Festive Walking in Malta



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
Festive breaks	Maltese Islands & Malta	3 & 5	1112kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

Make this Christmas extra special by spending the festive season in stunning Malta. With mild winters and more historic sights per square mile than any other country, this sunny Mediterranean isle has plenty to please. Our guided walking holiday is the perfect introduction to Malta's dramatic coastlines, countryside, Neolithic temples, impressive catacombs, and churches built by the Knights of St John. You'll also get to explore the Maltese capital of Valletta on foot – perfect for admiring the twinkling lights and festive decorations in Republic Square and tucking into seasonal treats at the island's Christmas markets.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Spending time in the UNESCO-listed capital, Valletta
- Taking in the dramatic views during coastal walks
- Experiencing the Silent City of Mdina
- Visiting the fishing village of Marsaxlokk

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- 3 guided walks led by local HF Holidays Leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager

- 7 nights half-board accommodation at 4-star hotel
- Festive dinner on 24 December
- Lunch included on 25 December (Please note this is not a traditional Christmas meal)
- Sightseeing trip to Valetta
- Return flights from the UK including hold baggage and airport transfers(on with flight holiday)

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Welcome to Solana Hotel. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2 **Dingli to Blue Grotto / Mdina**

Today's visit is to the Dingli Cliffs, Malta's highest point. We walk through Buskett Gardens (once the hunting ground of the Grand Masters) towards the Dingli Cliffs. Close to the cliffs we see the remains of Ghar ilKbir cave dwellings and a series of distinctive prehistoric cart ruts. This visit will be enhanced by a local guide who was raised in the area. The afternoon is spent sightseeing with the option of:

(a) visiting 4th century catacombs, the museum of Roman Antiquities, and soaking up the atmosphere in the Silent City of Mdina or

(b) visiting the temple complex of Ħaġar Qim that can be seen before descending to Wied iz-Zurrieq where there's the option of a boat trip to the Blue Grotto (if the weather's good).

Option 1 - Caves, Cliffs & Catacombs

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Total ascent: 300 feet (100m)

In summary: Today we walk through Maltese history. Starting in the old hunting grounds of Buskett Gardens we'll walk towards the coast and the Ghar-il-Kbir cave dwellings. We'll reach Rabat for lunch, with time to explore the 4th Century catacombs, St Pauls church and the Museum of Roman Antiquities. We'll finish our day in the 'Silent City' of Mdina.

Option 2 - Cliffs & Temples by the sea

Distance: 8 miles (13km)

Total ascent: 800 feet (240m)

In summary: The first part of our day follows the same route as the other party as far as Ghar-il-Kbir, yet passing closer towards the cliff edge for 180 metres of this scenic coastal section. At the coast we'll descend to the undercliff, passing two wayside chapels. We'll reach Ghar Lapsi for lunch, and a swim, before heading into more rugged terrain to the large temple complex of Hagar Qim, finishing our walk at Wied ir Zurrieq.

Day 3 (Christmas Eve) Free Day

Christmas Eve is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax at the hotel and make use of the spa facilities (booking ahead is recommended for any treatments), soak up the Christmas lights at local Mellieha Square or walk independently to one of the nearby coastal villages, such as Armier. In the evening, we'll enjoy a festive dinner together.

You may also travel to Valletta, Malta's capital to admire the architecture and walk around the harbour, or visit historic Rabat or Mdina. (Please note: attractions with entry required will be closed over the festive period)

Day 4 (Christmas Day) Free Day

Merry Christmas. Celebrate a relaxing Christmas Day morning enjoying the hotel facilities or exploring Mellieha before returning for a delicious lunch. The rest of the day is yours to spend as you choose. Unwind by the pool, share a drink at the bar, or relax in your room. In the evening relax and enjoy dinner with our group.

Day 5 (Boxing Day) Marsascala to Marsaxlokk Bay

These walks link two traditional Maltese fishing villages on the South Eastern corner of the island.

Option 1 - Marsascala to Marsaxlokk

Distance: 6 miles (9.5km)

Total ascent: 400 feet (120m)

Beginning in Marsascala, we'll cross the Delimara peninsula where we can observe the fascinating rock sculptures carved by wind and waves. Heading north, we'll break for lunch before finishing our walk in the pretty fishing village of Marsaxlokk famous for its colourful Maltese boats bobbing in the harbour.

Option 2 - Marsascala to Pretty Bay

Distance: 9 miles (14.5km)

Total ascent: 400 feet (120m)

Starting in Marsascala our route follows the coastline to Marsaxlokk before continuing to the aptly named Pretty Bay – a golden arch of sand lapped by Malta's beautifully clear blue waters.

