





## PLACES OF INTEREST

### HISTORY *continued*

In 1798 Napoleon landed on the island and conquered Malta. The once powerful and prestigious Knights had become corrupt and surrendered without a fight. The Maltese defeated the French in 1800 and officially became part of the British empire in 1814. After being developed as a major naval base, Malta, once again, found itself under siege during WWII. The island was considered a key in the battle for the Mediterranean and was exposed to months of bombing raids and blockades, leaving many of the inhabitants homeless and without food.

After the war, a form of self government was established and defined political parties emerged. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr. George Borg Oliver, Malta gained its independence in 1964 and became a republic. As further ties with Britain waned, the island prospered and in 1981 the Nationalist Party gained control of local government. The party held control and won a landslide victory in 1992 based on a platform which included Malta's application to join the European Union.

### Places of Interest

**1 St. John's Co-Cathedral**, located on St. John Street, is best known as the Church of the Knights of the Order of St. John. Housing a unique collection of church vestments, Flemish tapestries and silver objects, the Cathedral is one of the most important monuments on the island. The Cathedral serves as the final resting place of many of the Knights, which is evident by the engraved marble tombstones that cover the Cathedral's floor. Works by Caravaggio are housed in the Cathedral's small museum.

**2 Palace of the Grand Masters** was completed in 1574 and is now home to the Maltese Parliament. Inside are period furnishings, portraits of the Grand Masters and a unique collection of Gobelin Tapestries. A fresco which lines the main hallway depicts scenes from the Great Siege. The Armory of the Knights is located in two halls of the Palace where weapons and armor of various periods are displayed. Please note that due to parliamentary (government) sessions and/or official visits, the Palace may be closed to the public without prior notice.

**3 National Museum of Archaeology**, also known as the "Auberge de Provence", houses a small collection of items from Malta's megalithic temples as well as displays of prehistoric pottery, sculpture, and tomb furniture from the Roman period.

**4 National Museum of Fine Arts** is an 18th century palace housing paintings, furniture and sculptures associated with the Order of St. John. On display are works by Carpaccio, Domenico di Michelino, Tintoretto and works by contemporary Maltese artists.

**5 Upper Barrakka Gardens**, originally the private gardens of the Italian Knights, offer an excellent view of the Grand Harbour and the fortified towns of Vittoriosa, Cospicua, and Senglea. (The gardens do not close.)

**6 Fort St. Elmo** is located at the outmost extremity of the peninsula and was a strategic stronghold for the Knights against the Turks during the 16th century. More recently the Fort was used as the setting of the film *Midnight Express*. The Fort is currently home to the Malta Police Academy and is not open for interior visits.

### Beyond Valletta

**Mdina** is the historic 'Old Town' and was the island's hub before the arrival of the Knights who settled and developed the area surrounding the Grand Harbour. Located at the geographical center of the island, the Mdina is perched on a rocky outcrop which offers spectacular views. Known as the "Silent City", Mdina has been a functioning walled city for more than 3000 years. The city's narrow cobblestone streets are home to Mdina Cathedral, known for its fine collection of paintings and woodcarvings, and a number of small tourist and specialty shops.

**Mosta** is the location of the parish church designed by the Maltese architect Giorgio Grognet de Vasse. The church's main attraction is its Dome, one of the largest unsupported church domes in the world. During the air raids of WWII a bomb smashed through the dome and landed on the floor of the church but did not detonate. This was later acknowledged as a miracle. The church has a small museum which displays the bomb and period photographs.

- Admission Charges are generally in local currency.
- When going ashore, passengers are advised to take with them only the items they need and to secure any valuables.

**SHORE EXCURSIONS** To make the most of your visit to Valletta and the island of Malta we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk.

**LOCAL CUSTOMS Bargaining:** Most shops have set prices, although bargaining for local handicrafts is fairly common.

**Tippling:** A 10% tip in restaurants and taxis is customary.

**Local Cuisine:** Maltese cuisine has adopted much from its closest neighbor, Sicily. Pastas and Pizza are very common. Rabbit or "fenek" is a local favorite as well as spicy beef rolls known as "bragioli". "Timpana" is macaroni with meat sauce covered in a pastry case, and 'Gbejniet' is locally produced goats cheese.

**Drink Specialties:** Cisk is the locally produced lager beer. Malta also produces a large selection of both white and red wines that are for sale in local shops and restaurants. After a meal it is customary to try the local liqueur, "Tamakari". For those who prefer non-alcoholic fare, Malta produces a soft drink made of aromatic herbs called "Kinnie".

Bottled water is recommended.

**LOCAL CURRENCY** The unit of currency in this port of call is the euro. There are 8 euro coins denominated in 2 and 1 euros, along with 50, 20, 10, 5, 2, and 1 cent pieces. Every euro coin carries a common European face. On the obverse, each Member State decorates the coins with their own motifs. No matter which motif is on the coins they can be used anywhere inside the Member States. There are 7 euro notes. In different colors and sizes, they are denominated in 500, 200, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5 euros. The notes are uniform throughout the euro area; unlike coins, they have no national side. All euro notes are legal tender in all countries of the euro area.

**POST OFFICE AND TELEPHONE FACILITIES** The main Post Office is located at 305, Qormi Road.

There are few public telephones available. The national phone company, Maltacom, has an office on South Street. Overseas phone calls can be made from this office by using a phone card. Phone cards can also be purchased at the post office. Please note there is now a fixed prefix (21) for all local telephone numbers.

AT&T: 0800-890-110 / MCI: 0800-890-120 / SPRINT: No Access

**TOURIST INFORMATION** The Main Tourist Information Office is Malta Tourism Authority, Auberge d'Italie, Merchants Street.

**TRANSPORTATION** Local taxis will be available on the pier. Local bus service is available at the main bus terminal just outside the Valletta city gates. Many of the busses are restored relics of the 1950's. Public buses do not accept any foreign currency.

### USEFUL WORDS

Yes • Iva  
No • Le  
Thank You • Grazzi  
Good Day • Bongu  
Please • Jekk joghgbok  
You're Welcome • M'hemmx imniex