



Malta

— TRAVEL GUIDE —



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DISCLAIMER

Whilst all efforts have been made by the author to ensure that the information herein is accurate at the time of writing, the reader is advised to double check the information at the time of travel to ensure it is still relevant. As the data can be changed by third parties, the author takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the data herein. The information presented is intended as a guide only to help the reader during the travel, and no data is intended as advertising or other purposes.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Apart from a thorough guide to the island of Malta, what to see and experience and why you should study here, this guide will also offer you opportunities to practise your language skills. You will find tips scattered among the pages with instructions such as –“Beginner Level Tip: Ask for directions to get to Valletta”. Each tip will advise you on the level of English required – Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced. However, feel free to try everything, and challenge your English skills. Remember, practice makes perfect!



**WELCOME TO
MALTA**

Vibrant, sleepy, active, sunny, welcoming, familiar, different; Malta is a unique Mediterranean island that quickly finds its way to your heart.

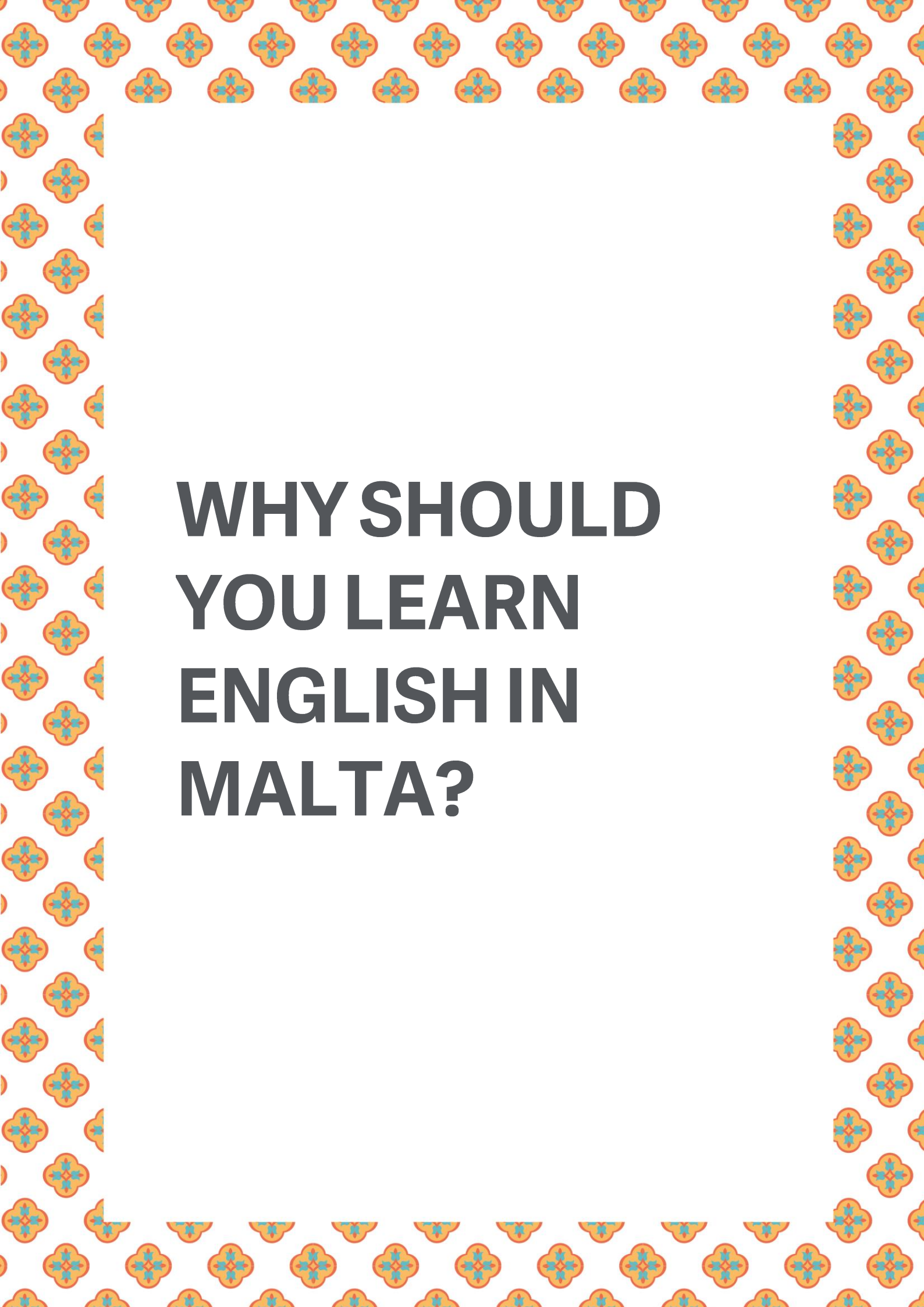
Made up of a tiny group of islands found just 96km south of Sicily, Malta has an area of 316km squared with a population of around 420,000. Given the small area and population density, people often wonder how locals manage not to fall off the edge.

Its Mediterranean location and weather, pretty beaches and crystal clear sea have long attracted visitors looking for a relaxed spot in the sunshine, but the islands offer so much more than just the plentiful sun and sea.

Architecture from the times of the Arabs, Phoenicians, Knights of St John and of course the British among many others, provides a backdrop to a more contemporary lifestyle that somehow combines a very Mediterranean relaxed vibe and character with a strong European influence.

Traditional life, old craftsmen, wooden balconies, grand churches and village feasts exist side-by-side with office blocks, bustling roads, shopping malls and pockets of contemporary art and culture, creating contrast and diversity that can be surprising in such a small place.





WHY SHOULD YOU LEARN ENGLISH IN MALTA?

A long-term British colony (Malta was part of the British Empire for 150 years), British culture and language have rubbed off strongly on the Maltese Islands with practically all of the Maltese population being bilingual and the majority proficient in English.

As your language improves you will be able to hold longer and more complex conversations in English wherever you go, whether you are shopping for groceries, asking for feedback when clothes shopping or learning about one of Malta's many historical buildings.

You will come across spoken and written English wherever you go as outdoor signage, restaurant menus, museum literature, tourist maps and even the most popular local newspapers are in English.

Blessed with beautiful Mediterranean weather and warm, clear seas, Malta provides an idyllic setting for your language lessons, encouraging you to combine learning with light-hearted island adventuring.

Given their tiny area, the islands will very quickly feel familiar, a feeling helped by the friendly and welcoming nature of the Maltese. No matter where you are staying, everywhere in Malta is close, which means you can fit a multitude of diverse experiences into each of your days.

North, south, east or west, the Islands pack a dense choice of attractions. Swimming, diving, snorkelling, trekking, rock climbing and sailing will keep outdoor types entertained while those preferring less strenuous activity can enjoy great restaurants, a vibrant bar scene, cinemas, music events and theatre among many other alternatives.

