



# Malta

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## Best Places to Stay

- » Asti Guesthouse (p594)
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## Best Places to Eat

- » Trabuxu Bistro (p594)
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- » Mahzen XII (p599)

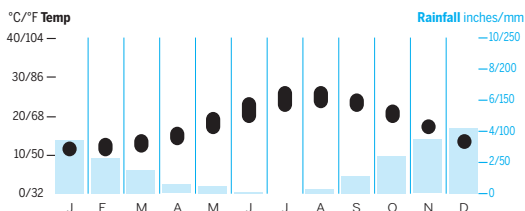
## Why Go?

Despite being made up of three tiny islands on the southern edge of Europe, Malta groans under the weight of its rich history and fascinating cultural influences. As a melting pot of Mediterranean culture, Malta merits far deeper exploration than is often given to it by the package crowds whose first priority is hitting the beach.

From ancient stone temples and historic Arabic connections (listen carefully to the local language) to Sicilian-inspired cuisine and an oddly 1950s British atmosphere, Malta will almost certainly surprise you. Valletta and the Three Cities are famed for their grand churches, elegant palaces and honey-coloured limestone fortifications, while nearby Sliema and St Julian are packed with restaurants and bars. And don't forget little Gozo – a pretty, rural island where the pace of life is that much slower – the perfect chill-out spot.

## When to Go

### Valletta



**February–March** Pleasant temperatures, spring flowers and the festivities of Carnival Week.

**September–October** Fewer crowds, perfect for sunbathing, sea warm and clear for diving.

**December** Low accommodation prices, village churches resplendent with fairy lights.

## AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** euro (€)
- » **Languages** Malti, English
- » **Money** ATMs wide-spread; credit cards widely accepted
- » **Visas** Schengen rules apply

## Fast Facts

- » **Area** 316 sq km
- » **Capital** Valletta
- » **Country code** 356
- » **Emergency** 112

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	€0.74
Canada	C\$1	€0.74
euro	€1	€1
Japan	¥100	€0.87
New Zealand	NZ\$1	€0.56
UK	UK£1	€1.16
USA	US\$1	€0.67

## Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** €25 per person
- » **Two-course evening meal** €20
- » **Museum entrance** €5
- » **Beer** €2
- » **Bus ticket** €0.60

## Resources

- » **About Malta** ([www.aboutmalta.com](http://www.aboutmalta.com))
- » **Gozo** ([www.gozo.com](http://www.gozo.com))
- » **Malta Tourism Authority** ([www.visitmalta.com](http://www.visitmalta.com))
- » **StarWeb Malta** ([www.starwebmalta.com](http://www.starwebmalta.com))

## Connections

Malta is well connected to both Sicily and mainland Italy by sea. Catamarans to Pozzallo and Catania in Sicily are the fastest and most frequent connection, while other services link Malta to Palermo, Genoa and Civitavecchia. Ferries operate year-round.

There are frequent flights between Malta and various European destinations, including Sardinia, Larnaca (Cyprus), Istanbul, Athens, Dubrovnik and many cities in Italy, France and Spain.

## ITINERARIES

### Three Days

Start things off in Valletta to get an overview of the country – wander the streets and soak up some of the history. On your second day, head to the Hypogeum (you'll need to have booked in advance) before enjoying a meal of seafood in Marsaxlokk and the nightlife in Paceville. On the third day visit Mdina and Rabat, then escape to a beach in the northwest.

### One Week

As above, then on day four, head for gorgeous Gozo. From here you can take a day trip to Comino, discover your own beaches and enjoy glorious food in Malta's least discovered corner.

## Essential Food & Drink

- » **Ġbejniet** You'll either love or hate this small, hard, white cheese traditionally made from unpasteurised sheep's or goat's milk. It is dried in baskets and often steeped in olive oil seasoned with salt and crushed black peppercorns.
- » **Pastizza** (plural *pastizzi*) This traditional Maltese snack is a small parcel of flaky pastry filled with either ricotta cheese or mushy peas. They're available in most bars or from a pastizzerija (usually a hole-in-the-wall takeaway or kiosk).
- » **Ftira** Bread baked in a flat disc and traditionally stuffed with a mixture of tomatoes, olives, capers and anchovies.
- » **Braġioli** These 'beef olives' are prepared by wrapping a thin slice of beef around a stuffing of breadcrumbs, chopped bacon, hard-boiled egg and parsley, then braising them in a red wine sauce.
- » **Fenek** (rabbit) The favourite Maltese dish, whether fried in olive oil, roasted, stewed, served with spaghetti or baked in a pie (*fenek bit-tewm u l-inbid* is rabbit cooked in garlic and wine, *fenek moqli* is fried rabbit, *stuffat tal-fenek* is stewed rabbit).
- » **Kinnie** You'll see its advertising signs are all over the place in Malta – the brand name of a local soft drink, flavoured with bitter oranges and aromatic herbs.