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About Malta

The Maltese archipelago lies practically at the centre of the Mediterranean, 93 km south of Sicily and 288 km north of Africa. The archipelago consists of three islands: Malta, Gozo (Għawdex in Maltese) and Comino (Kemmuna) with a total population of over 400,000 inhabitants occupying an area of 316 square kilometers.

Malta is the largest island, with its capital city Valletta being the cultural hub of the islands. Gozo is the second largest island and is more laid back and rural, characterised by fishing, tourism, crafts and agriculture. Comino, the smallest of the trio, is largely uninhabited.

The origin of the term Malta is uncertain, however the most common etymology is that the word Malta derives from the Greek word, meli, "honey". The ancient Greeks in fact called the island Melitē, meaning "honey-sweet". The Romans went on to call the island Melita. It was the Sicilians who later on baptised the island as Malta.

With sunny weather almost all year round, attractive beaches, a thriving nightlife and an intriguing history which spans over 7,000 years, Malta is not simply an idyllic tourist location but a much sought-after and peaceful island where one can relocate to and take up residency.

History

For such a small island, Malta is enriched with great historical events which have made Malta what it is today.

The Maltese Islands went through the Neolithic period, the remains of which are the mysterious temples dedicated to the goddess of fertility. Later on, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Romans and the Byzantines, all left their traces on the Islands. The Arabs conquered the islands and left an important mark on the language of the Maltese, which is mostly of Semitic origin.

Since Malta was an extension of Sicily, the Normans, the Aragonese and other conquerors who ruled over Sicily also governed the Maltese Islands. The Knights then took Malta through a new golden age, making it a key player in the cultural scene by injected it with the presence of artists such as Caravaggio and Mattia Preti who were commissioned by the Knights to embellish churches, palaces and auberges.

In 1798, it was France's turn to take over Malta from the Knights though its presence was short lived, as soon after the English blockaded the islands in 1800. British rule in Malta lasted until 1964 when Malta became independent. The Maltese adapted the British system of administration, education and legislation. Modern Malta became a Republic in 1974 and joined the European Union in May 2004.

Climate

As most of the other Mediterranean countries, Malta's climate is strongly influenced by the sea. The Maltese Islands have a pleasantly sunny climate with a daily average of around 12 hours sunshine in summer going down to 5 to 6 hours in mid-winter. Summers are hot, dry and very sunny. Cool sea breezes mitigate summery days in Malta, whilst the occasional Scirocco wind from Africa brings unseasonally high temperatures and humidity in spring and autumn. Winters are mild, with the occasional short cold spells brought about by the north and north-easterly winds from central Europe. The rainy season is between September and April, with very little rain during the summer months. There is no snow, frost or fog in Malta.

Language

Maltese, a language of Semitic origin written in the Latin script, is the national language of Malta. Over the centuries, it has incorporated many words derived from English, Italian and French.

Through the ages, many foreign words, particularly English and Italian, have become part of the language. English, which is also an official language, is widely and fluently spoken and is the language of international business.

Italian is also widely spoken, and the Maltese boast fluency as well in other languages such as French, German, Spanish and Arabic. With the accession of Malta in the European Union, Maltese has become one of the official languages of the EU.

Population

Malta is the most densely populated country in the EU and one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Be it for a tourist visiting for just a couple of days or for a foreigner who has taken up residency in Malta, the perception is that the interesting mix of customs and traditions that characterise Malta, make the Maltese people truly unique.

Driving

In Malta and Gozo, driving is on the left. Speed limits vary between 80 km/h on the open road and 50 km/h in built-up areas.

If one intends to rent a car or drive in Malta, it is advisable to take out comprehensive insurance. National or international driving licences are accepted.

Schooling

Malta has a free state school system with optional private education at very reasonable school fees. With a curriculum which is very similar to the British system, lessons in private schools are taught in English.

Standards of education are high with English being the language of instruction for most subjects at all levels of the education system.

Religion

The great majority of Maltese profess the Roman Catholic faith. However, other religious denominations are widely accepted and also have their place of worship in Malta.

Church services are mostly conducted in Maltese but services in other languages, particularly English, Italian, French, German and Greek are also held.

Currency

After its accession to the European Union, Malta adopted the Euro as its currency on the 1st of January 2008.

Entertainment

Being an island surrounded by crystal clear waters, diving and yachting are two of the major entertainment activities that come to mind. But there is much more to Malta than that: with its vast calendar of theatre events and concerts, mostly held outdoors or in historic venues, Malta has a lot to offer its visitors, no matter their age or tastes.

Dining al fresco in the summer months is a delight for anyone visiting our lovely island. One is spoilt for choice: from romantic and quiet palazzo's to harbour restaurants bursting with life, one can indulge in a variety of cuisines offered by professional chefs all over the island.

Why Malta?

- A strong commitment to attracting foreign investment;
- A vast experience in foreign direct investment;
- High levels of quality productivity;
- Highly skilled, flexible and multilingual workforce;
- Availability of industrial premises at competitive costs;
- Fiscal and financial incentive packages;
- Excellent educational facilities;
- English and Italian are widely spoken with a good understanding of French, German, Arabic and other languages;
- High professionalism in business support services;
- Economic, political and social stability; and
- A healthy and safe environment.