The lower cost of living when compared to other European countries makes Malta a viable choice financially, allowing you better value for money and therefore more learning and entertainment opportunities for your budget.

Finally and most importantly, the Maltese Islands have some of the best safety records around, helping you feel free to learn and have an adventure with peace of mind.



WHERE TO PRACTISE ENGLISH IN MALTA

The following are some locations or activities that can encourage you to read, speak English in social situations and enjoy new experiences in the company of English speakers:

1. Visit the Bibliotheca in Valletta

Whenever the hustle and bustle of Malta becomes too much and you crave a spot of quiet, the National Library (Bibliotheca Melitensis) 36, Old Treasury Street, Valletta is the perfect oasis. Walk through the big wooden doors and up the staircase to the top floor researchers' area where you can give your details in return for a researchers' identification card (have a passport or ID card ready). Enjoy being surrounded by the beautiful floor to ceiling collection of Maltese books, the grand architecture and of course the silence. There is free Wi-Fi in case you miss the crazy world outside.

Open Monday to Friday: 08:15 hrs – 17:00 hrs and Saturday: 08:15 hrs – 13:15 hrs from 1st October till 15th June and Monday to Saturday: 08:15 hrs – 13:15 hrs 16th June till 30th September.



INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP: Ask a librarian to guide you through the library reference system and perhaps recommend a book you might enjoy leafing through.

2. Go trekking with Experience Adventures

Make Sunday mornings active by joining a trek organised by Experience Adventures and More and make new English-speaking friends. Treks are usually easy to medium difficulty and start at around 8am on Sunday. Big groups attend, making this a great way to get to know new people and practise your English while you walk. You also get to experience parts of Malta that are a little off the beaten track. 'Like' the [Experience Adventures and More](#) page on Facebook to stay updated with their upcoming events.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP: Research some information about the place you will be going to and engage in a conversation about it.

3. Ask for directions

Given that place names on road signs are in Maltese and signage is rather sparse, you will probably need to ask for directions often during your Malta adventure. Since practically everyone in Malta speaks English, this can be a great way to strike up a conversation with a local and perhaps get a few insider tips on the surroundings.

BEGINNER LEVEL TIP: Ask locals for their favourite café or restaurant nearby and to tell you why they like it. This will point you to the places loved by locals rather than those targeted at tourists.

4. Join a Sports Club

Joining a sports club is a great way to make new English-speaking friends, try new fun activities and keep fit in the process.

With Malta's beautiful rocky landscape, rock climbing is an adventurous pastime that brings you to the Island's most beautiful and often hard to reach locations. Climbing combines concentration with mental and physical exercise and can be as useful a self-development tool as it is a strength-building activity. [Malta Climbing Club](#) is a great place to learn the ropes and meet up with fellow climbing enthusiasts of all levels.

Fancy something to help you eliminate stress? Rugby is surprisingly popular in Malta with several budding clubs holding regular training sessions and a healthy national team. [Valletta Lions Rugby Club](#) may be a good place to start. They have a youth nursery and a Women's Team, ensuring there's an opportunity for everyone to join in.

5. Watch an English film at the cinema

Films can be a great way to polish your language skills whilst being entertained. Malta has several permanent cinemas as well as some pop-ups that mostly spring up in the summer months:

Eden Cinemas: Located in St Julian's, Eden Cinemas are Malta's largest with 17 screens that include supersized Cinema 16 with a T.H.X sound system. Type of films: Mainstream blockbusters, including 3D. Some independent, experimental and foreign language films are also screened (<http://www.edenculture.com.mt/sidestreetfilms.html>)

Embassy Cinemas: Found in Valletta, Embassy is a smaller cinema found on the top floor of a shopping complex. Type of films: Mainstream blockbusters.

Empire Cinemas: Located in Bugibba this is the northernmost cinema in Malta. Type of films: Mainstream Blockbusters, including 3D.

St James Cavalier Cinema: Found within this Valletta centre for art and creativity, this one screen cinema shows independent films and play / opera screenings from major theatres worldwide.

Tal-Lira Cinemas: Located in Fgura, Tal-Lira Cinemas are part of a chain of bargain shops. They show slightly older blockbusters at bargain prices.

Kinemastik: Pop-up film club at the British Legion in Valletta (111, Melita Street) and yearly film festival showing indie and arthouse films. Check website or Facebook page for titles and locations.

6. Play Boċċi at the Bugibba Boċċi Klabb

Learn to play the traditional Maltese game of Boċċi where the objective is to get your team's balls as close to the smaller jack ball as possible. Usually popular with older men in village centres, the Bugibba Boċċi Klabb & Diner has managed to make the sport popular with younger players who often meet to compete fervently over a couple of beers and generally hang out. The Club is a regular haunt of British expats making it a particularly good place for language practice in a fun atmosphere. Found on Islet Promenade, Bugibba and open Monday to Sunday: 09:00hrs till late.



INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP: Ask Joe, the owner, to teach you the rules of Boċċi and challenge yourself to explain to your friends how to play, in English.



**WHAT TO SEE &
EXPERIENCE**
MEMORABLE MALTA

1. Valletta

Valletta Entrance and Parliament

Reimagined by world-celebrated architect Renzo Piano, the entrance to Valletta has been completely transformed in a way that brings it more in line with the original. Walk along the bridge over the deep ditch to the narrow 8m gap in the walls that marks the city's entrance, giving a sense of the strength and depth of Valletta's architecture. Also part of this project, the new Parliament just beyond the gate was built to generate 60 to 80% of its energy through solar panels and an energy efficient construction. The unusually shaped blocks jutting out of the building help shade the inside from heat whilst allowing sunlight to stream in and maintain views. The entrance and square are spectacular by night thanks to perfectly positioned lighting.



EXPERT LEVEL TIP:
Research about Renzo Piano's other projects online. Which one is your favourite? Try writing a blog about it or preparing a mini presentation. You can entertain your friends (in English of course) or practice in front of a mirror.

Getting to Valletta entrance

Most locations have direct bus links to Valletta. Stop at the Terminus (last stop) and follow the flow of people into the city.



The Manoel Theatre

Commissioned and funded by Grandmaster António Manoel de Vilhena in 1731, the intricate Manoel Theatre was meant to keep young knights out of trouble and also provide the public with 'honest entertainment'. An inscription to this effect in Latin, 'ad honestam populi oblectationem' can be seen inscribed above the main entrance. Remember to look out for the Royal Box, placed exactly in the middle of the theatre and adorned beautifully to house nothing less than royalty. Should you wish to take the theatrical out of the theatre, the wardrobe department hires out its costumes.



Visiting the Manoel Theatre

Take a tour through the history of theatre in Malta (€5 including an audio guide) or better still watch a performance in the theatre for the full, authentic experience. Check out what's on at <http://www.teatrumanoel.com.mt>.

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 09.30hrs to 16.30hrs and Saturday: 09.30hrs to 12.30hrs (and evenings on performance nights).

