.

Together they also discussed European priorities, in particular migration policies, rule of law and Brexit. On migration, France and Malta insisted on sharing the same approach in favour of a comprehensive, responsible and united European solution, based in particular on respect for States' international obligations and on the need for close cooperation with countries of origin and transit.

Besides, the Minister also paid a visit to the European Asylum Support Office

(EASO), which has been based in Malta since 2011. She discussed the reform of the agency with its acting executive director, our compatriot Jamil Addou, and recalled the attachment of the President of the Republic to make the Support Office a true European asylum office.

Eventually, Loiseau spoke with Michael Farrugia, Minister for Home Affairs and National Security and Carmelo Abela, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion.

The Maltese authorities also travelled to France multiple times during the last 12 months. Prime Minister Joseph Muscat was invited by President Emmanuel Macron to attend the Govtech Summit in Paris on November 12.

Minister Abela represented Malta to the International Ceremony for the centenary of the 1918 Armistice. He also attended the first edition of the Paris Peace Forum, held on November 11, 2018.

Earlier last year, Minister Abela went to Paris to meet with his French counterpart Minister Le Drian. A bilateral diplomatic agreement was signed at this



Summit of the Two Shores

blooming cooperation

occasion, the implementation of which already gave the opportunity for two renowned Academics to visit Malta and deliver very interesting conferences. Justin Vaisse, former head of the Policy planning department at the Quai d'Orsay and general director of the Paris Peace Forum delivered a lecture on multilateralism and the future of our world at the Maltese Foreign Ministry. Prof. Stephane Lacroix gave a conference at MEDAC and had an interesting discussion on the perspectives and challenges of the Arab world with the Maltese diplomats. The year to come will see many more exchanges and actions in the framework of this one-of-a-kind bilateral cooperation!

Last but not least, President Macron participated in the MED7 Summit on June 14 in Valletta.

The cultural dimension of our relationship was also nourished with a great number of visits and events this year. First, France is very much grateful to Minister Helena Dalli and Minister Owen Bonnici for their participation in the European meeting convened in Paris to foster a joint reflection on how to protect and salvage our common historical patrimony. This meeting came few weeks after the tragic fire of Notre Dame, which triggered an immense movement of solidarity from the Maltese people.

The visit of the president of the MUCM, the iconic museum located in Marseille and dedicated to the Mediterranean, was extremely beneficial: multiple ways of cooperation with MUZA and MICAS were explored at that occasion and will certainly fuel further cooperation between these institutions.

This year was also the occasion to deepen our musical collaboration. Several concerts and festivals were organized in very different and typical venues, both in Malta and Gozo, with French artists getting involved. To name just a few concerts took place at the festival of lights in Gozo, at Is-Suq Tal-Belt, Valletta, Palazzo Falson in Mdina with Italian col-

leagues, at Surfside in Sliema and more recently on June 21 for the Fête de la Musique at Storeroom, Ta' Xbiex, and Ghanafest in Floriana. Furthermore, a vibrant concert was offered to celebrate the 56th anniversary of the signature of the Elysée Treaty and French-German friendship, with a performance of the Maltese mezzo-soprano Clare Ghigo and the German Karlsruhe Konzert Duo, on January 22 in Mdina.

Eventually, French cinema was continually promoted throughout the year. In partnership with the Alliance Française Malte Méditerranéenne, free screenings of French films were proposed every third Wednesday of each month at Spazju Kreattiv. The Embassy also contributed to the wonderful Valletta Film Festival, which made a wonderful focus on French-language film

Learning French in Malta

As Malta became an observer at the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) last October, the French language was celebrated around the island with much enthusiasm in March. Through a partner-

ship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion and the embassies of the OIF members in Malta, a full week of events was organised in Malta and Gozo.

Celebration of French culture and prize-giving ceremony for French language students were also part of the agenda. Besides, two exciting rock concerts of the French singer Marine Bercot were organised in Verdala Palace and at the German Maltese Circle to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Alliance Française.

