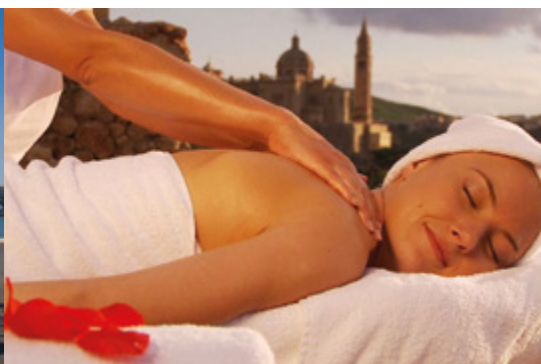


D I S C O V E R I N G

MALTA

TOURISM
GASTRONOMY
NIGHT LIFE
SPORTS





WELCOME TO **MALTA**

INTERVIEW WITH

EDWARD ZAMMIT LEWIS MINISTER FOR TOURISM, MALTA

WE ARE CURRENTLY EXPERIENCING THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TIMES IN THE TOURISM HISTORY OF MALTA AND GOZO AS UNDOUBTEDLY 2014 WAS AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR FOR US.

STATISTICS AND TRENDS REGISTERED IN 2015 SO FAR ARE VERY ENCOURAGING AND OPTIMISTIC AND ALL INDICATORS ARE POINTING TO THE FACT THAT THIS YEAR WILL BE ANOTHER RECORD YEAR. OUR GOAL IS TO GROW BY NOT LESS THAN 4%, IN TERMS OF ARRIVALS BUT ALSO IN TERMS OF TOTAL BED NIGHTS AND TOURIST EXPENDITURE. OUR OBJECTIVES ARE DEEMED AMBITIOUS BUT ACHIEVABLE GIVEN ALL THE INITIATIVES ALREADY IMPLEMENTED TOGETHER WITH OTHERS CURRENTLY UNDERWAY.

Our hotels, especially those within the 4 and 5-star categories, are managing to both increase their occupancy and also their selling rates, that is a very encouraging aspect for the industry. We are working towards refining our tourism products and services and, of course, this is not limited to just our hotels but to all the tourism offering in general. Our unique product are the Maltese Islands and how we manage to position ourselves, in the very competitive travel and tourism market, is the key factor for success.

We are now diversifying our offering and in order to improve the quality of our tourism product we need to also develop other areas of travel such as cultural tourism. We have already been successful with the diving and wedding tourism niches, however, we also recognise the importance and the potential of cultural tourism alongside other niches such as medical tourism, that are nonetheless still developing.

There has also been considerable investment in our sister island of Gozo, which is developing in terms of hospital and medical services infrastructure to attract possible medical tourism.

With respect to the Institute for Tourism Studies we are starting to train staff in the area of medical tourism, as well as offering courses for our Tourist Guides and exposing them to new and diverse languages in order for them to be appropriately prepared for the new source markets that we are now targeting.

Our overall aim, in a nutshell, is to maintain our Sun & Sea tourism over the summer, while increasing cultural and other type of tourists during the remaining months. We are surely a competitive Mediterranean destination, yet, however confident we are with the figures we still need to focus more on the shoulder months in order to achieve our long-term goals for this sector.

The MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events) industry offers further potential for Malta. This sector attracts a higher value tourist with a greater daily expenditure budget and, of course, it attracts tourists during the winter months. The majority of conferences happen during winter. We are therefore aware that we need to improve our facilities since this sector is growing and we want to fully exploit this niche. We have a very good DMC (Destination Management Company) representation in Malta that do a fantastic job. This year I launched a separate function within the Malta Tourism Authority known as 'Conventions Malta', to specifically position Malta as a major player within the international congress industry. The conference industry today accounts for approximately 6% of tourism revenue for the Maltese Islands, however, I am confident that there is much more potential for growth and we are working hard towards this end.

We are fully aware that we cannot tap into new markets without ensuring suitable connectivity to our islands. The profile of the modern tourist is that she or he will want to travel point to point by air with no or fewest possible connecting flights. This is an important aspect that we consider a priority in order to create a more sophisticated and all-encompassing air network with frequent flights all year round.

WELCOME TO MALTA!



EDWARD ZAMMIT LEWIS
Minister for Tourism



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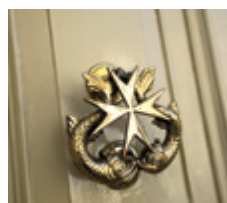
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CRUISING FROM OR TO THE MALTESE ISLANDS



MALTA IS IDEAL FOR ANYONE WANTING TO EMBARK ON A MEDITERRANEAN CRUISE, CHOOSING EITHER AN EASTERN OR A WESTERN ITINERARY DEPENDING ON THE CRUISE LINER OF CHOICE. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, UP UNTIL SOME DECADES AGO, MOST COMMERCIAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN MALTA WERE CENTERED AROUND THE GRAND HARBOUR.

The Cruise Terminal situated at the Valletta Waterfront and it welcomes a substantial number of cruise ships a year, whether as port of calls, turnarounds or home porting operations. The Maltese Islands is the ideal pre or post Cruise destination for those wishing to enjoy a couple of historic and cultural sites. With affordable accommodation in a variety of star classes, self-catering or boutique hotels, both Malta and Gozo have more to offer in heritage, culture and experiences across their 316sq km than any other country of its size.