Getting to the Manoel Theatre

Found in Old Theatre Street corner with Old Bakery Street, Valletta.



Map credit: Google.

St John's Co Cathedral & Museum

Decorated in baroque style and a complete contrast to the plain exterior, every centimetre of the cathedral's interior boasts beautiful, intricate and precious art. Commissioned by Grand Master Jean de la Cassière, the Knights of St John really strived to make this a unique monument nodding to their flamboyance and taste, and donated generously in funds, precious artefacts and commissioned art. Take advantage of the free audio guide to learn all about the cathedral and don't miss the two stunning Caravaggio paintings in the adjoining oratory, including The Beheading of St John which is the only known signed painting of this temperamental artist.

Opening Hours

Monday to Friday: 09:30 to 16:30 and Saturday:
09:30 to 12:30.

Visiting St John's Co Cathedral & Museum

Entrance to both the Cathedral and Museum costs €3.50 for students and €6.00 for adults. Being a place of worship modest dress is requested – shawls are available at the entrance. Stilettoes or narrow heeled shoes are not permitted as these damage the inlaid marble floors.



Getting to St John's Co Cathedral & Museum

Visitors' entrance is from Republic Street just opposite the Law Courts.



Map credit: Google.

Upper Barrakka Gardens

Originally built as a garden for the Knights of St John's leisure, in the hope of keeping them out of trouble, Upper Barrakka offers some of the most beautiful views in the Maltese Islands. Walk through the landscaped garden past the restored Malta Stock Exchange building and through the arches to enjoy panoramic views of Grand Harbour with the Vittoriosa, Senglea and the shipyards just across the water and the harbour entrance to your left.



Visiting Upper Barrakka Gardens

Entrance to the Gardens is free. Arrive at noon or 4pm and you can watch one of the guns in the Saluting Battery below being fired. Should you want a closer look you can also go down into the Saluting Battery for a charge of €2.

Once you feel you've taken in the whole view, walk to the right and ride the Barrakka Lift (free to go down, €1 if you want to come back up) down to the water where you can take a boat to the Three Cities from just across the road or walk underneath the tunnel, up the hill, through Victoria Gate and up the stairs back into Valletta.

Opening Hours of Gardens and Lift

Monday to Sunday 07:00 hrs to 22:00 hrs. Saluting battery open Monday to Sunday 10:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs.

Getting to Upper Barrakka Gardens

Found in St Ursula Street, Valletta. The entrance is across the road from Castille (the Prime Minister's Office) and just next to the Stock Exchange Building.



Map credit: Google.

2. South

Limestone Heritage

Limestone Heritage is a celebration and commemoration of limestone craftsmanship in Malta. Brought to life in a disused limestone quarry, the exhibition remembers the times when stone was extracted using simple hand tools, and when uneven blocks were carried up using a horse and cart. Walk through the history of quarrying in Malta and see first-hand traditional stone buildings and household features including the girna, rubble walls, arches, çangatura, niçça, and more.



ADVANCED LEVEL TIP: Find and photograph a traditional building feature made out of stone (e.g. girna, çangatura, niçça, armarju etc). Write an email to a friend describing where you found this feature and how it was created.

Visiting Limestone Heritage

Tickets cost €6 for students and €9 for adults. For an additional €3 you can also carve your own stone souvenir under the watchful eye of a master craftsman.

Bus stop: Saura.



Map credit: Google.

Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra Neolithic Temples

These ancient temples constructed out of giant blocks of limestone are the oldest freestanding buildings worldwide (even older than the pyramids!) and are UNESCO World Heritage Sites (<http://heritagemalta.org/museums-sites/mnajdra-temples/>). Perfectly aligned to mark the position of the sun during the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes and Winter and Summer Solstices (The South Temple at Mnajdra), you can't help but be amazed at what the people who built them.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP – At the visitor centre, ask about the constellation map etched in stone at Mnajdra.

Visiting Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra

Visiting the temples up close (which is highly recommended) costs €7.50 for students and €10 for adults and includes entrance to both. Alternately, you can go for a relaxing walk just outside the park and get scenic views of the temples for free. Extend the visit by walking down towards the sea just before Mnajdra where you can get right down to the water and enjoy an adventurous coastal walk.



Opening Hours

1st October till 31st March -
Monday to Sunday: 09.00 - 17.00hrs

1st April till 30th September -
Monday to Sunday: 08.00-19.15hrs

Getting to Ħaġar Qim and Mnajdra

Bus stop: Ħaġar and follow the signs (4min walk to Visitor Centre).



Map credit: Google.

Blue Grotto

A series of sea caves and a massive arch formed through years of sea erosion, Blue Grotto is a place of immense natural beauty. Although there is a spot just off the road where you can catch a panoramic view of the arch, the best views are reserved for those on boats. Boat trips leave the narrow Wied Iż-Żurrieq inlets and come out towards the arch, visiting the beautiful sea caves along the way. Filfla, a tiny, uninhabited, and protected island is visible just opposite. Although boat trips allow no time for swimming, you can have a dip close to the spot boats leave from and marvel at the deep valley sculpted by ancient rivers. The area is a popular climbing and diving spot, with the scuttled Um El-Faroud wreck a popular undersea attraction.



Visiting Blue Grotto

The caves are most beautiful from sunrise till around 13:00 hrs due to the unique way the light reflects off the cave walls.

Boat trips to the caves run Monday to Sunday: 09:30 to around 17:00 (weather permitting) and cost €8 for a 25 minute trip.

Getting to Blue Grotto

The Grotto is close to the village of Żurrieq on Malta's South West coast. Bus stop: Grotto or Panorama for the land based viewing spot.



Map credit: Google.

Marsaxlokk Fish Market

Marsaxlokk is a sleepy little fishing village in Malta's southwest where you can watch the colourful fishing boats come back to land with their catches. Sit by the sea for a while and observe fishermen as they untangle their nets and clean their gear in preparation for the next trip. Walk around the various stalls displaying the fresh fish of the morning; from tiny fish to rather sizeable ones, see how many you can identify. Further along the market you will find typical Maltese food and products including local honey and beeswax, olive oil, sundried tomatoes, olives and much more. Watch out for the dry goods stall selling nuts and pulses by weight to get your hands on a yummy mix of nuts and dried fruit for a fraction of the price you would pay in shops. For a real taste of Marsaxlokk, head to The Rising Sun restaurant at the left end of the market where Michael and his wife put together traditional home-cooked meals (especially fish) that give you the feeling of visiting your long-lost Maltese grandmother. The décor is simple and prices are cheap - but the food is fit for royalty.

BEGINNER LEVEL TIP: Ask Michael's wife for some information about Marsaxlokk. She is a walking encyclopaedia.

Visiting Marsaxlokk Fish Market

The Marsaxlokk fish market is on every Sunday from early morning till early afternoon (stalls start dismantling at around 13:00 hrs but some stay longer).

