



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

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

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

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

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

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