With a good public transport system, several taxi companies and self-drive companies offering vehicles to rent, there will hardly be a stone that is left unturned when you begin to explore the countless possibilities that await you here. 7000 years of history will take you across both islands, visiting our group of UNESCO World Heritage Temples and our UNESCO World Heritage Hypogeum underground temple. With the Liners all arriving in the Grand Harbour, the UNESCO World Heritage City of Valletta is literally 'up the road'. One can either take a leisurely stroll from the terminal up to the City Gate, or hop in to

the public elevator beneath the imposing bastions and massive rock face that form the foundations of this European Capital of Culture 2018. If you only have one day to enjoy the Maltese Islands, without a doubt it is a priority to visit St John's Co Cathedral in the centre of Valletta. Do not let the humble exterior fool you. This baroque cathedral holds unparalleled beauty and indescribable beauty within its walls.

Shrouded in the memory of the days of the Knights of St John, its sacred floor is covered with the grave markings of many a gallant gent or priest that served the

Grand Masters loyally. Deep underneath the Cathedral in the crypt lies the tomb of the most infamous Grandmaster of all, Jean de Valette, who led the Knights to victory in the 1565 Great Siege against the Ottomans. To top it all off, the museum holds the only signed painting known to date, by the artist Caravaggio – the beheading of St John the Baptist. The Grand Harbour is the largest European natural harbor, in itself already a beautiful sight to see, with the infamous Three Cities on the opposite side of this haven, welcoming you to cross over in one of the traditional Maltese Dghajsa's, and

take in the wonders of Birgu, Senglea and Cospicua. If you happen to be in Malta in October, this Grand Harbour is the start line to the Rolex Middle Sea Race, an annual event that draws the world's finest and hardest professional and amateur sailors, to circumnavigate the middle of the Mediterranean on a tough 700 nautical mile offshore Classic.

Before or after your Cruise, you can indulge in the local cuisine, fresh produce and variety of fish, poultry and other dishes served to your heart's delight. The old

fishing village of Marsaxlokk is notorious for restaurants that serve up freshly caught fish in delectable ways. Local wines are the way to go if you wish to sample sun kissed grapes carefully grown on the hills of Gozo, Malta's sister island. Gozo is the home to the seductress Calypso, a nymph that captivated the heart of Ulysses in Homer's The Odyssey. But a word of warning, you may not want to leave here once you have been wooed by the magical touch of this sultry romantic island.



TRADITIONAL & RELIGIOUS FESTIVITIES

MALTA HAS A LONG STANDING RELIGIOUS TRADITION WHICH FINDS ITSELF MANIFEST BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE MANY CHURCHES DOTTING THE ISLAND. PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULAR ASSERTIONS OF FAITH IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS IS THE VILLAGE FEAST, OR FESTA AS IT IS LOCALLY KNOWN. AND YET, AT THE SAME TIME, THE FESTA IS ALSO A CELEBRATION OF ALL THAT IS NOT RELIGIOUS, INCORPORATING TAKE-OUT STANDS, EXHIBITIONS, FIREWORKS AND A COLOURFUL GATHERING OF PEOPLE THAT REVERBERATES NOT WITH DEVOTION BUT WITH THE LOUD ATMOSPHERE OF A STREET PARTY.



Each village has its own patron saint, and each saint, subsequently, is granted his or her own celebration. According to the ecclesiastic calendar, the feast days of these patron saints fall throughout the year, winter and summer alike. Held mostly during the summer, the churches will be decorated with lights, gold, crystal and deep red damask. The figured statue of the saint, emphasizing some specific aspect which the village devotes homage to, is transformed into the centre of all the celebrations. Not only is it placed on display

from the week before the actual feast night, but, on the night, it is taken out round the main streets of the village, to music, applause and a magnificent backdrop of fireworks. The secular, therefore, only enhances the religious element in Maltese feasts and vice versa.

Stands surround the main piazza, selling anything from toys to traditional Maltese sweets like qubbajd (nougat), from neon light tubes and small flags to diverse mementos of the occasion. Marching bands weave between the crowds and

stages support singers, bands, orchestras and local performers. The experience is as magical as it is fascinating. Late night, the crowd's attention is directed to the fireworks displays. Most villages in Malta and its sister island Gozo, will show both sky and ground fireworks. The sky fireworks have won several international competitions, while the girandoles (or Catherine wheels) greatly vary in size, colour and rotation and are usually lit on the eve. Pyrotechnic clubs, mostly working on a voluntary basis, spend all year working to produce these magnificent and elaborate shows, and



hence each village puts on its own personal touch on these spectacular festivities which are not to be missed. In the summer period, there is no shortage of celebrations, having about one or two feasts almost every weekend. The season starts with the feast of St. Publius, just after Easter, until the Victoria feast on the 8th of September. The real problem is choosing to go to one feast over another, or figuring out a schedule to manage to get to simultaneous feasts in different parts of Malta. The feast of St. Mary is, for example, celebrated in seven different villages and towns at once, each greatly different from the other.

