



MALTA

GOZO COMINO



www.visitmalta.com

The Maltese islands truly Mediterranean

Blessed with a mild climate and set in crystal waters, Malta and its sister islands of Gozo and Comino offer you a memorable experience, where moments of complete relaxation can be combined with the exploration of the islands' many cultural, artistic and natural treasures.

Long considered to be a microcosm of the Mediterranean and a favourite with travellers who seek an authentic island experience, our islands offer an impressive range of historical and cultural sites, together with a wide spectrum of activities, making Malta a truly unique year-round holiday destination.

Malta has managed to strike the right balance between traditional hospitality and a cosmopolitan spirit born of our millennial history of welcoming people from all around the region and beyond. Moreover, Malta has developed into a highly sought-after location for international movie productions, while Valletta's majestic Grand Harbour welcomes cruise liner passengers from all over the world.

The Maltese islands are just a few hours away from major European airports, and with the many scheduled, low-cost and charter flights linking Malta to a host of European and other Mediterranean countries, not to mention the excellent sea connections to Europe, getting here could not be easier!



Between the sun ➤ and the sea

The sun and the sea are the essence of the Maltese islands. The contrast between the glow of the sun on the islands' rugged rock faces and the stunning deep blue of the surrounding sea offers a breath-taking spectacle to the first-time visitor.

The sun permeates the streets and fields of our islands. In winter, it provides relief to the thousands of visitors who bask in its warmth and soak up its energy. In summer, it provides the best excuse for taking it easy and heading for the beach.

The sea is a vital source of life for Malta. The pristine, azure depths surrounding the islands' coastline teem with all kinds of fish and other marine life. The sea is also a playground for visitors and locals alike, with water-sports, especially snorkelling and diving, being popular activities. The temperate nature of the sea surrounding these islands makes it ideal for swimming practically all year round.

The waters surrounding the archipelago are a spectacle of sailing boats and other seacraft which take to the sea to explore the many inlets and coves that dot the shoreline.

Every year, Valletta's Grand Harbour plays host to numerous luxury cruise liners, with an increasing number of passengers opting to start off or end their cruise vacation with a holiday in Malta, taking advantage of the many 'cruise and stay' packages on offer.



Meet the Maltese

You will find that the people of our islands are a product of the Mediterranean's history and geography. We are a multi-lingual nation. Our mother tongue is Maltese, a language of Semitic origin with a heavy Latin influence. English is our second official language and due to the islands' proximity to Sicily, Italian is also widely spoken, while a growing number of Maltese speak French, German and an increasing number of other languages.

The Maltese are among the warmest people you will find in the Mediterranean. We are renowned for our open, easy friendliness to visitors and will go out of our way to make you feel at home. It is in fact common for visitors to strike up long lasting relationships with their Maltese hosts, which then becomes the reason for them to return again and again.

With our desire to enjoy life, especially when participating in local feasts celebrating our villages' patron saints, we will be more than happy to have you share in our fun and joy.

Hospitality has long been a hallmark of the Maltese character, as documented in the Acts of the Apostles' description of St Paul's shipwreck off Malta in 60 AD. What visitors find especially alluring is the effortless blend of the traditional and the cosmopolitan, something which renders us so open to visitors while at the same time remaining true to our roots.





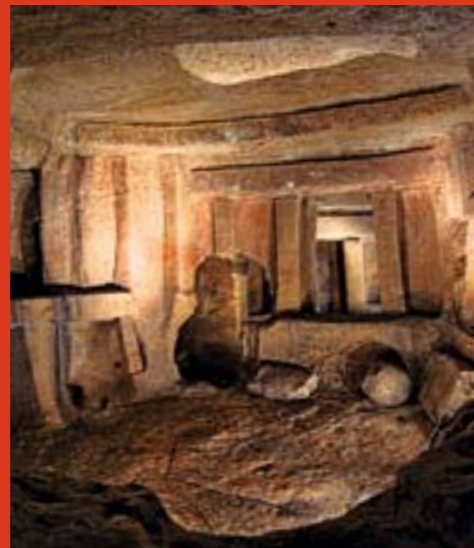
The ideal location for a well-deserved break

With the toils of everyday life left behind, all you will be looking forward to here will be days of utter relaxation, moving to the rhythm of the Mediterranean tempo. The islands of Malta and Gozo are the perfect location for just idling away the time in the sun, be it summer or winter.