Getting to Marsaxlokk Fish Market

Bus stop: Marsaxlokk.

Map credit: Google.



3. Mdina

Known to many as The Silent City, Malta's old capital Mdina is an ancient walled city dating back over 4,000 years. A perfect contrast to Valletta's straight, parallel roads and harbour-side location, Mdina was built on an imposing hill at a time when the enemy approached on foot.



Narrow, winding roads originally created to confuse attackers now hold a sense of magic with a surprise round every bend, be it unusually-shaped metal door knockers, beautiful palaces and monasteries, stone features and of course the impressive bastions themselves. Make sure to visit the Cathedral of St Paul and admire the view over central Malta from the top of the city's walls. Mdina is at its prettiest at dusk when the diminishing sunlight is accompanied by street lanterns that add to the warm atmosphere.

BEGINNER LEVEL TIP: The Mdina Dungeons just past the city's entrance offer an audio tour that you can enjoy in English whilst learning about the less glamorous aspects of Malta's past. Opening hours: Monday to Sunday 10:00 hrs to 16:30 hrs.

Getting to Mdina

Closest bus stop: L-Imdina.



Map credit: Google.

4. The Three Cities

Birgu, Bormla and Isla Waterfront

Often referred to as Vittoriosa (Birgu), Cospicua (Bormla) and Senglea (L-Isla) these three ancient cities definitely deserve a visit. Dating back to the time of the knights of St. John when Grand Masters built palaces and stately homes pre-dating Valletta, these cities combine an air of grandeur with simple and derelict buildings (such as the old dock in Cospicua) that provide strong contrast. Walk along the water's edge through these three cities admiring tiny traditional wooden boats alongside super yachts moored at Grand Harbour Marina in Birgu. Take in the stunning architecture and have regular coffee breaks at the waterside cafes and restaurants.

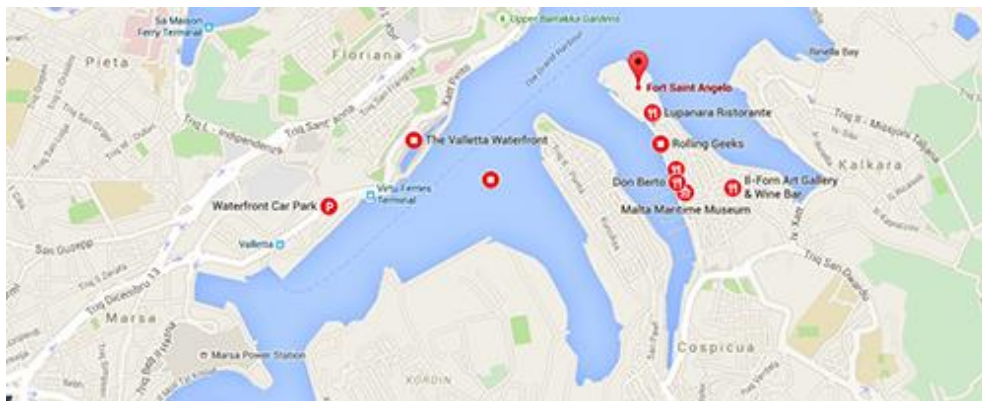


Getting to the Birgu, Bormla and Isla Waterfront

The best way to arrive is no doubt by boat. Ferries and traditional dgħajjes leave Valletta at regular intervals; see schedule here:

<http://www.vallettaferryservices.com/schedule.html>.

Buses are also available. Stop: Żejt.



Map credit: Google.

Maritime Museum

Witness Malta's maritime history from pre-history to present day through the fascinating artefacts kept in this Museum in Birgu. Discover intriguing ancient maritime instruments dating back to the 15th century, miniature models of ceremonial gondolas belonging to the Knights of St John, models of the different types of traditional Maltese dgħajjes (boats), and an impressive collection of artillery. Look out for the model Carrack, essentially a super yacht from the time of the Knights that included a large chapel, a small orchard of citrus trees and a bakery that supplied fresh bread daily.



Visiting the Maritime Museum

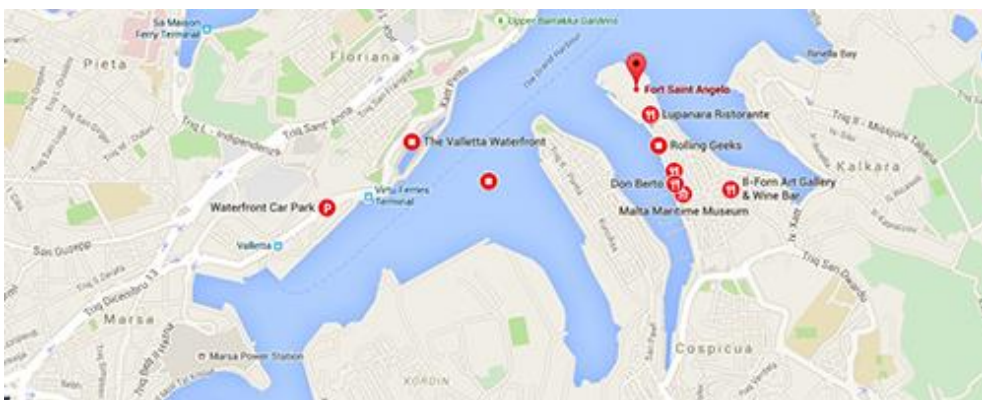
Tickets to the museum cost €3.50 for students and €5 for adults.

Opening Hours

Monday to Sunday 09.00 - 17.00hrs.

Getting to the Maritime Museum

Found on the Birgu (Vittoriosa) waterfront, the Maritime museum can be reached by ferry or boat from Valletta (ask to stop in Birgu) or by bus. Stop: Żejt.



Map credit: Google.

5. North

Għajn Tuffieħa Bay and Golden Bay

Set on Malta's North West coast, these two bays combine beach life with stunning surroundings and opportunities for trekking and adventure.

Starting with Golden Bay, the largest and most popular of the two, the sandy beach here is wide and deep, creating plenty of space for beach volleyball games, sandcastle-building, a variety of water sports, swimming and barbeques after dark. For a more luxurious experience, the Radisson Golden Sands Hotel located here has bars and restaurants overlooking the beach as well as a private hotel beach kitted out with canopies and sun loungers (at a charge).



The next bay along the coast, Għajn Tuffieħa, can be reached via a long flight of stone steps that may deter lazier beach-goers, making it a quieter place than neighbouring Golden Bay. The long way down is very much rewarded however, as the beach is flanked by towering cliffs to the left and sand dunes and clay slopes to the right, making it one of the most beautiful beaches on the island.

The area around both beaches is prime trekking ground with clay slopes, cliff walks, and a Nature and History Park called **Il-Majjistral**. The clay slopes to the left end of Għajn Tuffieħa can be climbed and eventually lead to yet another sandy beach called Ġnejna Bay.