The quality is excellent across the board – a sense of competition between villages is always present, and this cyclically raises the level of entertainment. In the village of Qormi, the statue of the Risen Christ is lifted on the shoulders of enthusiastic young men who then run through the streets. This reflects not only the fervour of the Roman Catholic community in Malta but also the energy present in virtually all Maltese feasts: a passion for fun, camaraderie and good cheer. A very traditional feast is what is called Imnarja, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul. Held at the end of June, it is a

very traditional feast which is celebrated, however, in ever fresh ways. Although the horse races, agricultural exhibitions, traditional Maltese singing and processions are still played out year after year, it is very youth oriented and the energy, therefore, never gets old. This is where spillage might occur, in favour of the profane, especially when one factors in youthful insatiability. The authentic experience of Maltese feasts is mainly expressed throughout the summer season, but other feasts throughout the year do not fall short of such characterisation. On the 10th of February, for example, there is the celebration of The Shipwreck of St. Paul, which is celebrated in Valletta with zeal and revelry alike. One might also mention Rabat's feast of St. Joseph (19th March), which delightfully combines spirituality with other traditional Maltese sweets and foods of that particular area, and the Cospicua feast of the Immaculate Conception on the 8th of December. In short, Maltese feasts occupy both the religious end of the spectrum as well as the profane, a combination that produces memorable and unique festivities, a carnival type atmosphere quite unlike anything else found on continental Europe.



WEDDINGS & HONEYMOONS IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

With so many stunning backdrops and venues, beaches and castles, palaces or baroque gardens, indoor or outdoor venues for either ceremonies or wedding receptions and with more than 365 churches & chapels (some older than 400 years), added by even more churches, Mosques and faith centers for other denominations instantly puts the Maltese Islands on the map as being the ideal destination for a romantic meaningful wedding celebration in the heart of the Mediterranean.

For your family and guests that reside in mainland Europe, several major airlines offer direct scheduled flights to the Maltese Islands from cities across the European Union such as Brussels, Rome, Frankfurt, Munich, Amsterdam, Heathrow and several other cities, to offer affordable options of travel. Additionally, low cost airlines also operate to the Maltese Islands from selected European cities, either daily or once to twice a week. Malta International Airport has routes to over 100 airports and is only a short drive away from Hotels and venues. Once on this multilingual island, a selection of professional wedding planners, as well as event organizers, await you to make that special day perfect. A long list of service providers to cater for a bride's every dream come true ensures that the memory of the beautiful day remain with the couple, their families and guests for a lifetime. With so many local traditional touches to add to a bride's desires for her wedding day, it can be said that having your wedding in Malta is the best gift that a bride can give to herself and her groom. From a Maltese the bride to the altar or a traditional Maltese fishing boat (Daghjsa) to dreamingly carry the newly-weds away, great ideas await you.

Cuisine in Malta is typically Mediterranean, but this does not mean that your wedding spread is confined to local produce or bakes. Caterers on the islands are masters of gastronomy and are experts in the

CHOOSING TO HAVE YOUR WEDDING OR HONEYMOON IN MALTA MEANS THAT YOU WILL BE WALKING DOWN THE AISLE ON AN ISLAND WITH MORE THAN 7000 YEARS OF HISTORY.



preparation, presentation and handling of an unending array of delicacies, dishes and unique menus to suit every palette and budget. The fact that so many top European chefs have settled here is already testimony to the faith that they place in their teams and the availability of the freshest produce and best ingredients on the islands. Malta and Gozo also cater for the pampering and entertainment of your special guests. From seafront properties to accommodate them in, to historical and cultural activities, 3 UNESCO World Heritage sites to wow them and to die for Spa treatments in some of the nicest state of the art facilities possible. Myoka spas are unique to the Maltese islands with their main focus on well being and relaxation. Getting married in Malta is a relatively straightforward process that is subject to some standard paperwork at the marriage registry. If you

your country (example a lawyer, a Justice of the Peace, a Notary, etc.). It is absolutely necessary that the authorized person dates the declaration form and affixes his/her personal stamp or seal. Persons who have never been married must produce a Free Status Certificate where the registry from their home town or city declare that they are single and legally able to marry. It is important to note that unless otherwise specified on the document/certificate, the expiry date of this certificate will be taken by the Maltese Marriage registry to be three (3) months from date of its issue. If the Registrar in the home town/city of the couple cannot issue such a certificate, the Maltese Marriage Registry then requires a statutory declaration by a third party drawn up in the presence of a Commissioner for Oaths. Documents normally require legalization stamps/ Apostilles issued from the Ministry of Foreign

Depending whether the couple prefer a romantic quiet get away, isolated from the hustle and bustle of every-day life or whether they are adventure seekers looking to experience exciting and fun outdoor fun to create lasting memories, Malta and Gozo can spice it all up for you. The Island of Gozo, Malta's smaller sister island, is without a doubt the romantics location. With low rolling hills, and rich agricultural produce, endless trekking paths and quiet romantic coves to swim in, the beautiful quiet scenery of Gozo offers a choice of accommodation from 5* service at the Kempinski San Lawrenz, complete with a luxurious Spa, the Ta' Cenc Spa and Resort with it's unparalleled Trullo' accommodation to a variety of 4 and 3 star hotels. The most popular accommodation of choice for newlyweds are the unique Gozo farmhouses that come with or



For a listing of Malta Tourism Authority Wedding Planners holding an MTA Incoming Travel Agent Licence, Hotels and Accommodation selections, Event Organisers and Wedding Service Providers you can check out www.visitmalta.com

are hiring a wedding planner to take care of the nitty-gritties, then she or he will assist you or include the preparation of documentation for you.