Wherever you decide to go, the atmosphere across the Maltese islands is one of carefree relaxation. If what you are looking for is the perfect hideaway, a traditional rustic home of weathered limestone, clad in vibrant bougainvillea, would provide the ideal retreat. If what you're after is a room with a view, hotels along the islands' fashionable seafronts and beach resorts will allow you to sip your sundowners on a balcony overlooking the sea. Should you desire some pampering, you can opt for one of the many luxury hotels offering wellness, health and spa facilities where you can recharge your batteries and rediscover yourself.



7,000 years of civilisation



- 5000 BC** First settlers arrive in Malta from Sicily
- 3600–2500 BC** Construction of megalithic temples
- 800–480 BC** Phoenician rule
- 218 BC** Roman rule begins during Second Punic War
- 60 AD** St Paul the Apostle shipwrecked off Malta
- 395–870** Byzantine rule
- 870–1090** Arab rule
- 1090–1194** Norman rule
- 1194–1530** Swabian, Angevin and Aragonese rule
- 1530** Islands ceded to Knights of St John

- 1565** The Great Siege. Ottomans besiege Malta with an overwhelming force but are defeated by a small army of Knights and Maltese
- 1566** Founding of Valletta, the new capital city, named after Grand Master La Valette, hero of the Great Siege
- 1798** French army under Napoleon Bonaparte invades the islands on the way to Egypt. Knights of St John expelled after 268 years in Malta
- 1800** Maltese revolt against the French who are expelled, heralding the start of British rule
- 1964** Malta granted independence, becoming a sovereign nation within the British Commonwealth
- 1974** Malta becomes a Republic
- 2004** Malta becomes a member of the European Union



A treasure trove of heritage and culture

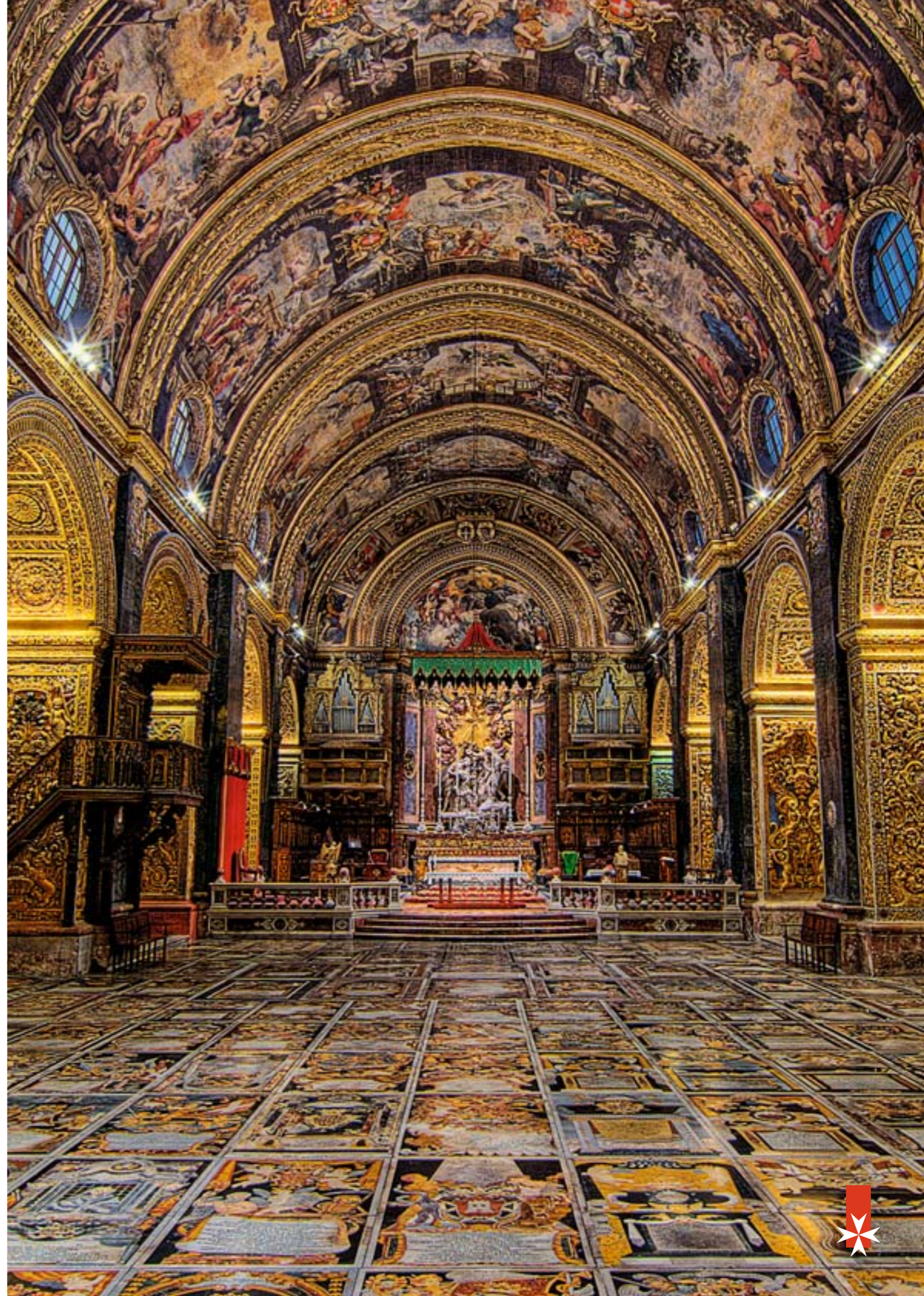
The islands' architectural heritage, spanning seven millennia, will present an impressive backdrop to all your activities. Malta and its sister islands of Gozo and Comino offer far more than the traditional Mediterranean sun and sea. They present a veritable treasure trove of heritage and culture, both ancient and modern – a living testimony to 7,000 years of civilization.

