

# The Snop House



## *Enchanting accommodation in the heart of Senglea*

Senglea remains one of Malta's largely-undiscovered treasures. But, right at its heart, is a boutique hotel determined to showcase the city's splendid charms and character. *Jo Caruana* meets the team behind the Snop House.

The sun shines over Senglea church and, just beyond, a pop of red greets you as you walk through the square. That red signifies that you've reached the Snop House – stunning boutique accommodation right in the core of this delightful (and often overlooked) historic city.

“The Snop House is a genuine reflection of two of the most important things in our lives,” says owner Olivier Plique, who transformed the property together with his partner Sophie Nicolas. “Originally we were looking for a pied-à-terre in Valletta because we're totally in love with the city. We think it is becoming one of the most wonderful capitals anywhere in Europe. But it was a little too busy for us, so we started to look elsewhere and found ourselves in the Three Cities.”

The couple were drawn to the area because they consider it the cradle of Maltese history – a topic they are both fascinated by, especially when it comes to the period of the

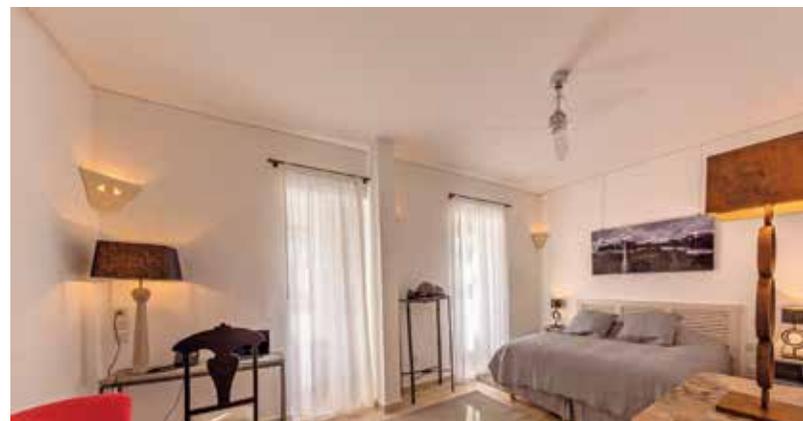
Knights of St John. “The atmosphere immediately reminded us of Venice – especially Giudecca, which had been abandoned but was then rejuvenated. The Three Cities area has gone on the same journey and is now really coming into its own. As the smallest of the three cities, I find Senglea to be really special – because it's a peninsula, you can't just pass by, you have to come into it to see it. The people here are so friendly too and life is wonderfully authentic. It was the same sort

of atmosphere I discovered in Gozo when I first moved there 20 years ago.”

Olivier and Sophie actually started their journey towards owning the Snop House by looking at the house next door, but were soon told that this one property was available too. “It was perfect!” Olivier smiles. “So well distributed and just the right size for a small hotel. We loved it immediately and decided to buy it within five minutes. Instantly, we started our adventure towards opening the hotel of our dreams – one that would be the perfect reflection of both our passions: Malta and art.”

Nevertheless, the couple knew they were facing a challenge. The property (previously a social club) had lain empty for 10 years and needed to be converted and modernized, but they believed it would be worth it – and it is. Today, the Snop House offers six luxuriously-designed bedrooms, with two on each floor of this impressive townhouse. Each is served with a lift and the magnificent internal stair-





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case, and has a balcony – three internal, and three overlooking the pretty street below.

Each suite is unique too, and has a theme all of its own. It invites the guest through the wink of an artistic eye, to discover some part of the history, culture, environment or traditions of the island. Beyond that, this is where local history and culture meet elegance, resulting in a unique hotel experience: high-end design, first class accommodation, and ultimate comfort, whatever the season or temperature. Other highlights include the delicious Continental breakfast, the in-room amenities, the fabulous beds and linen, the top-floor honesty bar stocked with local products, the original art, the beautiful terrace with its stunning view over Grand Harbour, and the library downstairs, which is packed full of information on Senglea and the rest of Malta.

“We want our guests to really get to know the area while they are here,” Olivier says. “So we try to impart as much knowledge as we can. The idea is to give city-breakers from all over the world a genuine experience of the island we call home – whether they are walking along the promenade here and stop-



ping for dinner, going over to Valletta on the ferry to experience the history or nightlife, or taking a water taxi for a spin around Grand Harbour. It’s the best way to enjoy life – the perfect place for a bit of *dolce far niente* living.”

So with all of this in mind, it seems there really is nowhere better to choose to stay for a couple of days in Malta – whether you’re local or not. It is a treasure trove of art, design and hospitality – and the ideal spot from where to explore this stunning part of our island.

As for the origins of the hotel name, I wonder? It turns out SNOP is an anagram of Sophie and Olivier’s names, and they now refer to themselves as Mr and Mrs Snop. “We have a lot of fun with our guests,” Olivier continues. “It’s our aim to offer a very personalised service, so that everyone feels at home. I know our guests appreciate that, which is great, as we want them to return again and again, and to keep discovering the endless things there are to love about Malta.”

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