



As a child I used to collect stamps and old coins. My granddad had huge collections of both, and taught me a lot about them. Before long I had my own respectable collection, including some stamps from Malta. But my favourites were the Maltese coins, with octagonal and decagonal specimens, which made them special in my eyes. I still remember how I had exchanged my US coins for the Maltese ones with my friend Boris. In that same year, my family and I went on holiday to Austria, where we visited the Maltatal valley. At the time it looked like a rainforest to me. From then on, my childish imagination started associating Malta

EVERY LITTLE PATH

ANKE JABLINSKI a German travel writer from Berlin, fell in love with Malta during her first visit in 1987. Since then, she has been back. And back. And back...



Anke Jablinski

with thick forestry and huge waterfalls, exotic coins and rare stamps. That was Malta for me, as a ten-year-old.

When I travelled to Malta and Gozo for the first time in 1987, I immediately got my hands on a five cent piece. A picture of a crab was on the coin and since Cancer is my star-sign I let a friendly Maltese

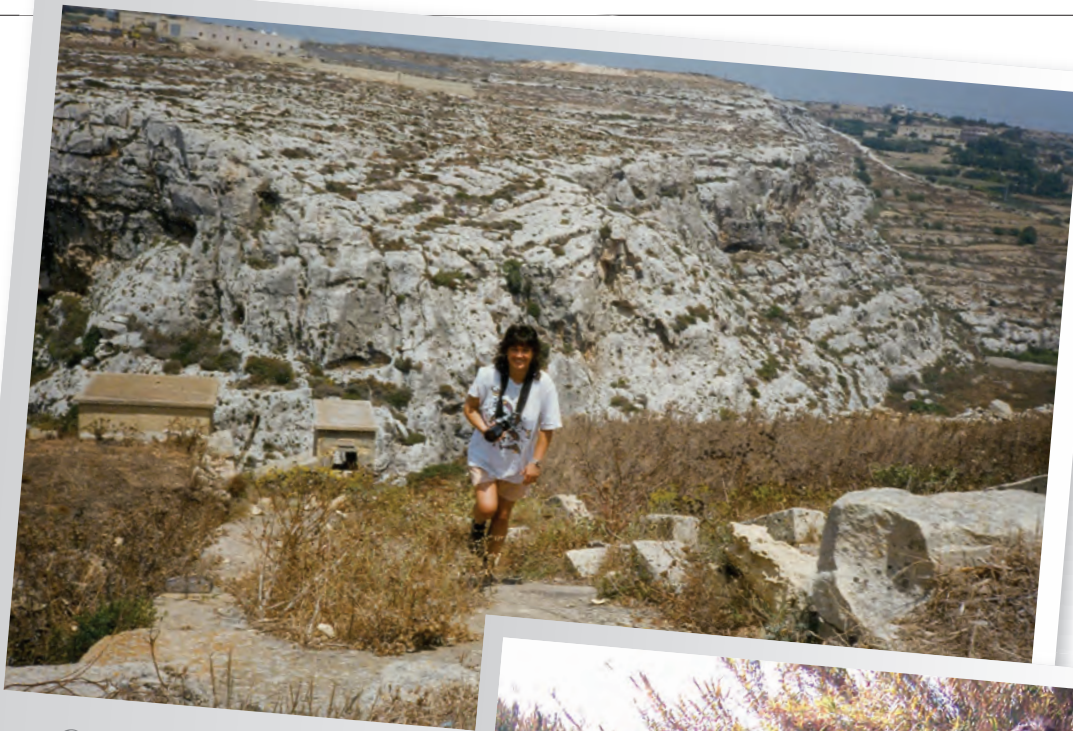
locksmith drill a hole through it so that I could wear it as a pendant. I still have this pendant today.

I was not disappointed when I found out that there weren't any rainforests or waterfalls on the Maltese archipelago, because by then I had already travelled a lot, just like I had dreamed of doing when I collected

stamps and coins as a child. And through my travels I had even grown to love the barren landscapes.

After my first day in Malta I had already decided that I wanted to explore every imaginable corner. These were small islands and therefore uncovering all their mysteries had to be possible. I rented a car, drove to a specific place each time, and then made a miles-long roundabout tour until I was back at my car. I had always hiked a lot with my family, and in Malta I re-discovered that passion. I walked from morning to evening, often without any interruptions, almost like someone possessed. A Maltese friend thought I was exaggerating when I told him that I had once walked from St Julian's to Marsaxlokk.

In those days I used more ordinary paths, mostly roads, or went along the coastline. I have fond memories of how one could walk from Msida to Pembroke with hardly having to leave the coast. These days that has become quite impossible, with hotels everywhere.