However, as a quick guideline, documents required are usually full version birth certificates (showing parents' names) and for the couple to make their Declarations on Oath (Form RZ2). These declarations are to be signed, on separate forms, by each of the parties either in the presence of the Commissioner for Oaths attached to an Embassy of Malta in your country of residence or, alternatively, in the presence of a Commissioner for Oaths located in

Affairs in the respective country of domicile. Hence, it is advisable to contact the Marriage Registry well in advance to ensure that you procure the right documentation or ask your wedding planner/organizer to explain the procedure to you.

According to Maltese Law, a request for the publication of Banns (Form RZ1) must be received by the Marriage Registry earlier than six weeks but not more than three months before the date of the intended marriage. The Law in Malta does not provide for marriage by Special Licence. Honeymooning in the Maltese Islands comes in many shapes and forms.

without a swimming pool, in or outside of a local village. Farmhouses are for the most part very old renovated 'farmhouses' where families would use the downstairs sections to house their farm animals and keep the upstairs rooms for themselves. These buildings now make for beautiful and indescribable holiday accommodation. There are several companies that offer farmhouses (catered or self catering) to suit your fancy. Diving, sailing, trekking, climbing, horse riding, taking a day or weekend trip to nearby Sicily are all realistic and doable options to include in your Malta & Gozo honeymoon. Heritage is so rich here that you won't be lost for places to visit.

GASTRONOMY IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION IS RENOWNED FOR ITS HEALTHY AND MOUTHWATERING CUISINE. NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD IS FOOD EXALTED IN QUITE THE SAME WAY AS IT IS BY THE COUNTRIES BORDERING OUR BOUNTIFUL SEA.

The Maltese islands have served as one of the most important trading posts of the region since ancient times and have seen their fair share of exotic delicacies cross its port, from fragrant oriental spices to cured meats, cheeses and fine wines but their personal take on food was much more humble and focused on local produce. Admittedly Maltese cuisine is influenced by Italian, French, British, North African and Spanish and Greek tastes and over the years the Maltese have gained a reputation for being big foodies, with a particular taste for fish and meat.

What is truly marvelous about getting a taste of the “real Malta” is that traditional, classic Maltese home cooking, which is still loved by the majority of the locals is simple yet delicious and several restaurants now have a special section in their menu dedicated just to local cuisine, or better still there are those entirely dedicated to Maltese-inspired dishes. Whetting your appetite is never a problem especially when the quaint and endearing “nanna” (grandmother) response to claims of “I’m peckish” is still going strong and is well ingrained into the local mentality – “Have some more: you haven’t eaten enough/ You’re looking peaky and I’ve just cooked a dish/tray/saucepan-full of” whatever darling Maltese grans love to fatten us up with. Let’s start with a universal favourite – Maltese bread. This is known as “ħobż Malti” is baked in wood-burning ovens and is particularly light with a dark crunchy crust that can be an acquired taste. Used as the basis of some mouth-watering appetisers, it tastes equally good just slathered in butter, whether toasted or fresh, as it does fried, but for those with a healthier diet in mind, “ħobż biż-żejt”, a type of ungrilled bruschetta, is terrific, made simply by drizzling fresh Maltese bread with olive oil, rubbing tasty Maltese-grown tomatoes, ripened in the Mediterranean sun, into the textured bread and sprinkling it with salt, pepper and topping it with capers, olives and chopped onions, garlic and parsley to taste, is a joy that many Maltese ex-pats yearn for. Other excellent ways to enjoy Maltese bread is with goat’s cheeselets (gbejniet) which can be either fresh and creamy or preserved in a coating of coarse black pepper. A truly traditional recipe is a hollowed out loaf which is then stuffed with a mixture of its own breadcrumbs, tomatoes, gbejniet, olives, capers, onions and beans to form an extremely filling and healthy “Workman’s Lunch” in its own edible lunchbox, as the exterior shell eventually forms part of the meal. The same kind of filling is also included





in a flat kind of bread called “ftira”, which, cut into smaller pieces makes an excellent snack. Snail aioli are just another one of those Maltese quirks which turn gourmet food into a great bar-side appetiser.

