



MORE TO DISCOVER
MORE TO ENJOY

MALTA & GOZO



Malta
Gozo & Comino



PEOPLE WHO VISIT MALTA FOR THE FIRST TIME ARE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED BY THE RICHNESS AND DIVERSITY OF WHAT IT PROVIDES AS A HOLIDAY DESTINATION.

The country has tremendous character and offers so many authentic experiences. It is steeped in history and its architecture is stunning. It hosts temples older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids. Cultural life is vibrant with a busy programme of theatre, concerts and art exhibitions. The coastline is alive with activity, as divers, sailors and swimmers enjoy the clear blue waters of the Med. Gastronomic creations whet the appetite. There is a wide choice of activities - wine tasting, watching artisans at work, action sports and boat trips being just a few. Once you embark on your own journey of discovery, you will find there is much more than meets the eye.



THREE ISLANDS OF CHARACTER

Located at the centre of the Mediterranean, Malta is made up of three main islands and a few smaller ones. The main island of the archipelago is also called Malta. The smaller islands are Gozo and Comino. Each has its own character; they are compact and easy to get around, and easy to reach. Short ferry hops link Gozo and Comino with the main island.

Malta is stunning in its beauty. Its charm lies in rocky coves, bays, cliffs and a few sandy beaches. About a third of the island is arable land with ancient, cultivated terraces cut into the hillsides for crop growing. Wetlands attract scores of species of birds, and plants and wildflowers are in abundance.

The landscape of Malta, and Gozo too, is dominated by limestone deposits. The limestone is quarried and used in construction, giving the urban landscape a rich, honey-coloured hue.

Gozo is significantly greener than Malta. The island is less developed too, providing an air of tranquillity. Its most notable physical features are its hills. They are distinct landmarks, visible from miles away and providing superb sea views.

Situated half-way between the two main islands, **Comino** is smaller in size and mainly low-lying. The highest point is just 68 metres above sea level. The coastline is rugged and delineated by limestone cliffs and caves.



DID YOU KNOW?

Malta is a bilingual country. Everyone speaks English as well as Maltese. Pick up a menu and it will always be in English. All road signs are in English; so too are the country's main newspapers. In fact, Malta is a leading destination for people wanting to learn English as a foreign language.

Malta is well connected by air and can be reached from most European cities in three hours or less. The winning combination of being English speaking and having easy access makes it a prime location, not just for tourism, but for conferences and events too.