Having three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and more monuments per square kilometre than any other country, our islands have an astonishing concentration of unique cultural and historical attractions. A stroll through our towns and villages is bound to give you that particular 'lost in time' feeling.



The construction of the islands' megalithic temples is the source of an age-old enigma. Who were our ancestors that built these great constructions, and why? What happened to the intelligent civilisation that created these amazing temples? Through the passage of time, Malta and Gozo have attracted the attention of the great powers that dominated the period. To varying extents all of them, from the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Castillians, to the Knights of St John, the French and the British, have all left traces of their influence and have woven a rich tapestry of cultures for you to discover.

Walking through the grid-lined streets of Malta's baroque capital, Valletta, described by Sir Walter Scott as "that splendid town, quite like a dream", and admiring its churches, squares and palazzos, or taking a late-night stroll through the winding streets of the silent, walled medieval city of Mdina, will doubtless add a special feel to this memorable visit.



A journey of discovery

Once here you will find yourself in an oasis of tranquility. Nevertheless, it will be difficult to resist the temptation to explore the spectacular seascape of our islands, ranging from quiet coves and alluring sandy beaches to rugged coastline and towering cliffs. Inlets of shimmering sand with evocative names such as Golden Bay, Paradise Bay and Ramla l-Hamra will provide an intimate spot for a dip.

The islands lend themselves perfectly to the practice of any water-sport under the sun, with diving being one of the major crowd pullers. Malta, Gozo and Comino offer excellent sport facilities both for beginners as well as for experienced open water, cave and wreck divers.



There is no better way to see the sights from an alternative vantage point than to take a relaxing cruise around the islands. Sailing, kayaking, jet-skiing, kite-surfing and paragliding also provide an alternative sea view.

Inland, the horizon is dominated by the baroque spires of Malta's innumerable churches and cathedrals. You can opt to put on your walking boots and head out to discover tranquil village squares, ancient farmhouses and wayside chapels, as well as inland valleys and spectacular seascapes. The countryside is also ideal for exploring by bike. Myriad village and country lanes crisscross the islands and take you to some stunning viewpoints. Horse-riding is another great way to explore the Maltese countryside with its rugged terrain and quiet footpaths. For the more adventurous, the islands have endless challenging and spectacular rock faces with superb sea views to tempt the rock climber.



It's all happening here!

The Maltese islands provide an authentic and unique backdrop to a variety of international cultural and sporting events that attract visitors from all over the world.

Malta's annual calendar of activities brings together an eclectic blend of local and international events, entertainment and exhibitions. Choose from performances by international rock legends, classical music concerts and a jazz festival. Malta's vibrant performing arts scene offers a surprisingly diverse repertoire of theatre, opera, music and dance.