Surprisingly, one of the recipes traditionally associated with those of a lower socio-economic status is now one of the most expensive and healthy dishes to be found. “Soppa ta’ L-Armla” or Widow’s Soup, is so called because it was made from ingredients which were affordable by poor widowed women who had no regular income after their husband’s death – mainly an eclectic concoction of seasonal vegetables. These days, with vegetable prices at a premium, often with added fresh gbejniet and eggs cooked into it, this soup is a great meal that isn’t as easy on the pocket as it used to be. From vegetables to carbohydrates, some of the best-loved Maltese comfort food is designed to be followed by a nap and later by guilty exercise. If there’s something that the Maltese love, it’s “Frejjeġ” – fried omelettes and patties whose main ingredient apart from eggs varies according to personal favourites with cauliflower, meat and fish, courgettes and even corned beef featuring quite prominently, but the best by far is “Froga tat-tarja” a pie-like fried combination made with “tarja” – cooked cappellini pasta, beaten with an egg batter and mixed with ham, tomatos, garlic, parsely and mushrooms, fried and placed on a bed of cheddar cheese – providing a true mix of Italian, Maltese and British influences.

Add to these, “Timpana” – macaroni pasta baked with Bolognese sauce into a pastry pie as well as “pastizzi” – ricotta or pea pockets baked in filo pastry cases, and “qassatat” mini pies filled with ricotta or spinach. Local ricotta, incidentally, is salty and very tasty and the basis of many dishes and snacks – a perennial favourite being ricotta pie and “Bħal fil-Forn” (As though baked in the oven) – a simple, healthy dish of courgettes, tomatos, a large slice of creamy ricotta and an egg, all poached to perfection. Finish snacking on “imqaret” – deep-fried date cakes, and you have a list of devilishly good comfort foods which are sure to taste terrific but induce just a hint of guilt.

So let’s go back to meat, poultry and fish. Malta being an island means that seafood features prominently in our diet – with stuffed calamari - squid, a delicacy often cooked in white wine, while “lampuki”, the dorado fish or mahi-mahi is a particular favourite, often cooked in a batter of flour and eggs, or more traditionally, al cartocchio, wrapped in foil and baked in its own juices and served with lemon juice and a side salad. Baked in a pie, the dorado makes a delicious meal, mixed with spinach, olives and capers, the last two ingredients are also used as condiments with octopus tentacles, along with olive oil, garlic and parsley. Interestingly, it’s game which still has a prominent place in traditional Maltese gastronomy. Rabbit is one of the Maltese national dishes recommended. It is traditionally served

either stewed in a delectable sauce, or stove top sauteed with wine & garlic, or otherwise as an alternative spaghetti dish; while tender young quail stuffed with prunes and cooked in red wine still makes for one of the best local gourmet meals. Veal “braġoli” – condiments wrapped in tender veal and simmered till cooked, are also excellent. Usually accompanying these dishes are sides of stuffed courgettes and “Brungiel” (aubergines) and tomatos as well as roast potatoes seasoned with fennel although the best potatoes are those sinfully cooked in goose fat. Dessert is never really a problem in Malta because apart from the countless combinations of fresh fruit salads, Sicilian pastries, Italian ice-cream and British cakes and puddings which are all very much an integral part of our cooking culture, there are some delicious traditional favourites like “qagħaq ta’ l-għasel” – honey rings made with honey and rich treacle, “pastini and torti tal-lewz” – almond cakes and pastries, “imbuljuta” – a delicious Christmas recipe for a compote of roasted, softened chestnuts, soaked in a cocktail of hot chocolate and brandy and flavoured with nutmeg and cloves and “ħelwa tat-tork” – nut-butter-based halva which is crumbly and usually made from Tahini (sesame paste) or other nut butters and sugar and usually has whole almonds dotting it. Taking away the memory of even a small selection of these delicacies after your holiday is enough to give you the best taste of Malta – a slice of heaven in the Mediterranean.

DIVING IN THE MALTESE ISLANDS

MALTA AND GOZO OFFERS SOME OF THE BEST DIVING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN. THERE ARE DIVE SPOTS SUITABLE FOR ALL LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE, FROM BEGINNERS TO PRACTICED DIVERS LOOKING FOR A NEW CHALLENGE. THE UNDERWATER LANDSCAPE HERE IS SPECTACULAR, THE VISIBILITY EXCELLENT. THE SEA IS USUALLY CALM AND THE SEA TEMPERATURE NEVER DROPS BELOW 13°C SO DIVING IS POSSIBLE ALMOST ALL THE TIME.

The islands have a remarkable number of dives accessible from the shore and many more that are just a short boat ride away. The small size of the archipelago means that you spend less time travelling between sites and more time in the sea. Being 'weather proof', if there is wind on one side of the island you are only minutes from an

alternative dive-site on the other side. The Blue Hole in Dwejra, Gozo is a big attraction for many divers: a natural underwater archway that leads to the open sea. There is also an abundance of wreck dives around the islands, reefs and caves, as well as four specially scuttled vessels, making Malta, and Gozo in particular one of the most interesting & attractive dive destinations in the Mediterranean.



MALTA COMES TO LIFE AT NIGHT

TYPICAL OF THE MEDITERRANEAN LIFESTYLE, THE LOCALS' APPROACH TO LIFE IS TO ENJOY AND CELEBRATE IT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. ISLE OF MTV MALTANIGHTLIFE ON THE ISLANDS IS ALWAYS BUSTLING - EVEN IF THE VIBRANT CALENDAR OF EVENTS GETS LEANER DURING SOME PERIODS, THERE ARE ALWAYS SCORES OF CLUBS TO VISIT, EXCELLENT WINE BARS AND FIRST-RATE RESTAURANTS TO TRY.