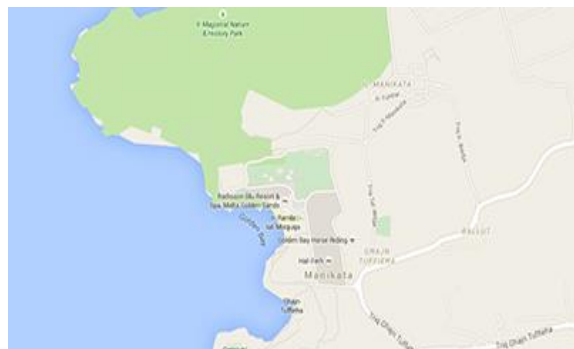


Visiting Għajn Tuffieħa Bay and Golden Bay

Sunset is particularly stunning here as you can watch the sun disappear on the horizon and enjoy a swim surrounded by the beautiful cliffs and vibrant colours. Watch out for underwater currents in both bays, as these can be dangerous. Red flags will be flown when swimming is not recommended.

Getting to Għajn Tuffieħa Bay and Golden Bay

Closest Bus Stops: Għajn Tuffieħa Bus Terminus for Golden Bay and Riviera for Għajn Tuffieħa.



Mellieħa Bay & Għadira Nature Reserve

The last major bay before Malta's northernmost tip, Mellieħa Bay is one of Malta's best swimming and water sports spots. Thanks to its width and sheltered shape, waters here are calm, making it very popular with beachgoers practically every day in summer (get there early if you'd like a good spot).



The beach offers golden sand and all kinds of water sports including parasailing, Jet Ski rental, water skiing, windsurfing, kayaking, and paddle boating - but if you crave some quiet nature time, the Nature Reserve just behind the beach is perfect for you. Managed by Bird Life Malta, a local NGO, the reserve includes two hides where you can observe birds in their natural environment as they enjoy the brackish pools and sand-dune environment.

Visiting Għadira Nature Reserve

Entry to the reserve is free but donations help Bird Life continue their good work.

Opening hours

Saturday and Sunday: 10:00hrs to 16:00hrs.

Getting to Mellieħa Bay

Closest Bus Stop:
Għadira



6. Gozo

Dwejra Azure Window and Inland Sea

Perhaps the most iconic image of the Maltese Islands, the Azure Window in Dwejra, Gozo lives up to the hype. Made out of a massive block of Upper Coralline Limestone (a type of Maltese rock) that has been worn away by the waves to form an arch, the Azure Window shows sea erosion in action and will one day crumble to leave just a disconnected stack (rock island).

The nearby inland sea was formed after underwater caves collapsed, leaving an inland pool of water connected to the open sea. Swim in the sheltered waters surrounded by spectacular cliffs that tower above you or take a boat ride (around €4) through the tunnel linking the sea to the open water and enjoy breathtaking views of Fungus Rock. The area is also an excellent diving site.

Getting to Dwejra Azure Window and Inland Sea

At Id-Dwejra, Gozo. Bus stop: Dwejra



Map credit: Google.

Ramla l-Hamra

Named after its soft, reddish sand, this beach is the largest in Gozo and an excellent location for both relaxing and having an adventure. The sand and shallow sea make it a popular swimming spot, although it's far less busy than the beaches on Malta. The beach is surrounded by sand dunes, terraced farmland,

and rounded clay slopes, with many opportunities for treks. Calypso cave, mentioned in Homer's poem "The Odyssey" (where the nymph Calypso supposedly entertained Ulysses for seven years before he continued his journey) is just a short walk away and a welcome spot of shade on scorching summer days.

Watch out for undersea currents on windy days that can make swimming hazardous. Lifeguards man the beach in summer and put up red flags when swimming is dangerous.



Getting to Ramla l-Hamra

This beach is close to the villages of Nadur and Xaghra in Gozo. Closest bus stop: Ramla.



Map credit: Google.



THE REAL MALTESE EXPERIENCE

Malta like a Local

Malta is a bit like an onion. Most tourists only experience the outer layer or two, sticking to touristic areas like Sliema and Bugibba, perhaps venturing to a couple of popular sites here and there. Dare to go deeper however and you will find an endless series of layers where you can be exposed to more and more of the unique character of this land and its people.

The following are a few ideas that will help you live an authentic Malta experience away from the routes followed by day-trippers.

Pastizzi and Tea from Crystal Palace

Try Maltese pastizzi; cheap, flaky pastry pockets filled with either ricotta or peas in their original (and best) format from this 100-year-old establishment in Rabat. Usually full of old men enjoying pastizzi, tea and whatever is on television, Crystal Palace is a true slice of Maltese culture. Enjoy your pastizzi and glass of tea (yes the strong black tea is poured into thick glasses, no fancy cups here) on the bench right outside the simple shop or roam further and take your pastizzi and tea across the road.

Walk towards the left of the gardens opposite and sit on one of the benches enjoying your treat with views of Mtarfa to one side and the Mdina bastions to the other. Triq San Pawl, Rabat. Within walking distance of Mdina's main gate.



Birgu Flea Market

Delve into Malta's cultural history and grab a few bargains in the process, probably ones you weren't expecting to walk away with. The Flea Market in Birgu (Vittoriosa) is one of the few markets in Malta where you can experience an unusual combination of weird artefacts, authentic antiques (some falling to pieces, others beautifully restored and cared for), second hand furniture and clothes, tools old and new, plants, books and sometimes in-season fruit and vegetables. The market attracts a mixed crowd made up mostly of locals out for a bargain.

TIP: Be there at crack of dawn for the best selection or towards the end (round 13:00 hrs) for the lowest prices as stallholders try to get rid of the last items before they pack up. Always remember to haggle for the best price.

The market sets up in a football pitch up from Couvre Port in Birgu (Vittoriosa).

Bus stop: Fortini

Trekking

Despite its population density and widespread development, it is completely possible to experience (and easily get lost in) Maltese wilderness, most often within valleys or along coastal cliffs. Getting away from the main roads and onto country lanes you will encounter village life in Malta including farmers at work and the odd flock of sheep out for a wander.



Malta is at its prettiest in spring or autumn when the landscape is greener and the air cooler, but high summer also presents many opportunities for walking, ideally

in the shaded valleys or right next to the water where you can take a dip to cool down. Several local trekking groups (search for 'trekking Malta' on Facebook) organise weekly treks of varying degrees of difficulty but you can also walk with a friend along one of these marked routes. Always take a walking buddy and water, and watch your step near cliffs, as rocks can be crumbly or unsteady.

Swimming

Swimming and beach life are crucial parts of Maltese summers, with long days by the sea being regular weekend activities. The sea in Malta is both warm and crystal clear particularly in the north and north-west parts of Malta and most of Gozo and Comino.

