

welcome to **Malta & Gozo**



Prehistoric & Futuristic

Malta and Gozo are home to some of the world's most impressive prehistoric sites, including gigantic temples set atop sea cliffs, and the Hal Saffieni Hypogeum – the 5000-year-old underground necropolis carved perfectly from the living rock. A visit to any of them will stay with you long after you've left the island.

It's also remarkable to visit somewhere where the history of savage warfare – all due to Malta's geographical significance – is so enduringly evident. The islands have an embattled feel, even in today's peaceful times, with their walled cities, great fortresses, fortifications running over remote hills and myriad underground tunnels

that became homes away from home during WWII bombardment.

Though building upon an already overcrowded landscape is a favoured activity of the Maltese, many parts of the island still manage to retain a sense of timelessness. This back-in-time atmosphere is even more pronounced on Gozo, where horses and carts are sometimes seen on country lanes, and quiet villages combine Italianate architecture with incongruous English red post boxes and blue police lamps. Lately, however, Malta's beautiful 17th-century capital, Valletta, has received some substantial 21st-century sparkle. The city has a new Renzo Piano-designed gateway, parliament building and open-air auditorium built on the elegiac ruins of the city's opera house.



OCEAN/CORBIS ©

The Maltese Islands are like nowhere else. Here you'll find great prehistoric temples, fossil-studded cliffs, glittering hidden coves, thrilling diving opportunities and a history of remarkable intensity.

(left) Mgarr harbour (p114), Gozo
(below) Tranquil street, Mdina (p85)



TIME WHITE/GETTY IMAGES ©

The Deep Blue Sea

You're never far from the Mediterranean here; in Gozo you can see the sea from almost everywhere. The islands' beaches are small and perfectly formed; there are also some breathtakingly beautiful coves to swim in. This is also one of the world's finest places to go diving, with sites ranging from sunken WWII bombers to dramatic undersea caves. To cap it all, much of what you'll eat will come from the sea's bounty.

A Mediterranean Cocktail

People here are warm and welcoming, but also have a certain gentle reserve. It's the kind of place where if you ask for direc-

tions you'll get a cheerful reply and maybe even be guided part of your way for good measure.

The country is staunchly Roman Catholic, with mighty churches towering over diminutive villages. But there's also the beguiling mix of cultures that's stewed over generations. The Malti language sounds Arabic, but is speckled with Italian, French and English words, and local food packs in Sicilian and Middle Eastern flavours, while making use of local ingredients like rabbit and honey. Even the local fishing boats resonate with history, their prows painted with eyes as their Phoenician predecessors' were several millennia ago.