MEM Summer Placement Blog – Malta

Not wanting to venture too far from the UK, but still wanting to enjoy a hot climate for the summer, I went to Malta to complete the MEM summer placement. Having never dived or snorkelled in the Mediterranean this was a great chance to learn what the marine environment there has to offer, and it did not disappoint.

For my project I worked with the University of Malta with an enthusiastic and helpful supervisor to give guidance on my work. The university office also provided a nice air conditioned retreat from the scorching afternoon heat! My project looked at a self-guided snorkel trail at the popular Golden Bay Beach in north-west Malta (picture to the left). The project looked to reassess the original snorkel trail and an extension to provide recommendations for any changes and improvements. This involved habitat mapping, underwater visual census surveys to build a fish list and estimate of their abundance, plus transect surveys to look at benthic cover and creatures. This allowed me to learn identification of Mediterranean fish and algae.

As well as in-water surveys I carried out questionnaires on the beach to find out what the public thought about snorkelling in Malta, and also carried out questionnaires with local stakeholders to gauge their support and thoughts with regards to the snorkel trail.
Free time was filled up exploring the Maltese islands, which also include Gozo and Comino. The blue lagoon off Comino has incredible clear turquoise water! There is so much to explore and over the summer there are many festivals, feasts and activities to get involved with. I don’t think I’ve ever heard so many and such loud fireworks!

The summer placement was one of the reasons I wanted to take the MSc MEM, and I’m so glad I was given the opportunity to study at York. The summer placement has allowed me to use knowledge and skills I gained during the MSc course and has allowed me to learn new skills in a different place and to learn about a different marine habitat. I was also lucky to avoid any stings from the common mauve stinger jellyfish found in Maltese waters!