MDINA,
MALTA

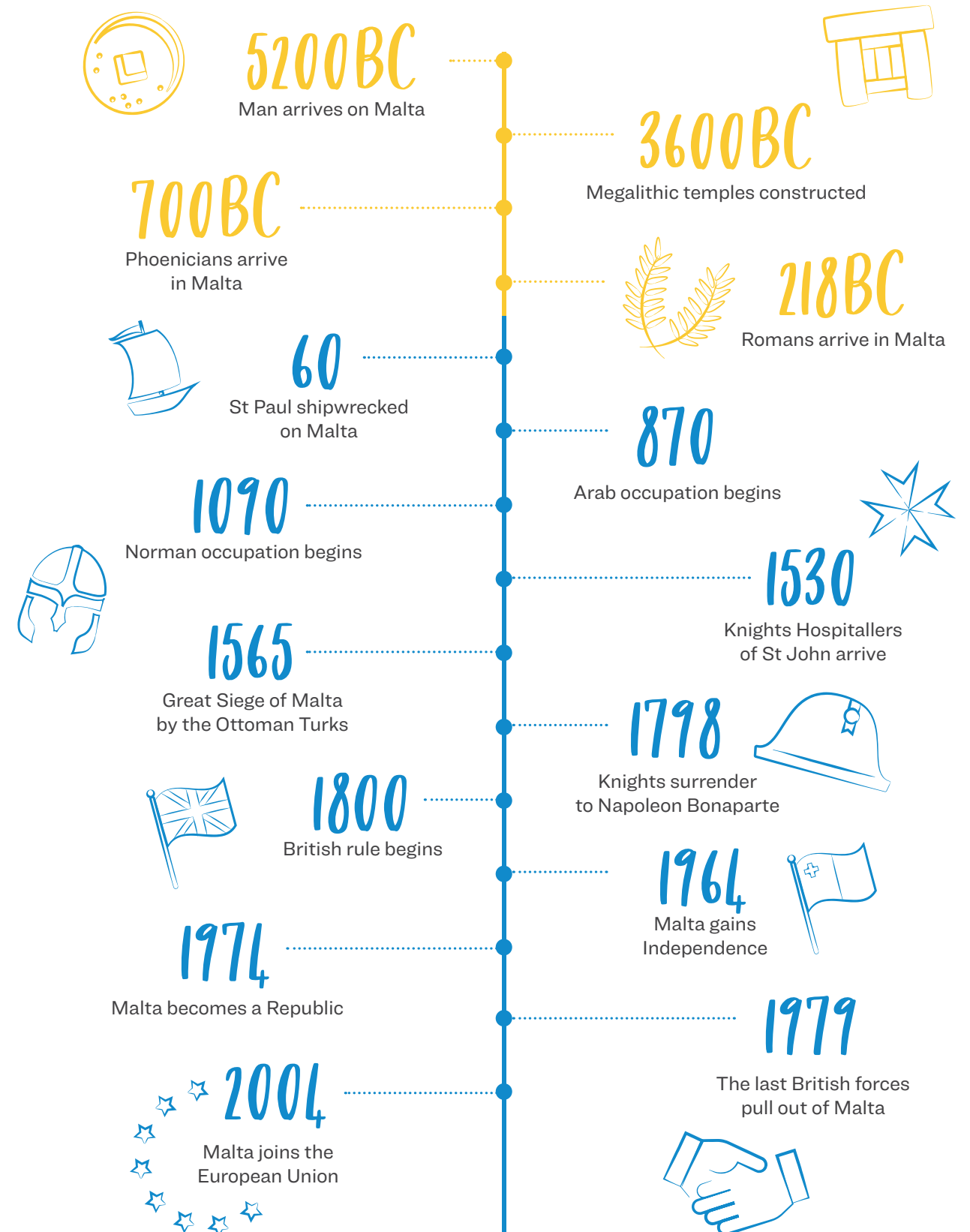


MALTESE LUZZU
MARSAXLOKK, MALTA

HISTORY & CULTURE

Wherever you go on the islands, you will find reminders of Malta's exciting history, from ancient temples to stunning architecture. From the capital of Malta, Valletta, to the capital of Gozo, Victoria, and in many places in between, the history is engulfing.