The Islands have an effervescent calendar of cultural events to see, such as the Malta Arts Festival, the Valletta Baroque Festival, the Opera Festival, the Choir Festival and the International Jazz Festival held in July. Major music concerts starring top international artists are held every summer, attracting massive crowds of both tourists and locals alike. The Maltese Islands have also become a hub for the clubbing scene. Internationally renowned DJs like Paul Oakenfold, Erick Morillo, Bob Sinclair, Guetta, Magda, Tiesto, Van Heill have appear for guest weekends throughout the year. This scene thrives all year round and is an all-week affair in a variety of venues,

from large clubs to quieter bars where some excellent house DJs entertain and the admission is free. The main nightlife clubbing action is in Paceville, on the coast near St. Julians, where the clubs and bars are in abundance. Classical music is very popular on the Islands and organ recitals take place regularly in the many baroque churches. Regular orchestral, soloist concerts and operas take place in some stunning historic venues. Band music is one of the most popular traditions on the Islands. Every town and village has at least one band club. Band music is taken seriously on the Islands and the highlight of the year for band clubs is the parish festa. These events are characteristic of the Maltese Islands. Saints, fireworks, food

and fun are all part of this cultural phenomenon. Theatre & Opera are lively and a well-represented part of the local cultural scene. The 18th century Manoel Theatre makes a wonderful venue for the performing arts. The open-air Shakespeare performed in the Gardens of San Anton Palace in July is one of the many theatrical highlights. If you happen to be here during Christmas, check out one of the Pantomimes for some fun and great family entertainment. There is more nocturnal entertainment on offer if you want to try your luck at the casinos, or go see a film (blockbuster movies, art house films, re-releases and non-English language films) or dine al fresco at one of the romantic palazzos or harbour restaurants.





M.I.C.E.

THE MALTESE ISLANDS ARE A DESTINATION OF CHOICE FOR M.I.C.E. THIS AWARD-WINNING ISLAND HAS SEEN RECORD NUMBERS OF M.I.C.E. VISITORS WITH DELEGATE NUMBERS AMOUNTING TO 86,000 FROM A TOTAL OF 130,173 BUSINESS TRAVELERS IN 2014.

Despite being one of the smallest members of the Euro-zone, Malta stands its ground as a destination of choice among many companies, international organisations and Associations. Versatile, flexible and dynamic, the Islands offer a high quality infrastructure. Centrally located at the heart of the Mediterranean its direct flight connections, many of which are less than 3 hours away from main European gateways, make it an easily accessible meeting hub for delegates. The Maltese Islands are also members of the European Union, the Euro zone and the Schengen agreement facilitating travel to and from the destination. The multitude of languages spoken by local professionals ensures a clear understanding. Communication is also facilitated as English is the official business language together with Maltese - our national language. The Islands' inherent attractions set the scene for successful meetings and events. With modern conference centers, a vast option of prestigious historical buildings and outdoor locations, C&IT organisers have various possibilities where to host events. The size of the Islands also facilitates the planning process; Malta's size (316 kilometers) is especially attractive as it minimizes the time spent on transfers between the meeting room and venues for social program. Our five and four-star

hotels include internationally renowned chains as well as boutique properties. These establishments have in-house meeting facilities and many are clustered within walking distance of each other, enabling event organisers to split up large groups into different properties. The flexibility of the Maltese Islands allows an array of options for activities.

A number of DMCs have received international awards for their dedication and professionalism. In its ongoing drive to maintain this unparalleled standard of service, the MTA awards DMCs a Quality Seal to recognize those companies which are committed to high levels of quality. Malta has 18 Quality Assured DMCs, as well as other ancillary services on both land and at sea. The Maltese Islands also offer a vast events calendar throughout the year which can be incorporated as part of incentive programs. Surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the gentle climate is predominantly sunny and warm making it possible for an event to be organised in exceptional outdoor venues such as gardens, town squares and other historical places or precious landmarks dispersed along the Maltese and Gozitan coasts. Gozo, Malta's sister island, is renowned for teambuilding events, active day tours and outdoor events. The size and natural setting conspire to make it a prime location

for incentive groups wishing to experience the Island's laid back lifestyle, culture and cuisine. Comino, situated between Malta and Gozo, is popular mostly for incentives and sporting activities.