Day 6 Valletta Day Trip

Today we'll visit Valletta. Like a vast open-air museum, the entire city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A walking tour with an expert local guide will take in all the city's top sights. Discover fortified citadels and hear tales of the heroic Knights Hospitaller and their defence of the city during the Great Siege of Malta in 1565. There'll also be free time in the festively decorated city centre to explore or stop for a drink. We'll also watch the Christmas lights illuminate the streets before heading back to the hotel.

Day 7 Mellieha to Golden Bay

Combine coast and countryside walking through Majjistral Nature and History Park to Golden Bay

Option 1 - Mellieha to Golden Bay

Distance: 6 miles (9½km)

Ascent: 450 feet (140m)

Descent: 750 feet (230m)

From the hotel, we set out through town and country to the beach at Ghadira Bay. Our walk then continues to the west side of the island along tracks through farming country to Popeye Village. We'll enjoy views to Comino and Gozo as we make our way to Majjistral Nature Park and then on to the popular sandy Golden Bay. Here there will be swimming opportunities as well as bars to enjoy a final drink with the group.

Option 2 - Mellieha to Golden Bay via Red Tower

Distance: 7.5 miles (12km)

Ascent: 700 feet (220m)

Descent: 1,000 feet (300m)

We start out from the hotel in Mellieha, taking the same route to Ghadira Bay. From here we ascend through the Forests 2000 Park to the Red Tower with far reaching 360 views of Malta, Comino, and Gozo. After a short stretch on a quiet road along the crest of the plateau we descend along the coast to Popeye Village, from where we pick up the same route as the easier group to Golden Bay.

Day 8 Departure Day

We hope to see you again soon

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 3

Slightly longer walks, mostly on well-trodden paths, with some gentle gradients plus stiles and steps possible. Typically, 5-6 miles (8-10km) with around 650ft (200m) of ascent.



Moderate walking grade 5

Some walking experience needed. Full day walks which may include some short but steep ascents and descents throughout the day, and varied terrain. Regular stops. Typically, 8-9 miles (13-15km) with around 1,300ft (400m) of ascent.

ACCOMMODATION

Solana Hotel - Malta

Situated in the quiet seaside resort of Mellieħa on Malta's northeast coast, the 4-star Solana Hotel offers both indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a wellness centre, and three restaurants. HF Holidays guests will also benefit from unlimited self-service drinks during dinner including local beer, wine, soft drinks, and hot beverages. There are a cluster of local shops, bars, restaurants, and amenities on the doorstep and the stunningly beautiful Mellieħa Bay – the island's largest stretch of sand – is around a 30-minute walk away.

Your evenings

The friendly atmosphere of your holiday continues into the evening. Enjoy a glass of wine or local beer before hearing about the next day's activities. On some evenings, there will be some kind of entertainment; an excursion to Mdina to see it by moonlight - the effect is amazing; or just relax in the bar area and speak to your fellow guests about your day.

FOOD & DRINK

Dining at the Solana Hotel

Guided walking holidays at the Solana Hotel are on a half-board basis and includes breakfast and your evening meal.

Breakfast

Breakfast is available at the Bellini Restaurant and is a self-service buffet. There is a selection of cereals, fruit juices, breads, pastries and cakes, as well as a hot selection, cold meat and cheese, and fruit.

Lunch (payable locally)

There are several shops and local supermarkets, a short walk away, in Mellieha Village, where you can buy the ingredients to make your picnic lunch. There will be opportunities to eat in a local café during the day and our leaders will advise you of all the options and directions to the nearest shops.

Evening meal

A buffet style evening meal is served to our guests in the Bellini Restaurant. There is a good selection of international dishes as well as fish and local meals, antipasta dishes and salads as starters. Desserts will be followed by tea and coffee. On the other two evenings, we will be dining at the Tosca Restaurant which is a served 3-course meal which pre-selected choices.

The hotel does cater for most dietary requirements but we would advise you to speak to our reservation staff and also ensure that you speak to our hotel staff on arrival to avoid disappointment.

Drinks

Self service drinks are included during dinners at the hotel, including local beer, wine and soft drinks (drinks will be brought to the tables when dining at the Tosca restaurant).

There is a well stocked bar offering a variety of pre-dinner drinks, wines, beers and local spirits including an interesting prickly pear liqueur.

ROOMS

Your room at the Solana Hotel

The hotel has 183 en-suite rooms and are all of excellent standard. Each room is decorated in a modern-contemporary style and has

- Individually-controlled central heating and air-conditioning
- Satellite TV
- Tea and coffee making
- Mini-bar
- Hairdryer
- Telephone
- Wi-Fi

ABOUT YOUR STAY

Facilities at the Solana Hotel

Solana's rooftop pool offers impeccable views of the sea and Malta's sister islands, with a pleasant outside seating area. There is also an indoor pool (heated October - May).