Eating French in Malta

Since 2015, the homage to French gastronomy is paid on every 21st of March, in more than 150 countries on five continents. The recurring event called "Goût de France – Good France" enables around 3000 chefs from all over the world to compose "A la française" menus served to locals. Malta is no exception: this year, five restaurants joined the adventure: the De Mondion, Bacchus and Palazzo Castelletti in Mdina and Rabat, Bahia in Lija and The Voyage in Luqa. They elaborated savory dishes, from original appetizers to tasty desserts

and cheese assortments, served with prestigious wines for more than a hundred guests, on the same night, to honor French cuisine. The students from the Institute of Tourism Studies once again gave their best to prepare a refined dinner at the Voyage restaurant!

Last but not least, Malta and France have again this year further developed their economic relations.

These prospering exchanges were discussed during the forum held to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Maltese-French Chamber of Commerce.

Hon. Minister Ian Borg was invited in April to visit Paris. He met with his counterpart Minister Elizabeth Borne to discuss bilateral cooperation and common positions regarding the European transport policies. Minister Borg also visited the "Grand Paris" ongoing works and met with representatives of French international companies and SMEs. The same month, Dr Abdalla Kablan was in the French capital as well, since he was chosen to participate to the Programme d'invitation des personnalités d'avenir (PIPA) by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

Multigas announces long-term agreement for nitrogen supply in Malta

Multigas Ltd., producer and distributor of industrial and medical gases based in Kirkop, has recently signed a new seven-year agreement with Air Liquide Italia – the Italian affiliate of the multinational Air Liquide Group – to supply their customers with industrial nitrogen.

Under this new agreement, Multigas has undertaken an investment in a second air separation plant which will significantly add to its production capacity of both nitrogen and oxygen as well as enhance business continuity plans. The plant is scheduled to be operational in 2020.

“Successful collaboration goes back several years”

Within the framework of this agreement, Multigas will supply the customers' plants in Malta with gaseous and liquid nitrogen: gaseous nitrogen will be used mainly for securing the reliability of the customers' process by preventing oxidation, while the liquid nitrogen will be used for the cold testing of the final products.

Multigas and Air Liquide Italia's successful collaboration stretches back several years, to the 1980s, and has supported Multigas' commitment to provide a secure and robust supply of gases to the Maltese industrial and healthcare sectors.

Ing. Michael Mifsud, CEO of Multigas, said: “We are extremely satisfied to reach this milestone agreement which is the result of months of preparation and close collaboration with our dedicated counterparts at Air Liquide Italia. We thank them for the opportunity to strengthen our support to customers operating in the Maltese islands. Our teams are now fully focused on implementing the new plant project in a timely manner.”

(Content provided by Multigas Ltd.)



Good France at the Institute of Tourism Studies, Luqa.



Every man has two countries, his own and France – Henri De Bornier

Whether travelling to France, shopping online or carrying out business with companies based in France, Bank of Valletta has a wide array of solutions for both individuals and companies to live a simpler life.

Payment platforms such as the BOV internet banking and BOV mobile app are low cost, easy to use and provide consumers control over their finances, whether in Malta or abroad. Through these

digital systems, one can pay bills, transfer money from one account to another, pay third parties both locally and internationally, check out account balances and transactions, provide instructions to the bank, top up mobile phones and much more. In situations where large one-off payments need to be carried out, customers can ask the bank to increase transactions limit both for internet banking and card payments.

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BOV offers a number of other payment instruments such as credit and debit cards that can be used locally, abroad and online. Consumers who prefer debit cards can choose the free Cashlink suite of cards. CashlinkMalta is used locally in ATMs and retail outlets, while Cashlink Visa is a debit international card that can also be used abroad and for on-line purchases. Additionally, Bank of Valletta rewards customers who use premium cards such as Visa Gold, Visa Platinum and BOV Skypass through a customer loyalty scheme.

A myriad of fast and secure payment solutions are available for corporates and SMEs both for local and international business. These include trade finance, wireless card payment terminals, cash-register integration to card payment terminal, online payments, mobile payments, direct debits, electronic credit transfers, automated wages and salaries and e-commerce.

All these solutions coupled with a strong customer experience make Bank of Valletta the ideal payment partner both in Malta and in France.

For more details and information on payment options, visit a BOV branch or business centre or drop us an e-mail at customerservicecentre@bov.com.

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