TIMELINE



VALLETTA

UPPER BARRAKKA GARDENS, VALLETTA MALTA



St. John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta, Malta

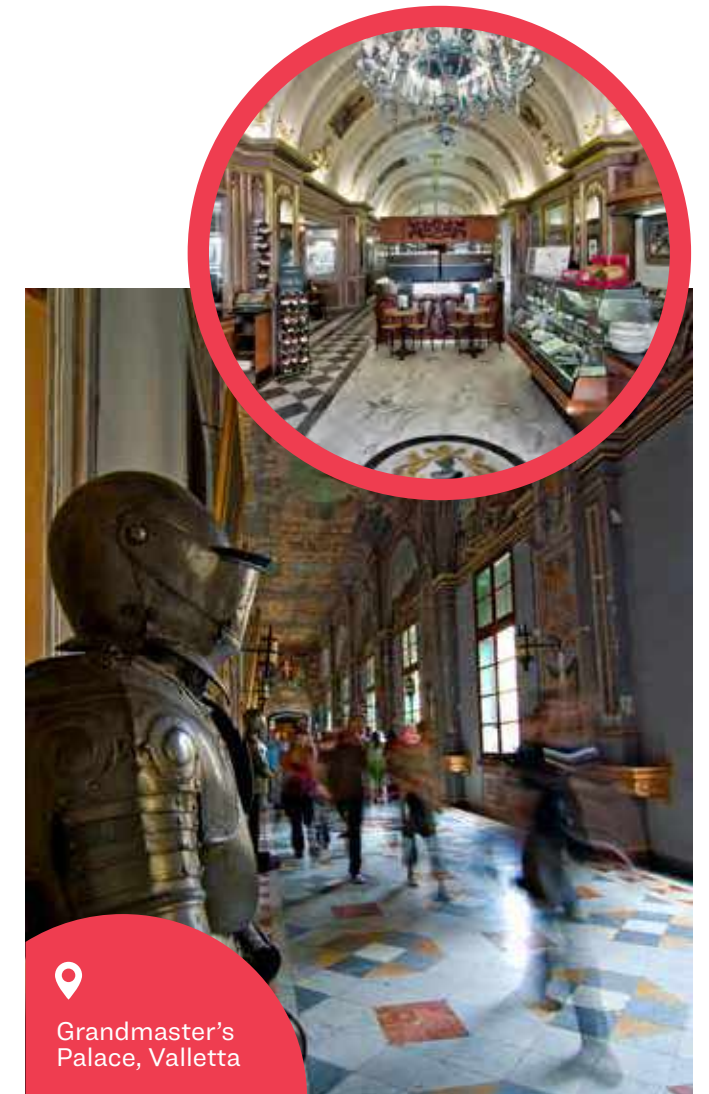


'The Beheading of St John the Baptist' by Caravaggio, in St John's Co-Cathedral

The capital, Valletta, is an outstanding attraction and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. While many European cities have a quarter called the Old Town, Valletta doesn't because the whole city qualifies as such.

The legacy and treasures of the Knights of St John are abundant. The Knights came from the wealthiest Catholic families across Europe and ran Malta for the best part of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Their palaces, forts, bastions and churches are there to be explored.

In the heart of Valletta lies **St John's Co-Cathedral**. Dating back to 1577, it offers rich Baroque art, frescos, ornate marble floors, carved stone walls and breathtaking vaulted ceilings decorated by the Italian Baroque artist, Mattia Preti. A prized possession is Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio's 'The Beheading of St John the Baptist' (1608). It is the largest painting by Caravaggio and the only one to bear his signature.



Grandmaster's Palace, Valletta

Nearby is the **Grandmaster's Palace** boasting sumptuous state rooms and an impressive armoury. It is situated on **St George's Square**, an ideal place to sit a while to people watch.



Parliament Building,
Valletta, Malta

TRITONS'
FOUNTAIN
OUTSIDE
VALLETTA

The city is easy to explore. As you enter through **City Gate** from the open piazza, adorned by the beautifully restored **Tritons' Fountain**, you will find the modern **Parliament building**, designed by renowned Italian architect Renzo Piano, juxtaposed with the classical architecture of the open-air opera house.

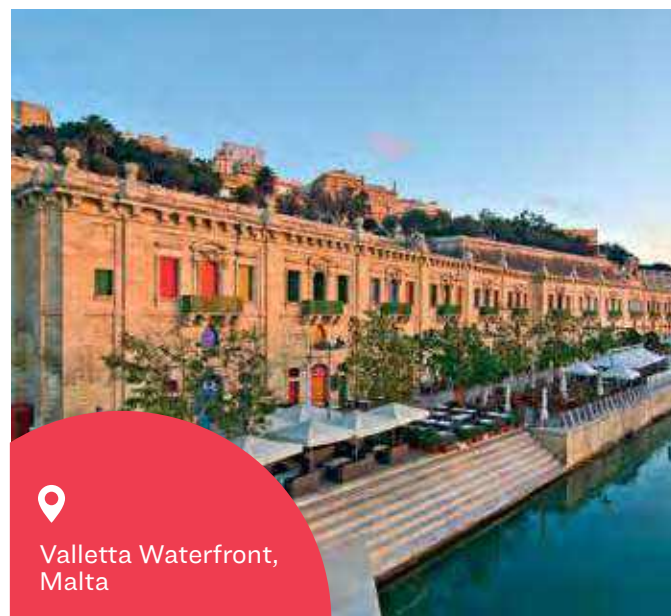
Elsewhere in the city, the exquisite **Manoel Theatre**, dating from 1731, offers concerts and live performances and is embellished with wooded tiers of boxes decorated with gold leaf. **Fort St Elmo** hosts the **National War Museum**, displaying the George Cross, awarded by Britain's King George VI for the bravery of the Maltese people during the Second World War. The **Auberge de Provence**, one of the most elaborately decorated baroque buildings in Valletta, is home to the **Museum of Archaeology**. And the **Auberge d'Italie** houses **MUŻA**, the Malta National Community Art Museum.



