



Valletta

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Why Go?

Valletta is Malta's Lilliputian capital, measuring 600m by 1000m. When it was built by the Knights of St John in the 16th and 17th centuries, its founder decreed that it should be 'a city built by gentlemen for gentlemen', and it retains much of this elegance. Despite its small size, there's a mass of things to see here: when Unesco named Valletta a World Heritage Site, it described it as 'one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world'.

Now is the time to visit: Valletta's lately undergone more changes than it has for centuries, with the brand-new Renzo Piano-designed main gate and parliament building, as well as the renovation of the bombed-out Opera House. There are plenty of bars and restaurants here too; just don't expect Valletta to be buzzing all night – its tranquility is a large part of its charm.

When to Go

April, May, June, September and October are the balmiest months, with lower prices, sunshine and fewer crowds. In April there's the Malta Firework Festival, and in June Ghanafest celebrates traditional music. However, summer is hot and lively with the Malta Arts and Jazz festivals in July. Look out also for the Notte Bianca in September, when Valletta stays up unusually late.



Valletta Highlights

- 1 Exploring the nooks and crannies of **Valletta** (p38)
- 2 Checking out the view that puts the grand in Grand Harbour, from the **Upper Barrakka Gardens & the Saluting Battery** (p44)
- 3 Discovering the glories of **St John's Co-Cathedral** (p38)
- 4 Admiring the delicate modelling of the 'fat ladies' at the **National Museum of Archaeology** (p43)
- 5 Asking the unanswerable questions (who? why? how?) at the remarkable **Hal Saflieni Hypogeum** (p57) – book ahead!
- 6 Exploring Vittoriosa's charming **Il Collachio** (p56) district, followed by a cruise of the **Grand Harbour** (p53)