The Maltese islands also play host to an exciting array of international sporting events such as the Rolex Middle Sea Race, the Malta Marathon and the Malta International Air Show. Top European football teams regularly choose Malta as the site for their training camps, while other athletes from around the globe gather here to prepare for major international competitions from swimming to hockey.



Malta's cosmopolitan seafront resorts offer a stylish and vibrant nightlife and as excellent a cuisine as may be found in any European city. Malta is special, however, in that rural tranquility and a beautiful coastline lie just a short distance from the hub of entertainment. You can enjoy the best of both worlds in one stay.

So whether you seek the ultimate in unspoilt isolation, the hubbub of café life or a flutter of excitement in one of the casinos, Malta and Gozo offer visitors a special blend of peace and adventure in one location.



photo: Rolex / Kurt Arrigo



Gozo... the magic of Calypso's Isle



Accessible from Malta by a 25 minute ferry crossing or a 15 minute seaplane ride, Gozo's charm is apparent the moment you arrive. Greener, more rural and just one third the size of Malta, Gozo moves to a noticeably different, more leisurely rhythm than its sister island. According to Greek legend, the temptress nymph Calypso lured Odysseus to Gozo, keeping him prisoner for seven years. Today it seems that visitors willingly surrender themselves to Calypso's charms, as they admire the glimmering red sand of Ramla Bay from the vantage point at the nymph's legendary home.

Gozo offers you a unique variety of cultural sites and natural landscapes. You can visit the imposing citadel which towers over Victoria, the island's commercial and administrative centre, or feel the aura of religious devotion which pervades the Ta' Pinu basilica. A striking feature of Gozo's green landscape is its series of flat-topped hills, although its coastline is equally spectacular. The Azure Window in Dwejra stands majestically as a gateway to the sea, while the nearby Inland Sea provides a shallow and deliciously warm pool for bathers.

A visit to this tranquil haven is guaranteed to leave you with indelible memories of a land where time appears to have stood still and where relaxation comes so easily. All things considered, one has to wonder whether Ulysses was really held here against his will.



A vibrant ➤ nightlife

Here in Malta, the nightlife is vibrant, varied and entertaining. You will find that it's pretty hard not to have a good time here, what with the large selection of bars, restaurants, clubs and casinos to choose from.

Many of the finer restaurants, which offer an exciting array of cosmopolitan fare, are concentrated in the sea-resort areas. However, the islands' towns and villages are host to several intimate wine-bars and family-run restaurants specializing in local cuisine. You will find that exploring the islands' traditional gastronomy can be extremely fulfilling in more ways than one. What better way to savour local culinary delights than in the candle-lit intimacy of an ancient palazzo, or within the jasmine scented confines of a traditional Maltese courtyard?



Fish naturally features very prominently in Maltese cuisine, with rabbit cooked in wine and garlic being another favourite. No mention of Maltese food is complete without reference to the local bread, very crusty on the outside, yet soft on the inside.

Malta's club scene compares well with the best in Europe, with top international DJs and recording artists making regular appearances at popular party venues. Although Paceville is the local hub for year-round clubbing, the island's warm climate and plenty of fantastic outdoor venues attract flocks of tourists and locals to open-air parties held throughout the summer.

Malta offers a wide array of clubs and bars to suit most musical tastes, from alternative rock to salsa, and from R&B and hip-hop to trance. For a mellower vibe however, you can opt to sip cocktails or wine and relax to gentle live music at one of the sea-front leisure establishments.