Manoel Theatre,
Valletta, Malta

The **Valletta Waterfront** offers a promenade lined with stylish restaurants in restored baroque buildings and is home to cruise liners and pleasure boats. And the city bounds with striking churches, art galleries, boutiques, shops and cafés.

Republic Street is the main thoroughfare and a major shopping street. Brightly lit shops nest within historic buildings. The place is alive with colour and character as businesspeople and lawyers from the courts mix among shoppers and tourists. The occasional parade welcomes a foreign dignitary, street musicians play, and people pause in cafés to sip their cappuccino, eat a gelato and take in the Valletta vibe.



Valletta Waterfront,
Malta

BIRGU YACHT MARINA

BIRGU, MALTA

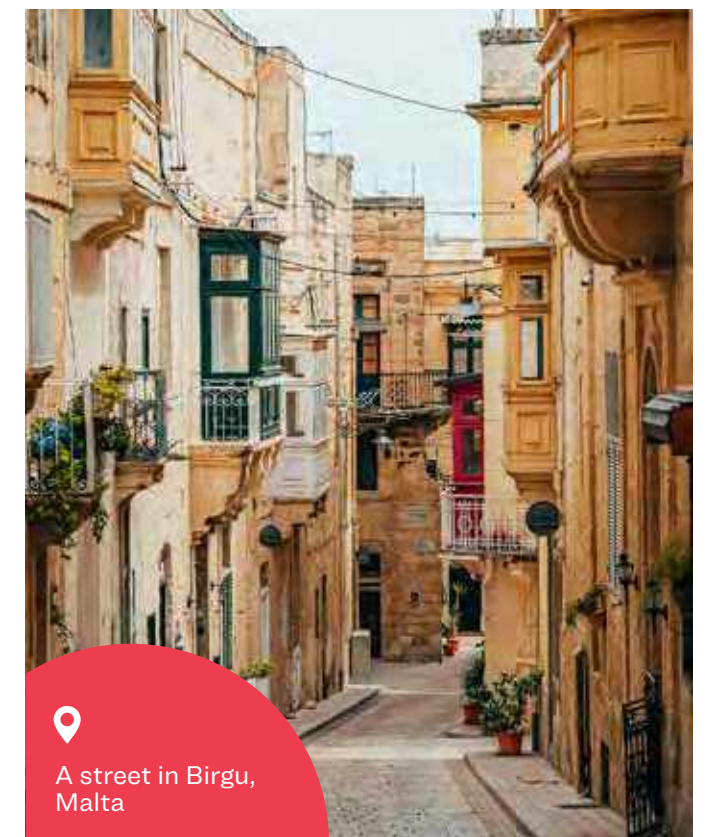


THE GRAND HARBOUR

MALTA

THE GRAND HARBOUR & THE THREE CITIES

The **Upper Barrakka Gardens** are a big attraction in Valletta, offering shade from the sun and tremendous views of the **Grand Harbour**. Cruise liners mingle with superyachts and traditional Maltese gondola-like boats called *dghajsa*. Across the harbour are **Birgu**, **L-Isla** and **Bormla**, known as the **Three Cities**. Wander their streets and you will feel you have travelled back centuries. These are communities with heart, where people know their neighbours but also enjoy welcoming visitors. Sights include **Fort St Angelo**, built on the site of a castle, and the Inquisitor's Palace with restored rooms and original cells to explore. The **Birgu waterfront** is a wonderful spot to take time to enjoy a good meal and admire glamorous yachts.