For an authentic Maltese experience, pack a picnic cooler with copious amounts of Ħobż Biż-Żejt, bottles of Kinnie and Cisk (see below for more information) along with a beach umbrella and straw mats. The local tourist board has a handy list of most of the swimming spots on the Islands:

<http://www.visitmalta.com/en/beaches-and-bays>.

Cisk, Twistees and Kinnie

Staples of Maltese life and the exact food which the Maltese crave when they have been away from the Islands for a while, Cisk, Twistees and Kinnie are absolute must-tries while in Malta. Cisk is a lager beer, Twistees a cheesy snack and Kinnie a fizzy drink made out of bitter oranges. You should definitely pack these in your beach picnic cooler.



Hobż Biż-Żejt

This traditional Maltese snack is available in many shops and bars as a pre-made ftira, which is essentially flat and crusty Maltese bread filled with local tomato paste, pickled vegetables, tuna, olives and a drizzle of olive oil. For the best-tasting Hobż Biż-Żejt, however, it's best to make your own with the following ingredients:

Fresh Maltese ħobża from a local bakery (ideally while still warm)

Round, flat Maltese tomatoes

Extra virgin olive oil

Mint leaves

Sea salt

1. Cut the bread into thick slices.
2. Slice the tomatoes in two halves and press them onto the bread so that they 'paint' the bread red.
3. Drizzle with olive oil.
4. Add chopped mint or basil leaves and some sea salt.

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP: Memorise the ingredients and method and teach a friend to make Hobż Biż-Żejt.

Festas

A weekly occurrence during the Maltese summer, festas or village feasts are celebrations in honour of each village's patron saint. Traditionally built around their parish churches, each village in Malta and Gozo has a patron saint (sometimes two) who has a special feast day to celebrate the saint's virtues.

Village festas start weeks before the actual day with street and church decorations, band marches along the streets and small fireworks displays. The

main celebration is held on the eve of the feast day, usually with a religious procession and church ceremony and several band marches along the village streets, during which locals throw shredded paper and balloons as the march moves past their house. In villages where more than one band club exists, rivalry is common, with supporters of each band club enthusiastically singing praise for one club and giving offence to the other.

The night then culminates in a ground pyrotechnics display (don't get too close to the action, sparks have been known to land on the audience) and spectacular fireworks to end the night. A wide variety of fast food along with more traditional items such as Qubbajt (nougat) is usually available from food trucks.

Horse Races at Marsa

Sunday race meets are enthusiastic affairs at the Marsa Racing Club with spectators cheering for their favourite horse and making the occasional bet. Dating as far back as the times of the Romans, horse racing became popular in Malta during British rule.

After the end of the Second World War, Malta was left with no horses, no jockeys and limited resources, fuelling Maltese creativity. Pony and sulky races emerged during this period – where ponies raced with two-wheeled carts tied to them, somewhat similar to Roman chariot races, only with the driver seated rather than standing. These races, albeit with horses not ponies, happen weekly and attract a healthy local following. The race calendar is available [here](#).

Marsa Horse Racing Track, Racecourse Street, Marsa.

Bus stop: Marsa Park and Ride

Shopping areas

Sliema and Valletta in Malta and Victoria in Gozo are the Islands' main shopping areas, providing a good selection of high street brands popular in most European cities. Aside from these two thoroughfares, smaller shopping centres exist in Fgura in the south of Malta and Mosta, Birkirkara and Hamrun, further towards the island's centre.

These areas provide for good bargains but high fashion might not be their strong point. Aside from permanent shops, Malta has an active group of market hawkers who set up weekly in different villages. These open-air markets can be fun to browse and practically always yield an unexpected find. The local tourist board website includes a handy guide of shopping areas, complexes and open-air markets: <http://www.visitmalta.com/en/shopping>.

Shops in Malta are usually open from 09:00hrs to 19:00hrs, sometimes with a siesta break between 13:00 hrs and 16:00 hrs for small independent shops. Open air markets usually run from around 07:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs.



WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

The Maltese love their food and drink. You can find restaurants, snack bars, pastizzerias, bakeries, and bars serving appetisers and a growing number of good quality food trucks in literally every corner of the Islands. Pizza and pasta are staples thanks to Italian influence but good quality fish, meat and salads are easy to find if you know where to look. In general, a queue of locals usually means you can expect abundant portions of good food at affordable prices.

Drink prices in Malta are very reasonable with the local lager beer Cisk being by far the most popular summer beverage. In tune with the Mediterranean culture, bars and clubs open late into the night with 4 am closing times being the norm in places such as St. Julian's and Paceville.

The following is a short guide to where to eat and drink in Malta including some of the best spots for a good night out.

Valletta

Malta's capital Valletta was the happening place on the island for much of the island's history with many popular cinemas, theatres and bars attracting both locals and British navy sailors stationed here.

After a few years of neglect Valletta is currently experiencing a revival and now offers a great selection of quality eateries and entertainment spots that attract a growing crowd.

Strait Street is perhaps the centre of this revival with several of the post-war bars being restored in keeping with the days when British sailors and bar girls filled Strait Street. **Tico** and **Loop Bar** are two popular bars that also do food and regular gigs while Streat, found further up the road is a whisky bar serving great food at medium range prices.



For a taste of Malta and if you love tapas, charming little [Leglign](#) (which is an endearing name for drinkers in Maltese) in St Lucy Street does a fixed price (€23.95) bar dinner that includes a seemingly endless supply of Mediterranean dishes. [L-Ingliż](#) in St John Street is a tiny bar with a big character (mostly thanks to Albert the owner) that offers reasonably priced drinks, great local food and real Valletta character. You can also find free Wi-Fi and use their printer at a small charge.

Summer time music gigs usually pop up in a few of the Valletta streets but [Django](#), at the bottom of Republic Street, is probably one of the Island's best locations for live music. From jazz to indie rock and swing, the selection is varied and the atmosphere buzzing. Entrance to gigs usually costs €2 to €5. If the dancing gets your appetite going, [Gugar](#) just across the road does a selection of (very reasonably priced) vegetarian ftiras, wraps, salads and smoothies that will keep your engine running on healthy fuel. On Fridays from 20:30 hrs [Bridge Bar](#) just up from Victoria Gate, holds top-notch jazz sessions under the stars in summer. Sit on the outside steps and enjoy the beautiful music for free.

If roaming Valletta during the day, Reno in Zachary Street makes a great selection of very reasonably priced food making it very popular with Valletta workers while [Piadina](#) in St Lucy Street, just off Merchant's Street makes the most divine sandwiches and salads you can possibly imagine.

Gżira, Sliema, St. Julian's and Paceville

These adjoining towns create what is definitely Malta's most popular entertainment centre. Day or night, the area is always teeming with locals and foreigners having coffees and ice creams, sitting down for a sunny lunch or drinking and dancing until the early hours in Paceville.

