


## WALK 16 MALTA: BUSKETT • GHAR IL-KBIR • LAFERLA CROSS • VERDALA PALACE


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See also photograph page 92 Distance: 5.1mi/8.2km; 1h55min

**Grade:** easy, with some rougher walking up to the cave at Ghar il-Kbir. Ascent of 450ft/140m; descent of 375ft/115m

**Equipment:** stout shoes, sunhat, waterproofs, picnic, water

**How to get there:**  81 from Valletta (Dingli bus). Departures every 30 minutes. Route 81 operates a circular service via Buskett; journey time 45min

**To return:**  81 to Valletta (via Dingli and Rabat), from next to the Verdala Palace gates

**Short walk 1: Buskett Gardens.** There are several well-established walkways in these gardens, all of which provide short, easy walks (Picnic 16).

**Short walk 2: Buskett — Wied il-Luq — Verdala Palace** (3.6mi/ 5.8km; 1h20min; easy, with an ascent of 325ft/ 100m and descent of 250ft/ 75m). Follow the main walk up to the 33min-mark (just past the small quarry), then turn left on the small road leading to the Gircenti Valley. Follow this down to a bridge over the *wied*, then pick up the main walk again and follow it from the 1h15min-point to the end.

This is one of Malta's loveliest walks, with a great deal of charm and something of interest for every Rambler. We cover ground more familiar to local people than tourists and visit palaces and cave dwellings ... as well as Malta's 'Clapham Junction'.

**Setting out** from the government's GRAPE AND WINE



RESEARCH STATION, where the bus stops, turn right (south) immediately past the winery and then left very soon afterwards. In **6min** turn right to a CAR PARK. From the car park follow a track for about a minute, to the point where it bends to the left at a field wall. Now a path leads up to a large fallen-in cave (**Ghar il-Kbir**; **12min**). Believe it or not, the cave was inhabited until 1835! Close by is 'Clapham Junction' — the name British visitors have given to the large number of prehistoric cart-ruts found in this area.

But back to the cave: retrace your steps to the car park (**20min**). Turn right downhill on a track. When you approach a wall and barrier in two minutes, turn right 15yds/m before the barrier (there are some cart ruts here). After 50yds/m pass a shooter's hut and after another 100yds/m, a TELEGRAPH POLE. Some 50yds/m further on, go left, through a GAP IN THE WALL (**25min**). Follow a path which bends left and, in about three minutes, scramble down to a lower level, closer to a *wied* (where you may spot pyramid orchids). In another two minutes skirt round a short stretch of modern wall that extends from the gates of the TA' ZUTA QUARRY No 35 towards the *wied* (**30min**). Do not pause at the quarry gates or staff car park; there is much heavy traffic, and workers may be unfriendly towards curious onlookers. (A diversion may be made at this point to a viewpoint over the Girdgenti Valley and the Inquisitor's Palace, a summer residence built by

Inquisitor Onorati Visconti in the 17th century, by bearing left for a third of a mile/0.5km).

Follow the road uphill to the right for about two minutes, then go left in front of another SMALL QUARRY. A minute later (**33min**), turn right on a narrow country road. (*Short Walk 2 goes left here.*) The road contours round the hill and then turns left to **St Lawrence Chapel (50min)**. From here turn left along a walled-in path; in a further five minutes you reach **Laferla Cross** and the **Annunciation Chapel**. On the summit a spectacular view greets you — a bird's-eye view of the more urban face of Malta; behind you, the incomparable blue sea and magnificent coastal scenery still beckon.

The track downhill is lined with statues; it meets the SIGGIEWI ROAD at **1h05min**. Turn left on the road and then left again almost immediately. In about five minutes the road swings left at a STONE PILLAR (inscribed GR). Take the track to the right here, passing a FARMHOUSE in a minute. The track deteriorates into a path running between stone walls. Cross the **Wied il-Luq** on a narrow BRIDGE (**1h 15min**) and after 60yds/m cross a road (*Short walk 16-2 comes in from the left here*). Go straight ahead up a narrow road flanked by small farm buildings. In 15 minutes (**1h30min**) turn left on another road (*where Alternative walk 15-2 comes in from the right*). After a further 15 minutes of steady climbing, Verdala Palace emerges

from the woodland like a French château. Begun in 1586, it was designed as a safe summer retreat for the Grand Master de Verdalle. Once at the boundary wall of **Verdala Palace (1h50min)**, bear right to the RABAT/BUSKETT ROAD (**1h55min**). The BUS STOP is 50yds/m to the left.

*The cart-ruts at Ghar il-Kbir. These strange formations occur on many plateau areas on Malta and have puzzled archaeologists, who believe they date from the Bronze Age. In some places, cart-tracks of several different gauges converge.*