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Solana Hotel
Gorg Borg Olivier Street,
Mellieha MLH 1925,
Malta

Tel: 00356 2152 2211

LOCAL AREA

Gozo

Only 20minutes away from Malta by ferry, Gozo is about one third of Malta's size and has a character quite distinct from its neighbouring island. It is more rural, with an extensive farming community and the countryside is greener and more scenic. Controls over building developments enabled Gozo to keep its rural charm. There are many historical sites to visit on Gozo, including: Ggantija temple site, Xewkija Church and Victoria, the capital of the island.

Comino

Named after the cumin seed that once flourished in the Maltese islands, Comino is noted for its tranquility and isolation. It has a permanent population of only four residents. One priest and one policeman commute from the nearby island of Gozo, to render their services to the local population and summertime visitors. Today, Comino is a bird sanctuary and nature reserve and can be reached by boat from Cirkewwa.

Valletta

The Capital City of Valletta, which is a fortified city, sitting on a peninsula between two natural harbours. The city was founded by the Order of St. John and named after their Grand Master, John de Vallette. When the Order left the islands in the late 18th Century, the French occupied Valletta, this was followed by British rule in the 19th Century. The city has many interesting and historic sites to visit, including churches, museums, and you can even take a harbor cruise, to see Valletta from a different vantage point. In 1980 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage site, and in 2018, Valletta is the European Capital of Culture. Valletta can be reached from Mellieha by local bus.

Did you Know?

The small island has 365 churches, one for every day of the year.

VACCINATIONS & HEALTH

Vaccinations & health information

Before booking, you should check with your doctor to see whether any health precautions are needed for your trip. Health advice and requirements can change, so we recommend doing this in good time before travel.

As a general rule, travellers should ensure they are up to date with routine UK vaccinations and boosters, including, for example, MMR and diphtheria, tetanus and polio. Some countries may require you to have specific vaccinations such as Malaria, Rabies and Yellow Fever. Please check with your GP if you are unsure.

Please note that the use or possession of some common prescription or over-the-counter medicines is restricted or banned in certain countries. If you will be carrying medication, you should check with the relevant embassy or consulate before travelling. As an extra precaution, we recommend keeping medication in its original packaging, carrying a copy of your prescription, and, where possible, asking your pharmacist to provide the medication name in the language of the country you are visiting.

For further country-specific health advice, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk or www.traveldoctor.co.uk. If you are travelling from outside the UK, please consult your own doctor and check local entry requirements.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passport & Visa information

This information is for those travelling with a full 'British Citizen' passport; for all other nationalities or passport holders, please check with your local consulate for advice.

Passport Requirements

This information applies to travellers holding a full British Citizen passport. Entry requirements vary by destination and can change at short notice. For most EU and worldwide destinations, passports must be valid for the entire duration of your stay. Some countries also require a minimum period of validity remaining on your passport (often up to 6 months beyond your return date), even if you are not staying that long.
We strongly recommend ensuring your passport has at least six months' validity remaining at the time of travel to avoid any issues.

If you hold a different type of British passport or a passport issued by another country, you must check the requirements with the relevant embassy, consulate, or official government website.

Visa Requirements

Visa rules depend on your nationality, destination, length of stay, and purpose of travel, and they can change frequently. It is your responsibility to check whether you require a visa before travelling.
British passport holders should check the latest entry, passport validity and visa requirements for their destination on the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) website:
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

Packing list

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Swimcap (compulsory in Itialian resorts)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone
- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags

- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device (excluding Bhutan, Georgia and India)

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITH FLIGHTS)

With flights

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from selected UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

JOINING INSTRUCTIONS (WITHOUT FLIGHTS)

Without flights

If you are booking on a land-only basis, you can join the group transfer at an additional cost. To do so, your arrival and departure times must be in line with the scheduled group flight timings. Guests travelling at different times will need to arrange their own transfers. Please contact us before booking to discuss the available options and costs.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so before you travel.

For more information about healthcare and its costs, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/

Drinking Water

Drinking Water

Standards for drinking water vary widely around the world. In many destinations, tap water may not be safe to drink, brush your teeth with, or use for making ice. Where advised, you should drink only bottled or treated water and ensure that bottle seals are intact before use. If bottled water is unavailable, water should be boiled or filtered.

Staying well hydrated is particularly important in hot climates and during active holidays. Carry water with you and drink regularly.

If you are unsure about local water safety, check official country-specific health advice before travel, or ask your accommodation or local guides for guidance once you arrive.

Language Information for Malta

The local languages are Maltese and English.

Telephone Code for Malta

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.
To dial a UK number 0044
To dial a Maltese number 00356

LOCAL CURRENCY

The local currency is the Euro (€)

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Malta

220 Volt AC with 3-pin plugs as per UK.

ATM AVAILABILITY

ATM availability for Malta

There are several ATM machines in Mellieha where you can obtain money.

TRIPNOTE VALIDITY

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred. In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary. The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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