A street in Birgu,
Malta

INLAND ATTRACTIONS

MDINA GATE
MDINA, MALTA



Mdina is a beautiful walled city in the middle of Malta. It offers a treasure trove of medieval and Baroque architecture. Lose yourself in its quiet, charming streets, visit palazzos and museums and rest up at one of the many cafés. The popular **Fontanella Tea Garden**, perched high on the city walls, serves up delectable cakes and spectacular views.

Situated just outside **Mdina**, the **Domus Romana** houses the **National Museum of Roman Antiquities**. Constructed in the 1st Century BC as an aristocratic townhouse, the villa has some fine mosaics and artifacts on display.



St Paul's Grotto,
Rabat, Malta

A short, pleasant stroll from Mdina is **St Paul's Grotto** in Rabat. This venerated site is where St Paul is said to have stayed when he arrived in 60 AD and introduced Christianity to the island.

Also nearby is the **Ta' Qali crafts village**, a place to watch artisans produce fine lace, jewellery and glassware.



The Rotunda,
Mosta, Malta

Another place to visit is the town of **Mosta**, renowned for its massive rotunda church, having the third largest dome in the Christian world. During the Second World War a bomb fell through the dome, just before evening mass, without exploding. A replica of the bomb is on display inside the church.



HYPOGEUM
HAL SAFLIENI, MALTA

ANCIENT MALTA

Malta's archaeological sites predate the Pyramids and Stonehenge. The top attraction is the **Hypogeum**, a 6,000-year-old temple and burial chamber, less than half an hour from Valletta. Explore its labyrinth of underground chambers but make sure you plan your visit; it is essential to book in advance.

Also well preserved are the ancient **Hagar Qim** and **Mnajdra Temples**. Set majestically on a wide-open plain by the coast, close to the village of **Qrendi**, these archaeological treasures were used for the worship of a fertility goddess.

The **Ġgantija Temples** on Gozo are a UNESCO World Heritage Site and date back to 3600 BC. They are recognised as the oldest freestanding buildings in the world. Due to the huge dimensions of the megaliths, exceeding five metres in length and weighing more than fifty tons, locals believed this to be the work of giants. The Temples offer a glimpse into building techniques in prehistoric times, while a modern visitor centre helps put everything into perspective.



Hagar Qim Temples,
Qrendi, Malta



Ġgantija Temples,
Xaghra, Gozo

COAST & COUNTRY

Let your adventures take you around the coast. Malta has picturesque beaches, hidden coves and crystal-clear waters. The most popular beaches are **Mellieħa Bay**, **Golden Bay** and **Għajn Tuffieħa**, or discover your own special spot.

Marsaxlokk is a picturesque fishing village with an attractive open-air market. It is especially popular on Sundays.



ST AGATHA'S TOWER
MELLIEĦA, MALTA



DINGLI CLIFFS
DINGLI, MALTA

The **Dingli cliffs** is the place to stand tall and enjoy breath-taking views while the sea caverns that make up the **Blue Grotto** are best approached by boat.

It's fun to have a day trip at sea on a tourist boat or take a harbour cruise. For thrill seekers, kayaking is an option, and the rugged coast is a playground for rock climbers and zip-liners.

A DIVER'S DELIGHT

The Maltese Islands have superb locations for diving, with professionals and beginners well catered for. Licenced dive centres offer a full range of services including training, daily dive excursions and gear hire. Visibility is superb, the climate is mild and there are coastal caves and reef habitats to discover. The swim-throughs, archways and mountain range-like landscape get rave reviews. For underwater photographers, there is an abundance of colour and spectacle. For technical divers there are more than a dozen shipwrecks to visit, all within a few miles of each other. In fact, Malta's sites are considered among the best in the Mediterranean and the ultimate for many divers.



INLAND, THERE ARE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES TO APPRECIATE THE GREAT OUTDOORS.