Perhaps the quietest of the three, Gżira has a good few eateries that make it worth checking out. [Grassy Hopper](#) in St George's Street (Open till 16:30 hrs on weekdays and evenings on Friday and Saturday), is a small vegetarian café with a big heart. Expect a simple menu of snacks and meals (try the spicy chickpea burger), fresh juices, smoothies, healthy desserts, low prices, heaping portions and a feel-good atmosphere.

Just round the corner at 195, The Strand, [HIM](#) (Handcrafted Italian Mozzarella) does exactly what it says on the tin really well (try the burrata for a real treat). Good Thaimes on Gżira Road, is a very popular bar where you can eat good cheap Thai food, drink a wide selection of international beers and generally have good times in great company.

Owned by a New Zealand couple, [Mint](#) in Stella Maris Street, Sliema (open 08:00hrs to 16:00 hrs) probably gets the award for some of the best tasting café food on the island. Expect a mouth-watering selection of breakfasts, pies, snacks, cakes, desserts and smoothies that will keep you coming back for more.

If your sweet tooth is not yet satisfied, [Dolci Peccati](#) in 268, Tower Road Sliema lives up to its name (Sweet sins) and makes Italian ice-creams and cakes that really are impossible to resist. [Piccolo Padre](#) just across the road and a couple of metres downhill is a longstanding pizzeria where you can eat overlooking the water.

For a night out with a vintage feel, [Electro Lobster Project](#) in Balluta Square St. Julian's is a beautiful restaurant / bar / club that will transport you back to when drinking was an elegant affair. They frequently hold great jazz or indie gigs.

In St. Julian's, try [Bianco's](#) (<http://www.biancos.info>) in St George's Street for great pizza, pasta and salads and [Gochi](#) further up the same road, for freshly prepared, well-priced sushi that you can take away or eat in at their Japanese style restaurant. [Juuls](#) is a reggae bar with a great vibe, famous for their strawberry mojitos and now also serving smoothies and yummy healthy vegetarian food.

In the thick of Paceville you can find countless side-by-side bars and clubs that attract huge crowds at the weekend. Should you get hungry, [Barcelona](#) (<http://www.barcelonaloungemalta.com>) in Ball Street does good bar food and the pizza at [I Monelli](#) in Wilga Street is to die for.

Venture South

Although not as popular as Valletta or the St. Julian's areas, Malta's South offers a few good, relaxed hangouts that are worth checking out. In Marsascala [Zion Raggae Bar](#) in St Thomas Bay is a truly chilled bar with an outdoor area kitted out with reclaimed furniture. This is a great place for beer, pizza and live music. Also in Marsascala, [Bongo Nyah](#) in Triq il-Gardiel, has been churning out some top quality gigs and events while [Lemon'n Lime](#) in Marina Street is a laid back Irish Pub that also serves pub food such as fish and chips and homemade pies.

Gozo

Gleneagles bar in Mgarr, just up the hill from the ferry terminal should be your first stop when landing in Gozo, particularly if that happens to be round sunset when the bar comes alive with an unusual mix of locals, expat Gozo residents and tourists. Go upstairs and enjoy the panoramic view from the balcony.

[Murella](#) Piano Lounge in Menqa, Marsalforn is a 1920's piano bar kitted out in vintage style where you can enjoy cocktails and tunes while you pretend you are in a scene from Casablanca.

For a night on the town, [La Grotta](#) on the downhill road leading to Xlendi is Gozo's main club. It opens in summer and regularly features guest DJs who keep the crowds dancing until the early hours.

For a typically Gozitan and delicious treat, [Maxokk](#) in St James Street, Nadur make Gozitan Ftira, similar to a pizza but with a Gozitan twist. Try the Gbejna version with ricotta and local cheese.



Cheap food

Pastizzerias are perhaps the most cost effective eateries on the Maltese Islands. Springing up in literally every corner and usually sporting names such as Sphinx or Maxims (or some form of that including Mc Sims and Mc Sean) these take away shops sell the famous Maltese *pastizzi* together with *qassatat* - pastry cakes filled with spinach or ricotta, pizza slices, sausage rolls and more. Although not the healthiest option, you can eat good, hot food here for a euro or two.

Bakeries are another great option for cost effective food. Apart from extremely good Maltese bread (the ones with a wood fired oven make the best bread), many bakeries make their own pizza, snacks and sweets, all for a cheap price. You can find bakeries in most old village centres around the Maltese Islands.

Ftiras are another cost effective option usually found in most snack bars around Malta. Fresh Maltese bread with olive oil, tomato paste, tuna, salad and olives, and ftiras usually cost a couple of euro and make a filling meal.



TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN MALTA

1. Watch sunset next to the watchtower at Għajn Tuffieħa

Search 'sunset time' on Google and arrive at least 15 minutes before it on a clear day to enjoy sunset in spectacular surroundings. If arriving by bus, go to the end of the car park at the top of the stairs leading down to Għajn Tuffieħa beach and walk towards the tower at the edge of the cliff (please keep away from the edge, particularly on windy days as nasty accidents have been known to occur). Sit by the tower and bask in the last rays of sunlight as the big ball of fire sinks into the water and marks the end of the day.

2. Rock climbing

Do it safely and in the company of experienced climbers but do try rock climbing while you are on the Islands. Malta and Gozo's many cliffs and valleys provide countless opportunities for sport climbing and deep water soloing, usually in the most remote and most scenic spots around. Join [Malta Climbing Club](#) for instruction, club meets and friendly local climbers.

3. Take a dgħajsa across Grand Harbour

Cross over from Valletta to the Three Cities of Birgu (Vittoriosa), Bormla (Cospicua) and L-Isla (Senglea) the quick and scenic way by taking a boat across the Grand Harbour. Traditional dgħajjes (small wooden boats) are available from next to the Customs House at the bottom of Valletta and will take you to your preferred location across the harbour for €2 per passenger from Valletta and €3 per passenger from Birgu.



You can also ask the boatman for a short harbour tour for €5 per passenger in groups of 6 (and tell the boatman you are students). Boats are available 09:00 hrs to 17:00 hrs. Call Johnnie on +356 7931 0024 the day before to book harbour tours. For longer operating hours and cheaper crossings on less traditional boats, a regular ferry operates from the same spot to locations across the harbour. See <http://www.vallettaferryservices.com/schedule.html>.

4. Swim at Peter's Pool

One of the most iconic local swimming spots, this natural pool is great for diving and snorkelling away from the summer crowds. Soft yellow limestone provides a rounded landscape and plentiful opportunities to sunbathe and watch the adventurous ones dive off the rocks. Watch out for local, perma-tanned 'Pele' performing show dives and find his yearly etchings in the limestone.

Take food, drink and shade, as no beach facilities are available. Comfortable shoes are recommended, as the beach is a 30 min walk from Marsaxlokk. Not recommended for inexperienced swimmers.