One of Malta's valleys

On my second trip I was hooked, and my plan to get to know Malta, Gozo and Comino began to take shape. I didn't just want to get to know every place, I wanted to get to know every single patch of land. With Malta and Gozo it was love at first sight, which then gave me the determination to write the book *Zufluchtsort Malta*. I wanted to get to know every path no matter how small, and to get rid of the cliché that there is no point hiking anywhere other than on Dingli Cliffs. My first goal was to circle the island along the coast in sections. That proved to be more difficult than expected but still possible, and I anyway liked climbing. RTO-signs and hunters were a problem, as were hotels and private landowners. I had to find the shortest



Anke at Chadwick Lakes

possible alternative routes and also be cautious. After a number of

journeys to Malta in the 80s and 90s I started to know Malta quite well. I had travelled a lot on foot and by car and felt at home when I came. I didn't foresee then that it would take me 50 visits to get as close as possible to my goal of knowing every path. By then I already called my Malta travels my "every-little-path-project". I am certain there are still

some paths, byways and roads that I don't know. But I did what I could, and I can say that I explored Malta, Gozo and Comino as well as humanly possible. I do not think it is possible to have done more.

Already during the first section of my journey (the coastal tour) I encountered areas that I had never found in any of the many books I had read about Malta. Hiking along the coast of the island can be briefly described as: cliffs-towers-salt pans. But there are a lot more interesting and attractive things. For example when I think of

Gozo, the unique incisions of Reqqa Point, Pinu Point and Mgarr ix-Xini come to mind. A hike along the coastal cliffs from Xlendi to Mgarr ix-Xini offers breathtaking views of Comino and Malta. It was hard to get from Dwejra Point to Hekka Point, but in springtime I was rewarded by soft, lush meadows. Hiking from Hondoq to Xatt L-Ahmar, again regaled me with wonderful views of Comino. My beloved Gozo I have pretty much completely walked through and through, but there too I needed 50 journeys.

I also did not relinquish the opportunity to explore all the towers I came across along the coastline. The coastal path in the east of Malta, from Fort St Rocco over Xghajra to Zonqor Point was also pleasant. In those days there were fewer interruptions when I hiked from Mistra Bay to Mellicha or along the coast of Sliema and Tigné, to Ta'Xbiex. At Tigné there used to be pretty old houses from colonial times.

Hiking around Delimara and Xrobb l-Ghagin or walking down the coast south of Hal Far Airfield became an adventure. Farmers and hunters who I encountered often didn't believe where I came from and where I was heading. ➔

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The way back often bordered on torture in the summer months, since the necessary return to my car at the end of the day would have come after a trip during which I would carry, and drink, as much as six litres of water. I mostly postponed the really long walks to the winter months.

The second part of my plan was the towns. Here I could communicate in English again, since in the countryside my

to explore. Hence I lived in Qrendi for a better look at Zurrieg, Bubaqra, Safi, Mqabba and Kirkop, or in Marsascula to get a proper look at that area. I did the same in Gozo. I stayed in Gharb to explore the west, in Xlendi or Ta' Cenc when I explored the south, in Qbajjar and in Ghajnsielem for the north and east respectively.

The third part of my plan was perhaps the nicest, since I explored the landscape of the inner island. It was fascinating to find that

others were real cave-churches, while others had old paintings to marvel at. Hence I discovered Il-Maqluba, Hal-Millieri, Kuncizzioni church, Santa Maria ta' Bir Miftuh and San Dimitri in Gozo, and the cave-churches in Mellieha and San Gwann. Since my main historical interest were Malta's temples, I found out where there were the lesser known temple ruins or where temples were expected to be. Kordin provided an unpleasant experience where students threw

Victoria/ Dwejra Lines on Malta, the landscape was unbelievably beautiful, as is the area west of the Chadwick Lakes, with its many interesting facets such as hills, partly hidden chapels and even a small waterfall.

Since I had gone for long walks inside Mdina several times, I started exploring the area around the silent city and after that the area of the hinterland of Rabat, the Girgenti Valley and Laferla Cross and the area around Siggiewi, where I once got completely lost after dark

(later it turned out that I had walked around in circles for hours). I also explored Valletta and the 'three cities' on foot often and thoroughly, but then I wanted to explore the outback there too and found small places like Bidni and San Leonardo.

A lot has changed in the twenty four years since I first visited the archipelago. I am certain I will still find a little treasure here and there, and there is one that I definitely don't know yet : Filfla! Since I have given many areas special, personal nicknames, Filfla would probably become Area of Birds, one

last squiggle on one of my many maps of Malta.

You may think that with all my hiking around Malta, I don't have time for collecting anymore. In fact, I do, though not coins and stamps. Those collections have been replaced by, you'll be pleased to know: an impressive collection of Malta maps!

Anke has her own website: www.ankejablinski.de and is also on Facebook. 📌



Laferla Cross area

newly-learnt, modest Maltese had to undergo a hard test. I drove around by car to get to know the region where larger cities like Birkirkara, Hamrun and Qormi dissolve into each other. Here my walks were just strolls of one to two hours with nice breaks in a café, bar or restaurant. It became more interesting in little towns and villages where I saw many things that I would have never seen if I hadn't done my 'project'. From this point onwards I only organised my accommodation in places that I really wanted

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it had still so much to offer that I had never seen before. I was particularly enchanted by small churches and chapels: some of them built into cliffs,

stones at my companion and I while we looked at some of these ruins.

Whether on Gozo, between Santa Lucija and San Lawrenz or down the

