

Understand Malta & Gozo

MALTA & GOZO TODAY 148

Largely unscathed by the recent European economic turmoil, Malta's future looks bright.

HISTORY 150

For millennia, Malta and Gozo have been key players in the tumultuous history of the Mediterranean.

THE MALTESE WAY OF LIFE 161

What's it like to live in one of the world's smallest countries? What makes the Maltese tick?

5000 YEARS OF ARCHITECTURE 165

From prehistoric structures seemingly built by giants, to Valletta's Renzo Piano-designed City Gate and Parliament Building.

Malta & Gozo Today

Malta is a microcosm of the Mediterranean, with a powerful enough character to measure up to any larger nation. The country emerged relatively unscathed from the global financial crisis and has enjoyed steady growth. Compared to many of its neighbours, Malta appears to be positively basking in a sense of well-being, enhanced by Valletta being named European Capital of Culture for 2018.

Best on Film

Malta Story (1953) WWII epic about the embattled island starring Sir Alec Guinness.

Simshar (2014) Critically acclaimed Maltese movie about migrants and a Maltese family shipwreck.

By the Sea (2015) Angelina Jolie writes and directs, and stars alongside Brad Pitt. Shot on Gozo.

Best in Print

The Great Siege: Malta 1565 (Ernie Bradford) Rip-roaring read about the epic battle between the Ottoman Turks and the Knights of Malta.

Fortress Malta: An Island Under Siege 1940–1943 (James Holland) Evocative account of Malta's fascinating and essential role in WWII.

Earthly Powers (Anthony Burgess) Set in a fictionalised Malta and written while the author lived here in the 1960s.

Politics & the Economy

The smallest state in the EU has largely ridden out the European storm: EU membership led to a flood of foreign investment, and strict banking regulations prevented the kind of financial meltdown seen elsewhere. Locals enjoy a good standard of living, with low inflation and relatively low unemployment. Government debt is also low.

Dependent on foreign trade, manufacturing and tourism, the Maltese economy could not entirely escape being hurt by the global economic situation, but its recession was short and shallow. A weakened euro and the arrival of budget carriers on Malta's deregulated airline scene helped to keep the tourist industry afloat, as has Valletta's status as European Capital of Culture in 2018, which has led to many hotel and restaurant openings and museum renovations. Construction and speculative property development remain strong areas, digital gaming is one of Malta's most dynamic sectors, and tax incentives have led numerous companies to base their operations here.

Since Maltese independence in 1964, the political scene has been dominated by two main parties: the Christian democratic Nationalist Party (Partit Nazzjonalista) and the social democratic Labour Party (Partit Laburista). After 15 years in opposition, the Labour Party, headed by former journalist Joseph Muscat, won a decisive victory in 2013. Labour promised to address high energy prices and tackle corruption, though opinions are divided on how successful they have been so far.

Migration

There are around 24,000 overseas-born residents in Malta; the largest group is British, followed by Libyans, Italians, Somalis and Russians. Before Malta joined the EU, in 2004, immigration was very low, but since then