The climate, terrain, wildflowers and views make trekking a joy. The wintertime landscape is green and lush and by late spring a thousand or more species of plants are in bloom. You may stumble across prehistoric remains, characterful farmhouses, wayside chapels and old military installations on your walk of discovery.

Cycling is fun too. Meander down country lanes, flanked by drystone walls, or take on some challenging hills and then find a resting spot. There's nothing more authentic than a neighbourhood bar or café in a quiet village, a place to soak up the atmosphere while you catch your breath.



Watch Tower,
Għajn Tuffieħa, Malta

WHERE TO STAY IN MALTA



When it comes to accommodation, there's a big choice to suit all budgets. They range from luxury hotels with pools and spas and beautiful boutique properties housed in restored historic buildings, to self-catering apartments, villas and farmhouses. The hotels in Valletta and the coastal resorts of Sliema and St Julians are close to the action and there are characterful places in the Three Cities.

Malta's fine hotels are also an ideal place for weddings and honeymoons.



CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Whatever time of the year you visit, you will find something going on.



The cultural year begins with the **Valletta Baroque Festival** in January and is followed by a busy programme of concerts and theatre productions.



Carnival, just before Lent, is a colourful spectacle while **Good Friday** sees solemn pageantry followed by joyous processions on **Easter Sunday**.

The **Malta Marathon** in February attracts runners from all over the globe, and is complemented by a **Half Marathon** in Gozo in April.



Rowing regattas are held on **Freedom Day** (31st March), and Victory Day (8th September) while, in October, the crème de la crème of the sailing world battle it out in the **Rolex Middle Sea Race**.

The summer months bring non-stop festivities as each town and village in turn celebrates its local patron saint. This is **festa** season – street celebrations last days, brass bands march and fireworks seem never-ending.



Music festivals and **Gay Pride** bring an explosion of colour. Isle of **MTV** draws big names from the world of pop music and the Maltese operatic tenor, **Joseph Calleja**, stages an open-air concert every August.

The Malta Classic Grand Prix in October is an exhilarating race of the finest classic cars, against a backdrop of historic buildings, vineyards and terraced hills.



Christmas is a time when the Maltese dress their homes with cribs and bright decorations. Streets and squares are lit up, and family fun events are held in Valletta and elsewhere.

GASTRONOMY



Malta and Gozo's gastronomy is a reflection of the islands' chequered history. Dishes are traditional and creative and, best of all, taste really good. Gastronomy has been elevated to an art, to be enjoyed in eateries ranging from simple family restaurants to the most sophisticated of establishments, some of them **Michelin-starred**. The menu includes **fresh fish**, **rabbit** cooked to perfection and a savoury meat dish like no other, called **bragioli**. Be sure to try **pastizzi**, small puff pastry snacks with a choice of savoury ricotta or mushy

peas filling. They are sold everywhere. And if you like the simple pleasures in life, don't miss out on **Maltese bread**, with its crisp crust and a light crumb.

Malta has its own beer, **Cisk**, and a refreshing soft drink called **Kinnie**. Maltese wines are growing in importance, winning international accolades, and wine tasting at a vineyard is a perfect way to enjoy the Maltese countryside.



JOIN THE PARTY

The nightlife district of **Paceville**, in the **St Julians** area, offers shoreline hotels, clubs, restaurants and bars aplenty. It comes alive after dark, as the place for a good time. Its small sandy beach, **St George's Bay**, is ideal for chilling after a night of partying.

Chic restaurants and bars can be found in **Valletta** and all the popular tourist destinations, some housed in the most incredible old buildings with character in abundance.

The National Aquarium, the **Esplora Interactive Science Centre** and several other attractions are a big draw for families. Another fun activity is to go on a movie trail to discover where *Game of Thrones* and movies starring Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt, Tom Hanks and Michael Fassbender were filmed.



ISLAND of GOZO

THE ISLAND OF GOZO IS PART OF THE MALTESE ARCHIPELAGO,
YET IT OFFERS ITS OWN INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER.

