

RTO ... Is it really?

Early Spring is the ideal time in which a walk in the countryside can be enjoyed. The blooming of wild flowers, the crunch of the grass under your feet and the fresh air help ease the mind and the body of people who venture away from the concrete jungle to enjoy the few last remaining open air spaces around our islands.

Unfortunately, such walks are usually cut short by various aspects.

Signs signalling walking routes, such as those indicated by *The Malta Coastal Walk* book supported by Malta International Airport, Ramblers Malta and Visit Malta are found broken or vandalised.

Walking paths are very often lined with boulders having **RTO** (riservato) painted on them when they are not blocked with rusted gates having labels reading PRIVATE.



Vandalised Signs



Sprawling land that cannot be reached since the property is marked as being private

The insistent **barking of dogs** is a tough test for the faint hearted. At times, dogs are also kept unleashed and they bark and charge at innocent passers-by.

Other times, **'farmers'** bodily try to put a stop to nature walks when they declare that rough trodden paths are private property and people cannot overstep beyond a certain point.

Is it really possible that most natural, undeveloped areas around the Maltese islands are private property? Should paths signalled by *The Malta Coastal Walk* book be re-considered? Should the authorities look into and take action regarding which paths are really private and which should be accessible to the general public?

Let us give back walking trails to the people because as the Greek physician Hippocrates said: *Walking is man's best medicine.*