The Maltese Government and public sector invest strongly in tourism and experience within the industry ensures that clients receive good value for time and money. In addition the Maltese Government has also announced that a foundation for the promotion of foreign conventions and congresses will be set up in Malta in the near future which further strengthens the importance given to this sector. This diverse offer is not only a result of our history and heritage but is also possible through the everyday aspects of our local life: including the people, our architecture and infrastructure, as well as the Maltese language and cuisine. The Islands' picturesque beauty, the warm local hospitality and the history of events hosted in Malta and Gozo keep acting as a major attraction for M.I.C.E. business travelers.

www.meet-malta.com



GOZO MEANING "JOY" IN CASTILIAN IS THE NAME THE ARAGONESE GAVE THIS ISLAND, WHEN THEY POSSESSED IT IN 1282. THE IDEA OF JOY AND PLEASURE IS ALSO CONVEYED BY ITS LATIN MOTTO "FERTILIS AB UNDIS CAPUT IFFERO – A FRUITFUL LAND RAISING ITS HEAD FROM THE SEA". WE KNOW THAT THE PHOENICIANS, WHEN IT WAS THEIRS IN 700BC, CALLED IT "GWL" OR GAULOS, MEANING A ROUND SHIP, POSSIBLY IN REFERENCE TO THE ISLAND'S SHAPE FROM A DISTANCE, A NAME THE ROMANS KEPT WHEN THEY, IN TURN TOOK IT OVER IN 218AD.

The Arabs, who came to rule this precious piece of land a thousand years ago, and who strongly influenced its Semitic language, left behind the name that has stuck in the vernacular Ghawdex (pronounced Aw-desh). Gozo is the second largest island of the Maltese Archipelago that consists of three islands known as Gozo, Comino and mainland Malta. Roughly circular in shape, 14km by 7km in area, Gozo is hilly and from the south-west to the northwest, the coast is entirely surrounded by cliffs. The hills of Gozo are curiously rounded and flat-topped, the result of hard rock lying on top of softer rock and being eroded away over time. The highest point on the island - Ta' Dbiegi that lies on the outskirts of the village of San Lawrenz - rises a cool 190 metres above sea level. Gozo is rural and simple, its culture and way of life rooted in fishing, and in

primitive pastoral and agricultural activity. Tomatoes, potatoes, onions, melons, grapes, figs, oranges, and tangerines are the island's prime agricultural produce. Gozo though separated from mainland Malta by a 5km stretch of Mediterranean sea is distinctly different from Malta. The soil is fertile as much as the clay is blue there. This means that rain water does not sink through the ground as quickly as on sandy soil, and is the reason why Gozo is much greener than Malta for most part of the year. Gozo's population of approximately 29,000 is not so much in evidence, except in the bustling little square in what makes for the main town, Victoria, so named in 1897 in honour of Queen Victoria's jubilee and where a fifth of the population resides. The local people have resolutely stuck to their own name of Rabat, instead of Victoria. Like other Rabats around the world, the name echoes the one time presence of the Arabs

here, complete with Gozo's own Medina, a fortified citadel atop a summit, which shelters the old town and which once offered security from raiders.

This haunting Citadel is a favourite spot for true romantics and comes complete with just a few splendid old houses and a lovely small cathedral encircled by the spectacular bastion walls and narrow winding streets. At night, with moonlight filtering through the ruins and the aged stones of ancient Palazzi, it is almost possible to feel the spirits of those who lived, laughed, cried, loved, played and died here – a time when the world was a very different place. Still, Gozo remains unchanged. The island's hamlets and villages, with their strong wooden doors and cane curtains, remain closed and their windows shuttered from the summer sun for most a summers day. There is no fear in walking out and about

at night. The sense of safety and security is tangible. The people of this island take pride in the absolute absence of muggings and the almost non-existence of theft. On an Island where everyone knows another and where the baker could also be your Ferry captain, it would be hard to fool the locals. Gozo spells tranquility and treasures its peace. For some, the silence can be overwhelming, but not to those for whom it spells a blessed respite from the trials and tribulations of everyday life. Gozo is not for those who like clubbing or high flying parties. It is for those who seek calmness and a reconnection between body and soul, through the slow rhythm of life, traditional foods, organic substances and a mellow lifestyle. However, there are still the isolated and couple of fine night spots which become a hive of activity among the locals during the summer months.

Village bars open early in order to cater for the early risers who attend the first mass of the day and close fairly late at night, catering to the socialising needs of locals and visitors alike. These watering-holes, with their wooden chairs, marble counters, and large metal trays containing this local delicacy, pastizzi, are a cultural icon. They have stayed unchanged for decades, the only sign of time passing by being the food and drink displayed for sale on the solid shelves and in the Edwardian glass cases. The island is well equipped with restaurants, where the eating is Mediterranean based & varied. A particular local dish is rabbit stewed in wine. Octopus stew with spaghetti is also very typical. Very tasty are a variety of soups and dishes with freshly caught local fish. A quick lunch with local cheeselets, olives, tomatoes, olive-oil and fresh bread washed down with a glass of wine is a real treat. Juicy prickly pears as a dessert may prove delicious and a small jar of the world renowned pure Gozo honey may be taken home to be shared with family and friends. In this pastoral atmosphere, you will occasionally come across the incongruity of an International Herald Tribune, a Guardian, or a Frankfurter Allgemeine. Gozo may be a peace warriors mecca, but it is not that isolated that the newspapers don't get there on time, which may be bad news for visitors who want to escape the headlines from their own country. Of interest to note is that Gozo and its inhabitants have their own distinct character and identity, and noticeably different lifestyles, different accents and an incomprehensible dialect.

Those who live in Gozo are quick to identify themselves and set themselves apart from the Maltese in Malta.