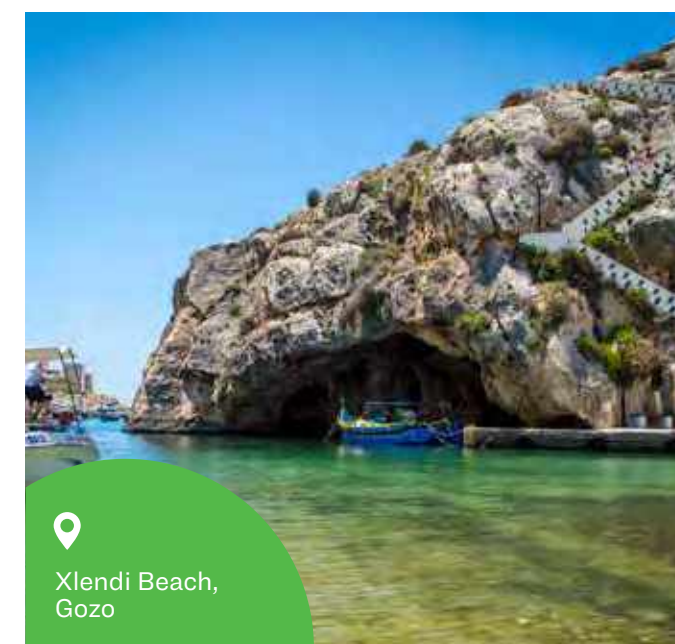


RAMLA BEACH
XAGHRA, GOZO

ALTHOUGH NO VISIT TO THE
MALTESE ISLANDS IS COMPLETE
WITHOUT A VISIT TO GOZO, THE
ISLAND CAN ACTUALLY BE
CHOSEN AS A DESTINATION IN ITS
OWN RIGHT.

It is only a 25-minute ferry ride from **Ċirkewwa**, the northernmost point of Malta, or a 45-minute ride by fast ferry from **Valletta**. But as soon as you step off the boat, you sense a change of pace. Nothing is too rushed. The natural beauty requires you to pause and breathe it in. There is a feeling of having stepped back in time, yet the island offers every modern amenity. It is that contrast that makes you want to discover more and let the spirit of the island bewitch you.

Gozo's standout attractions are the **Citadel** and the prehistoric temples, but there are stunning churches too. Of course, you may discover your own special place. Meander down a country track, take an early morning trip to the salt pans, to watch salt being harvested in the traditional way, or seek out a charming village, a rocky cove or a hideaway café.



Xlendi Beach,
Gozo

The quirkiness extends to the capital having two names. Officially it is **Victoria**, a title bestowed to the city by Queen Victoria on the Jubilee Anniversary of her accession to the throne, but many locals still call it **Rabat**. A lush, gentle valley stretches the three kilometres from there to **Marsalforn**, the main resort with a collection of restaurants looking out to sea. Another big draw is **Ramla**, an impressive red sandy beach set on a curving bay surrounded by rocky cliffs, while the pretty seaside village of **Xlendi** is a chilled place to swim, enjoy a meal or just grab a coffee and relax.



THE CITADEL

Sitting proud on a hill in **Victoria**, the **Citadel** served as a sanctuary from attack by pirates of the Mediterranean. A major reconstruction of the southern walls was undertaken in the early 1600s, transforming it into a gunpowder fortress. The northern walls were left intact and retain their largely medieval form. In more recent times the main buildings were beautifully restored and a 19th-century reservoir in the ditch was converted into a **Visitors' Centre**, which has won plaudits for its design. The Citadel is also home to the **Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven**, a Baroque treasure from the early 18th century.

GLORIOUS CHURCHES

Gozo's villages are small, but their churches are anything but. They dominate the landscape and have elaborate, often gilded interiors.

Three of the best are:



THE BASILICA OF TA' PINU

A fascinating place of pilgrimage for many where favours are sought and thank you notes left.

A local woman, Carmela Grima, heard the voice of the Blessed Virgin in a small chapel in 1883. In the following years, acts of grace were manifested. It was believed that prayers said in the chapel saved Gozo from the plague which struck Malta at the time. A larger church was built on the site in the 1930s for prayers to be offered for the intercession of the Madonna Ta' Pinu. Narrow rooms either side of the altar are full of ex-voto offerings, including christening robes, children's clothes and photographs.



