

Passaġġi

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From devout Christmas Eve traditions to memorable New Year's Eve celebrations



Photo: Massimo Listri. The Jesuits' Church Oratory, Valletta.

Words by
Passaggi

Naples meets Malta

Ring in the New Year with the Di Meo Calendar 2026, Naples and Malta – Mediterranean Dialogues. Standing as a cultural bridge between two nations, it reaffirms that art remains the truest expression of connection across the Mediterranean.

The Co-Cathedral of St John the Baptist, patron of the Knights Hospitaller; the Barrakka Gardens, with their baroque terraces overlooking the Grand Harbour; the Grand Master's Palace, today the seat of Malta's President, the Auberge de Provence... These are among the many sites featured in the Di Meo Calendar 2026, Naples and Malta – Mediterranean Dialogues.

Now in its 24th edition, it celebrates the deep cultural connections that have long linked the two shores of the Mediterranean. Produced in a limited, non-commercial edition by the Associazione Di Meo Vini ad Arte, this internationally acclaimed almanac has always embodied the values of art, heritage and dialogue.

In today's complex global context, its 2026 edition stands as a symbolic bridge between peoples, affirming culture's vital role in fostering understanding and peace.

The Di Meo Calendar 2026 places Malta at its heart. It unfolds as a journey through art, architecture and spirituality, inviting readers to rediscover the Mediterranean as a cradle of unity.

"This edition marks a milestone for our project. Celebrating Malta through this calendar is both a tribute to its beauty and a gesture of cultural union between Naples and Malta, two lands sharing deep artistic and spiritual roots," said Generoso Di Meo, creator and curator of the calendar.

He recalls arriving on the island inspired by literature: "I had in mind The Maltese Falcon and the adventures of Corto Maltese. What I found was a world of hidden treasures – and an echo of Naples itself."

At various points in history, Malta was under the rule of the Kingdom of Naples and later the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Di Meo explains. ▼



Italian Ambassador to Malta Valentina Setta with Deputy Prime Minister Ian Borg at the launch of the Di Meo Calendar 2026.

“These dominations profoundly shaped Maltese culture, particularly in architecture, religion and language. Italian remained Malta’s official language until 1934, while artistic and intellectual exchanges kept relations alive well before Italy’s unification.

“This year’s edition explores these shared legacies and celebrates the historic, artistic and spiritual connections that have long united Naples and Malta – two Mediterranean crossroads that continue to embody the art of dialogue.”

The Di Meo Calendar 2026 continues its mission: to celebrate the crossroads of culture, beauty and dialogue – where Naples meets Malta, and where the light of the Mediterranean never fades, Di Meo said. It stands as a cultural bridge between two nations, reaffirming that art remains the truest expression of connection across the Mediterranean.

The idea was also to capture and disseminate the authentic essence of Malta, paying homage to its art, people and traditions.

The calendar opens with a contribution from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg, who writes that “in unprecedented times, with geopolitical tensions rising across the globe, the Di Meo Calendar 2026 is a message of unity. It reminds us that peace is rooted in mutual respect, shared memory and collaboration.

“By recognising the historic friendship between Naples and Malta, we reaffirm the enduring power of cultural diplomacy

and the bonds between peoples. May this calendar inspire reflection and pride. Above all, may it remind us of the importance of unity for our shared future – in the Mediterranean, in Europe, and beyond.”

Turning the 2026 calendar into a collector’s item are the images of Massimo Listri, internationally renowned master of architectural and interior photography. Through 12 magnificent photographs, Listri captures Malta’s timeless beauty and its dialogue with history.

Month after month, the viewer is invited on a journey through Malta’s highlights, including the National Library, churches, historic houses and palaces, as well as the Manoel Theatre – a jewel of Maltese culture, even older than Naples’ Teatro San Carlo.

Each image is accompanied by original essays by distinguished journalists, historians, musicologists and art critics, who explore the historical and cultural ties between the two cities.

The architectural kinship, for example, between Castel Sant’Elmo in Naples and Fort St Elmo in Valletta is examined by Claude Busuttil, who says “the similarity in design principles is striking; a testimony to shared defensive genius and baroque vision”.

A decade of leadership by Gregorio Carafa (1615 - 1690), the 61st Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, cemented the Naples-Malta connection, explains Louise Cutajar, while Mgr Edgar Vella adds another thread in the calendar: since 2013, a Neapolitan nativity scene has adorned St Paul’s Cathedral in Mdina each Christmas – now destined for permanent exhibition, with hundreds of figurines, crafted in Naples, becoming part of Malta’s living heritage.

The Di Meo Calendar 2026 is produced under the patronage of the Ministry for National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, VisitMalta and the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers. ◀

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