5. Eat and drink at a local band club

Present in most village centres, band clubs are popular drinking and meeting spots for locals, and are the hub for village festas, showcasing an interesting slice of Malta's lifestyle. Usually located close to the parish church, band clubs sell drinks at very reasonable prices and usually offer pizza, burgers, chips and more traditional Maltese dishes such as ftira and bebbux (snails). Quite a few band clubs offer free 'appetisers' such as Ħobż Biż-Żejt, nuts, dips and other nibbles when ordering drinks.

6. Watersports

Don't leave without trying at least one form of water sports, be it parasailing, banana boat rides, windsurfing or kayaking at one of the Islands' beaches. Always keep safety in mind by wearing a life jacket, taking a buddy on kayaking trips, making your route known to someone on land and taking enough food and water for the duration. Check weather forecasts and do not venture out in rough seas or high winds.

7. Snorkeling and Scuba Diving

Maltese waters are amongst the best suited for scuba diving thanks to their excellent clarity and plentiful world-class dive sites. Many diving schools offer try dives with instructors for beginners or gear rentals for qualified divers.

Should scuba diving sound like too much hassle, snorkelling can be a simpler way to get a glimpse into the sea world. Most local shops in seaside towns as well as beach stalls will sell masks and snorkels.

8. Day trip to Comino

Although very popular with tourists in high season, a trip to Comino is definitely recommended. Swim in the impossibly blue water above white sands and enjoy fabulous snorkelling around this tiny island. Virtually uninhabited, the island provides great grounds for random rambles that end in sheltered rocky coves and beaches along the coast. There is also a campsite next to Santa Marija Bay should you wish to extend your time in Maltese wilderness.



Boats to Comino leave Ċirkewwa, Malta at regular intervals. Weekdays tend to be less busy than weekends. More information [here](#).

9. Try rabbit stew at Il-Barri, Mġarr

Rabbit is a traditional Maltese dish consumed regularly by the local population. Try this typical dish at [Il-Barri](#) in Mġarr, a popular restaurant in this farming village famous for its rabbit meals or fenkata. A Maltese fenkata usually starts off with pasta with rabbit sauce, moves on to fried rabbit and chips and ends with nuts and ħelwa, a sugary sweet of Turkish origin.

10. Take the ferry to Gozo

A ferry ride to Gozo is an essential part of any Malta visit combining sea faring with stunning views of all three of the main Maltese Islands. Leaving Ċirkewwa in Malta at intervals of around 45 minutes (less frequent at night), you can make the crossing on foot or take your bike or car on board. Passenger fare is €4.65 for a return ticket. Exploring Gozo is strongly recommended.

View the [Gozo Ferry Schedule](#)





SURVIVAL GUIDE

Getting To Malta

Malta has excellent flight links with European capitals and is a two or three hour flight from most European airports. Malta's national airline, Air Malta, flies to many destinations across Europe and beyond but many other airlines such as Emirates and British Airways link the Islands with further afield. Low cost airlines such as Ryanair, EasyJet, Vueling and Wizzair also fly to Malta at bargain prices. There is just one airport located in Luqa. The airport is accessible from everywhere within an hour or less.

A **daily ferry** links Malta with the south of Sicily in less than two hours.

Getting Around Malta

Public transport in Malta runs mostly to and from the main Valletta terminus, which provides links to most locations on the Island. There is one scheduled bus company that serves both Malta and Gozo on specific routes. You can research and plan your journey and download timetables here:

<http://www.publictransport.com.mt>.

One day tickets cost €1.50 while a 7 day ticket costs €6.50. Saver cards are available for stays of 30-days or longer.

The following is a quick bus guide to the most popular places of interest in both Malta and Gozo:

<http://www.publictransport.com.mt/places-of-interests?l=1>

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL TIP: Listen to the **BBC World Service** whilst on the bus. Your vocabulary and pronunciation will improve rapidly.

White taxis tend to be on the expensive side in Malta and only available for hailing in a very limited number of destinations, black cabs are a little more affordable and can be called to any location in Malta. Try **ecabs**.

Useful & Fun Info about Malta

- Malta is a very safe country but common sense should be applied at all times nonetheless. Avoid walking alone at night in quiet areas, especially when there may be people around who have been drinking alcohol.
- In case of any emergency please call the emergency number 112 for police, ambulance or fire department assistance.
- Local polyclinics usually found in each town or area will attend to minor injuries while the main hospital Mater Dei's emergency department will take care of more serious ailments and injuries.
- Shoulders and knees should be covered when visiting churches. Anything goes in terms of clothing when out and about but very revealing clothes do attract a fair amount of unwarranted attention.
- Cars in Malta drive on the left so please remember to look right first when crossing the road.
- Sockets take three-pin plugs in Malta so bring an adapter.
- Vodafone, Go and Melita are the three local mobile telephony providers. You can buy SIM cards and top up cards at most local stationeries or top up online.
- You should ideally carry some kind of identification with you at all times. Student cards will ensure you will get discounted rates at most museums and some theatres.
- Many localities have public libraries where you can find good selections of books in English. The largest is the one in Floriana. You can find a full list of libraries and their addresses and opening hours here:

<http://education.gov.mt/en/education/malta-libraries/Pages/Public%20Libraries/Opening-Hours.aspx>

BEGINNER LEVEL TIP: The children's section is a great place to look for fun books in English that you can understand and enjoy.

Useful Links

- Bus routes, information and journey planner: <http://www.publictransport.com.mt>
- Attractions and itineraries: <http://www.visitmalta.com>
- Full list of Maltese Festas for 2015: http://thechurchinmalta.org/files/page/EXTERNAL_FEASTS_IN_MALTA_GOZO_DURING_2015.142062496247.pdf
- Annual festivals and traditions: <http://www.visitmalta.com/en/annual-festivals>
- Malta's local newspaper online: <http://www.timesofmalta.com>
- Malta's alternative scene: <http://tal-ostja.com>
- Taxi companies: <http://ecabs.com.mt> , <http://www.maltataxionline.com>
- White taxi fares: <http://gettinghere.maltairport.com/en/white-taxi.htm>
- Museums and historical attractions: <http://heritagemalta.org>
- Which beach? A website that will recommend a beach depending on wind direction: <http://www.whichbeach.com.mt>
- Weather forecast: <http://maltairport.com/weather>
- Buying, selling, in need of a service?: <http://www.maltapark.com>
- Experiences, classes, gifts in Malta: <http://www.greatmalta.com> , <http://www.somethingdifferent.com.mt>
- Events in Malta: <http://www.whatson.com.mt/>
- Event and museum tickets online: <https://www.showshappening.com> , <http://www.ticketline.com.mt> , <https://maltaticket.com>
- Useful mobile applications: <http://www.visitmalta.com/en/mobile-apps>



Final Tips

Don't Leave Malta Without:

1. Tasting pastizzi
2. Experiencing a festa
3. Swimming in the sea
4. Trying hot Maltese bread with butter or olive oil, salt and pepper
5. Taking a boat ride (ferries are the easiest and cheapest)
6. Drinking tea in a glass at a village bar
7. Walking through Valletta at night