THE BASILICA OF SAINT GEORGE

Covered entirely with marble and gold stucco, with the spiral columns of the impressive main altar inspired by St Peter's at the Vatican.

The religious feast of St George in summer draws a large congregation, including many Gozitan emigrants from abroad who come home to mark the feast with their relatives.



THE ROTUNDA CHURCH IN XEWKIJA

Famed for its enormous dome supported by eight large columns, the Church is decorated with fine sculpture, marble and modern paintings.



CHURCH OF SANTA LUCIJA
GOZO

PARTYING IN THE STREETS

Just like the Maltese, the people of Gozo are also fond of their festas. These take place every weekend from the end of May to September. Each village organises a festa in honour of their patron saint. This is not a tradition that has faded over time; if anything festas have got bigger. Processions are full of colour. The Church is lit up. Street vendors keep the food and drink going. Brass bands provide the music and fireworks light up the sky. The dancing and revelry last for hours. Rivalry between villages is intense with each one aiming to outdo the others.

CARNIVAL

Gozitans like to do things differently and that's especially evident at Carnival, usually in February before the start of Lent. As well as floats and dance displays, there is a darker side to Carnival in the villages of Nadur and Xewkija. After sunset, hundreds of people walk the streets dressed in comically distorted figures. There is no limit to the imagination put into creating costumes and concealing identity. If it appears totally bizarre, then it is a job well done. There are no rules for this celebration because, if they did exist, revellers would be likely to break them.

OPERA

Incredibly for its size, Gozo boasts two opera houses: The Astra Theatre and the Aurora Opera House. Located a few metres apart on the main street of Victoria, each puts on at least one fully staged opera a year, often featuring international soloists. They are fuelled by commitment, passion, civic pride and a healthy dose of rivalry, with the result being fine performances for the public to enjoy.



NADUR CARNIVAL
NADUR, GOZO

WHERE TO STAY IN GOZO

There is a big variety of accommodation on Gozo, ranging from budget apartments to five-star luxury. Boutique hotels are full of character, and most secluded **farmhouses** and villas come with pools.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

With a seductive mix of lush green spaces, terraced fields, sea views and an abundance of prickly pear cactus, Gozo is a paradise for ramblers. Scuba divers like to keep it to themselves, but Gozo has some of the best dive sites to be found anywhere. The rocky coastline is a haven for climbers, who come to conquer. Cycling and boat trips are popular too. The modern local buses are a fun and cheap way to get around; services radiate to destinations around the island from **Victoria**.

EATING OUT

Good times require good food, good wine and good company. Nobody knows this better than Gozitans, where **family-run restaurants** offer a warm welcome to neighbours and visitors alike. Menus change according to what is in season and at the local market, and recipes have been handed down through the generations. Food must not just be fresh; it must be cooked with love and care. Fresh fish, rabbit stew, ravioli and pasta are favourites, and the local cheese and sun-dried tomatoes reign supreme. Alongside traditional fare, there are plenty of **international cuisines** available too: a fine illustration of how Gozo both cherishes its traditions and embraces modernity.



Wied il-Mielah,
Gozo

COMINO

SANTA MARIJA
TOWER
COMINO, MALTA

The island of Comino lies between Malta and Gozo. It has only one hotel, is car-free and virtually population-free. It's a fantastic place for walkers, divers and windsurfers.

Its main attraction is the Blue Lagoon, a sheltered inlet of shimmering aquamarine water over white sand. Day-trippers come to swim here and simply relax.



GOOD TO KNOW



Malta is easy to get to, with air links to all major European cities and many regional airports too.



Winters are mild and summers are hot, with spring and autumn particularly good times to visit. The average day-time temperature ranges from 12°C in February to 29°C in August.



The currency is the **euro**, and Malta forms part of the **Schengen zone**.



Malta is **good value for money** compared to many other European destinations.



Driving is on the left, a legacy of having been a British colony.