An ideal setting for learning English

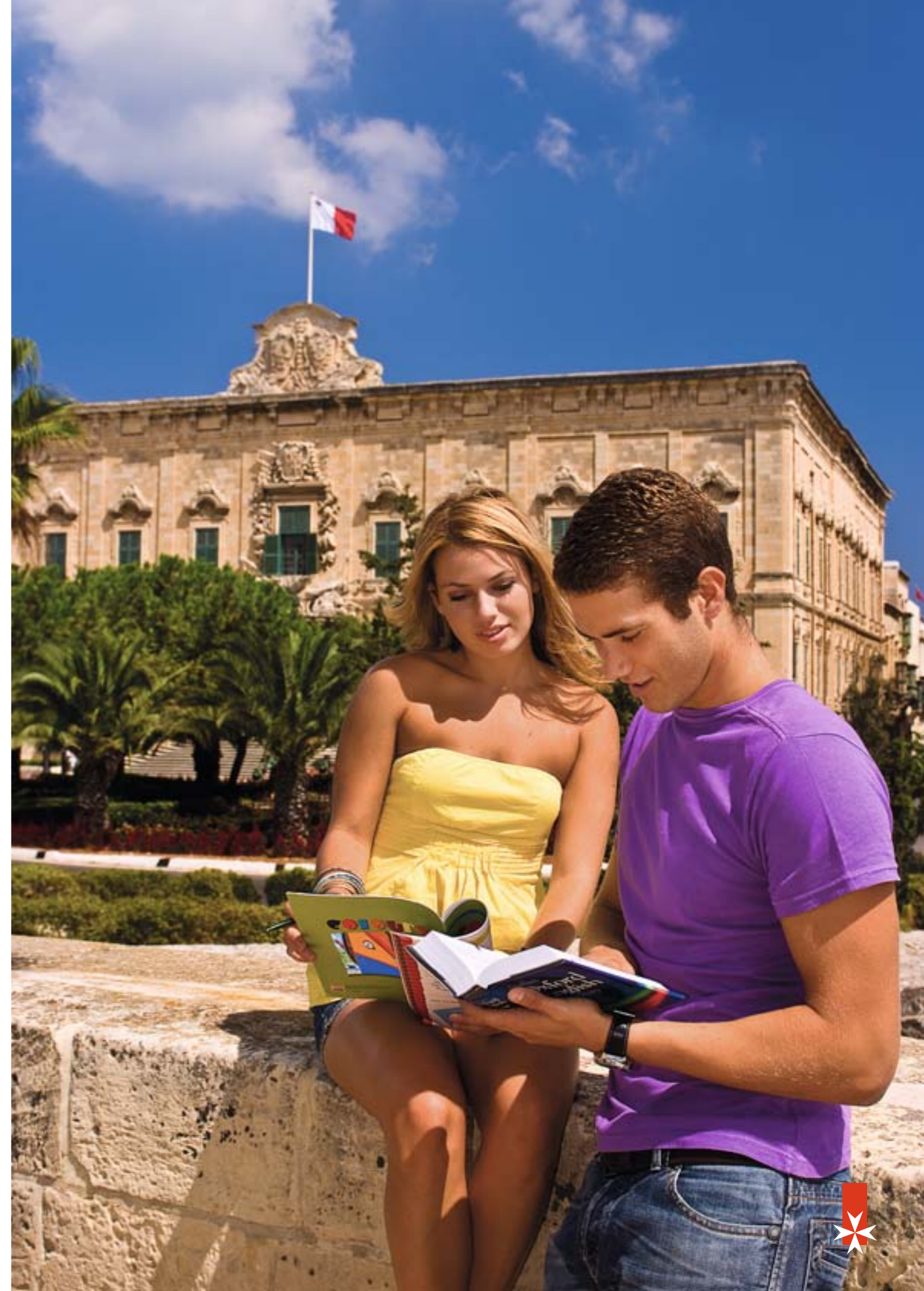
Though essentially mediterranean in character, Malta is also steeped in British tradition. Evidence of this is the fact that English is our second official language. Our educational heritage is also one of Europe's oldest, the University of Malta having been established in 1592.



Malta's English-speaking culture has enabled it to build a reputation as a leading destination for language holidays and the islands have been hosting English language students from all over the world for almost half a century. Today Malta is renowned as a centre of excellence for this increasingly popular, and highly demanding, form of travel.

Every year Maltese language schools host a cross-section of students from Europe and beyond, ranging from corporate leaders and members of parliament to university graduates, teenagers and families. Through the provision of quality teaching and the support of dedicated professionals, these schools, which are licensed by Malta's Ministry of Education, ensure that visiting students enjoy a memorable learning experience.

Moreover, the unique blend of the traditional and the cosmopolitan, of culture and the buzz of a sea resort, give students the best of both worlds and something to write home about...or return again and again for both learning and enjoyment. Although many students opt to stay with a local host family so as to be able to immerse themselves in the language within a friendly and supportive environment, other types of accommodation, such as school residences, apartments, hotels and guesthouses are also available.





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Population:	410,000
Area:	316 km ²
Geographical location:	Mediterranean Sea 93 km to Sicily 290 km to Africa
Official languages:	Maltese and English
Capital:	Valletta
Currency:	Euro
Time zone:	Central European Time – CET (+1 GMT)
Temperature:	10–18° C in winter 22–33° C in summer



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