

Vacations in Malta - The Reasons Why

Malta is a small archipelago of seven islands located in the Mediterranean Sea. Malta sits 179 miles north of North Africa and 58 miles south of Sicily. The small island nation boasts warm climate year round. Malta has a rich and colorful history, as represented in its many holiday celebrations. In fact, nearly any time of the year you choose to plan a vacation in Malta, you may witness at least one cultural celebration.

Malta's history dates back to 3500 BC. One of the oldest of all megalithic temples in existence is on Gozo, the second largest of the islands. Other temples on the islands date back to between 3200 and 2500 BC. In 400 BC, after the fall of Tyre, the islands came under the control of Carthage. This former Phoenician colony lost control to Rome in 218 BC. Evidence of each era of the islands' existence is well documented and proof still stands in many cases.

The island of Gozo has been inhabited since 5000 BC. Sicilian farmers used to cross the sea to the island to farm, and it's believed that they were part of the Sicani tribe of Sicily. Many pieces of similar pottery were found in both places. Gozo's most popular nickname is the Isle of Calypso, derived from Homer's Odyssey.

Because of Malta's rich history and beautifully preserved landmarks, many movie directors have chosen various points in Malta as primary settings for top-selling movies. Madonna and husband Guy Ritchie filmed their hit movie, 'Swept Away' on Malta. The lagoon Madonna's character goes snorkeling in is the Blue Lagoon on Comino. Movies such as Troy, Gladiator and Alexander brought a lot of attention to Malta as a prime place to film historically accurate movies.

Several other movies have been filmed in Malta, including "Cutthroat Island," "Popeye" and "The Count of Monte Cristo."

Malta is now home to many tourist attractions, including resorts and theme parks.

Several resorts are located on the northwest side of the island in the village of Mellieha. Mellieha is very popular among tourists during the summer months. After filming "Popeye" with Robin Williams and Shelley Duvall, the film crew left the set in place. The set remains today and is now a popular family attraction. Several "Popeye" shows are performed by local actors every day for tourists.

Mellieha is also home to the feast of Our Lady of Victories, a yearly celebration that takes place from August 30 to September 8. The feast commemorates the repelling of the Great Siege in 1565 and celebrates the Maltese victory over the Ottomans. Many people believe it was this victory that saved Europe's Christianity.

Tourism remains one of the primary strengths of Malta's economy. Its limestone and productive labor force are also frontrunners of the economy. Film making is a growing industry on Malta's islands.

Malta's farmers produce about 20 percent of the nation's food needs. The economy's primary dependencies are on foreign trade, manufacturing, tourism and financial services.

Cheaper airfares for [flights to Malta](#) is credited with some of the recent success of the tourism industry.

Several airlines have started offering cheaper and more frequent flights from multiple points in Europe. Less expensive airfares makes it easier for Europeans to take a weekend holiday or even an extended holiday to enjoy the sunshine and beaches.

In February 2008, Malta reported a 13.4 percent increase in tourism over last February. The Mediterranean island welcomed more than 57,000 visitors in the second month of the year according to the National Statistics Office. The increase was credited to the rising number of tourists from Germany, Spain and Italy, and it is hoped UK tourists will see a good year overall for the holiday island.

About the Author

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