We are Gozitan! Through the centuries, the Gozitan has developed a strong and independent character. A conservative person with staunch, clear thoughts, unaffected by what others think about him and who carefully deliberates every action to determine its compatibility with his interests and plans. Gozitans are hard-working and diligent, known as island will surely experience the friendliness of the Gozitans.





ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN MALTA

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING SECTOR HAS DEVELOPED TO BE A CORE SEGMENT WITHIN MALTA'S TOURISM PRODUCT OFFER, GENERATING APPROXIMATELY 80,000 STUDENTS ANNUALLY.

EFL, as it is known, is a sector that has done very well for the country - Malta has firmly established itself as a centre of excellence in English language teaching thanks to the high quality and professionalism of its EFL schools, especially when it comes to Business English and specialised courses; EFL has contributed significantly towards employment and generation of income for the country, and more than 12% of the tourist bed nights to Malta and Gozo are taken up by language students. The sector continues to grow and it is projected that by end of 2015 there will be 50 language schools in Malta and Gozo that meet the strict regulations and standards of the Government/Industry joint monitoring Board.

The sector has been constant in the number of students arriving from top tourist markets, such as Italy, Germany and France, but it has also been attracting students from non-traditional markets such as Asia, Russia, Ukraine, Colombia, South Korea, Brazil and Poland.

The Maltese English Language Learning Schools and the Malta Tourism Authority

have been investing significantly in the further development of the more mature student market within this segment that is able to guarantee constant flows of mature students with varying degrees of proficiency in the English Language during the less busy winter months of the year.

It is becoming increasingly clear that a good knowledge of the English language is key to quasi-universal comprehension in both Business as well as personal situations. A good number of non-English speakers have clearly understood this importance and are opting for full immersion language courses in a country such as Malta, that has a solid English-speaking tradition. Why does Malta stand out with its English-speaking tradition? - Malta was a British colony and English is an official language of the Maltese Islands. The Islands offer professional schools with courses ranging from elementary English to higher Business English Language courses, such as legal English, Banking English, Medical English and other English for specific purposes, which makes the Islands an ideal place for intensive language and communication training programmes throughout the year. Experienced and certified teachers conduct

classes consisting of a manageable group of students or hold one-to-one focused classes, ensuring that the individual's needs are met.

What's more the language schools can organise different sorts of accommodation to meet anyone's budgets and interests. Malta's strong cultural and entertainment scene, as well as the diversity of activities, sportive or otherwise, one can enjoy make Malta and Gozo as an ideal destination for a unique English plus experience. And, owing to the island's typically mild weather, these can be enjoyed all year round even in off-peak-season months.

It's what memories are made of. So if learning English as a second language conjures up images of fusty class rooms and incessant drilling as to the correct use of verbs and tenses, think again. The Malta experience couldn't be more different.

Please log in to
<http://eflmalta.gov.mt/en/Pages/Licensed-EFL-Schools.aspx>
 to download a brochure of the available schools in the Maltese Islands.

GENERAL INFORMATION & FACT BOX

VISA

Forming part of the European Union and Schengen area, entry and exit into Malta has been largely facilitated especially if travelling from destinations within participating areas (an Identity Card is all that is required). For those EU countries where an ID card is not issued and that do not form part of the Schengen agreement, a valid passport is necessary as well as a possible VISA.

For an updated listing of Visa requirements and those countries requiring this document, please refer to Ministry of Foreign Affairs website: **www.foreignaffairs.gov.mt**

GETTING TO THE MALTESE ISLANDS

Malta International Airport welcomes flights from a growing number of countries. Direct flights with your favourite schedule airline are available as per the itineraries posted on the MIA website **www.maltairport.com**.

Low cost aircraft are also flying regularly to the islands, with new routes opening all the time, making your holiday plans even more flexible. Malta's own National Carrier, Air Malta, is the pride of the Maltese islands and schedules can be viewed through **www.airmalta.com**.

Travelling by car or motorcycle? A frequent catamaran vehicle/passenger express service connects the Maltese Islands with Sicily. For itineraries to/from Catania or Pozzallo please check Virtu Ferries Ltd on **www.virtuferries.com**.

HEALTH

Medical care in Malta is available through both public and private hospitals and the quality of medical care in Malta is excellent. Hospitals are modern and supported by a regional network of health centres. Travellers do not normally require certificates of vaccination or immunisation to enter the Maltese Islands. Visitors from EU member states should make sure that they have a European Health Insurance card. It is advisable that all visitors, irrespective of their nationality, take out a personal medical insurance policy. Malta has reciprocal health agreements with Australia and the United Kingdom. Nationals of these countries, visiting the Islands for no longer than one month, are entitled to free medical and hospital care in both Malta and Gozo. Visitors receiving special medical treatment should bring a medical prescription or a letter of introduction from their family doctor, in case they need to purchase particular medicines.

Emergency

In case of emergency **call 112**

TOURIST INFORMATION OFFICE

There is an excellent tourist information office in Valletta in the Knights' Auberge d'Italie (a sight in itself) at the City Gate end of Merchants Street.

Telephone 00 356 22915440 /41/42

Open Mon-Sat 9am-5.30pm, Sun 9am-1pm

For more information, see:
www.visitmalta.com



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