

# GGANTIJA

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The small

European island country of Malta in the Mediterranean south of Sicily and close to the north coast of Africa is where civilization emerged from the Stone Age.

The story begins over 7,000 years ago, when a handful of Stone Age tribes in Sicily rafted 55 miles south to land on the twin islands of Gozo and Malta. They lived in caves, then huts, fished, hunted, farmed with primitive tools for they had no metal – and over a period of more than a thousand years taught themselves how to construct massive buildings of stone.

This is the Temple of Ggantija (*zhee-gan-tee-zha*). Built almost 6,000 years ago (around 3600 BC), it is the oldest free standing structure in the world. It is older than the pyramids in Egypt by a thousand years, older than Stonehenge by 15 centuries. The enormous stones weighing several tons were cut from the limestone bedrock with tools of stone and antler horn for they had no metal, and moved using small round-cut rocks as ball bearings for they had no wheels.

These folks figured out all by themselves how to build this and other massive stone temples to their gods and goddesses so many millennia ago. Nobody taught them. They were the first. (*Glimpses of Our Breathtaking World #166* photo ©Jack Wheeler)

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