

Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodation	156
Activities	158
Business Hours	159
Children	160
Climate Chart	160
Customs	161
Dangers & Annoyances	161
Discount Cards	161
Embassies & Consulates	161
Festivals & Events	162
Food	163
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	163
Health	163
Holidays	164
Insurance	164
Internet Access	165
Legal Matters	165
Maps	165
Money	165
Photography & Video	166
Post	166
Shopping	167
Solo Travellers	167
Telephone	167
Time	168
Toilets	168
Tourist Information	168
Travellers with Disabilities	168
Visas	168
Women Travellers	169

ACCOMMODATION

There is a wide range of accommodation available in the Maltese Islands, although the majority is in fairly uniform resort hotels and apartments. The authorities are attempting to drive Malta's tourist industry upmarket, and almost all the new hotels and developments are at the luxury end of the spectrum (and a number of budget guesthouses have closed in recent times). However, there are still plenty of good budget options and accommodation bargains in the low season (from November to March, excluding the Christmas and New Year period).

Camping

There is only one camping ground in Malta, on the Marfa Peninsula in northwest Malta (see p109), but its shadeless grounds and remote location render it unappealing.

Guesthouses

Guesthouses in Malta are usually small (six to 10 rooms), simple, family-run places and are often good value at around €15 to €20 per person (and there is often no single supplement). Most rooms will have a washbasin, but showers and toilets are mostly shared. A simple breakfast is normally included in the price. Facilities will usually not include air-con or a swimming pool, but there are a few exceptions to this rule. Bear in mind that some guesthouses in resort areas close in the low season (but all guesthouses in Valletta are open year-round).

Hostels

The **National Student Travel Service** (NSTS; Map pp56-7; ☎ 2558 8000; www.nsts.org; 220 Triq San Pawl, Valletta) is an associate member of Hostelling International (HI), and operates the very good Hibernia Residence & Hostel, in Sliema (Malta's only true hostel, p88). It has arrangements with a few guesthouses scattered throughout the country to provide cheap accommodation to hostellers.

Hotels

Hotels in Malta range from crumbling but character-filled old townhouses in Valletta, to modern gilt-and-chrome palaces of five-star luxury overlooking a private marina. The majority (especially somewhere like Bugibba) are bland, faceless tourist hotels, block-booked by package tour companies in

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PRACTICALITIES

- English-language daily newspapers include the *Times* (online at www.timesofmalta.com) and the *Independent* (www.independent.com.mt). The former has a good mix of local, European and world news, the latter has good coverage of domestic social issues. *Malta Today* (www.maltatoday.com.mt) is published twice weekly (on Wednesday and Sunday); the Sunday edition includes a useful supplement with listings of TV, cinema and events for the coming week.
- There are more than 20 local radio stations broadcasting mostly in Malti but occasionally in English. There is one state-run TV channel (TVM) and a couple of small commercial channels broadcasting in Malti. Most of the main Italian TV stations can be received in Malta. Satellite and cable TV are widely available in hotels and bars, providing a wide range of stations from Europe and the US.
- Malta, like most of Europe and the UK, uses the PAL video system.
- Malta's electricity supply is 240V/50Hz and the plugs have three flat pins as in the UK. Continental European appliances (plugs with two round pins) will need an adaptor (many accommodation providers supply these).
- Like the rest of Europe, Malta uses the metric system. The British legacy persists in the use of pint glasses in some pubs.

summer, and either closed or eerily quiet in winter. However, there are a few places that have real character, like the Castille Hotel (p67) in Valletta, housed in an old mansion; the Xara Palace (p116) in Mdina; and the Kempinski Hotel San Lawrenz (p146) or Hotel Ta'Čenc' (p144) on Gozo, but the latter three hotels are among the most expensive in the islands.

There are plenty of glitzy new five-star hotels on Malta, but also a disturbing number of neglected three-star places crying out for renovations. Most of the large four- and five-star places offer the kind of holiday where you may not need to leave the hotel's grounds – they're fully equipped with cafes, bars and restaurants (most hotels include breakfast in their rates, and some offer half-board and full-board arrangements). At these places you'll usually find indoor and outdoor pools, a gym and/or sporting facilities, plus a program of children's activities; and quite possibly a health spa, a dive company, and perhaps a beachside lido offering pool and water sports (water-skiing, boat trips, canoe or boat hire, ringo rides etc).

Typical high-season hotel rates are €30 to €65 per person, but they rise to as high as €120 for the four- and five-star places. Prices may well halve in the low season. You should also be aware that many hotels

and guesthouses quote their prices per person, not per room.

Loads of internet sites offer information on hotels and other accommodation options in Malta, including:

Holiday Malta (www.holiday-malta.com)

Malta Hotel (www.malтахotel.net)

Malta Hotels (www.malta-hotels.com)

Visit Malta (www.visitmalta.com/booking-page)

Rental Accommodation

There are hundreds of self-catering apartments with little to choose between them. Most have a private bathroom, a balcony and a kitchen area with fridge, sink and two-ring electric cooker. Though lacking a little in charm, they are often very good value at under €30 per person, even in high season.

If you're looking for something with a little local colour, get in touch with a tour operator or agency that specialises in Gozo farmhouses (see the boxed text, p140).

High & Low Seasons

The cost of accommodation in Malta can vary considerably with the time of year, and low-season rates are often a bargain. Low season is almost always November to March. High season generally refers to the period April to October, but some accommodation providers have a 'shoulder'