Malta's Heritage Discovery



Trip style:	Destination:	Walking Grade	Carbon Footprint:
European holidays	Maltese Islands	1	793kg CO2

HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

There's more to Malta and Gozo than meets the eye. The strategic position of these tiny islands in the middle of the Mediterranean has gifted them colourful culture, mouthwatering cuisine, and history worthy of a Hollywood script. Hear tales of the heroic Knights Hospitaller and the Great Siege of 1565 from atop Valletta's city walls and head underground to discover why the Maltese were awarded the George Cross during WWII. You'll also hop over to Gozo where highlights include exploring temples that predate the pyramids of Egypt. When it's time to unwind, you can look forward to a relaxing cruise aboard a traditional fishing boat, learning to make typical Maltese dishes in a cooking class, and a four-star hotel stay in the charming coastal village of Mellieħa.

WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Tour of Valletta including the Grand Master's Palace
- A full day on Gozo including a visit to one of the world's oldest temple complexes
- Touring prehistoric Ħaġar Qim and walking atop the limestone cliffs.re
- Tasting freshly made pastizzi and joining local chefs for a Maltese cooking class.
- A relaxing cruise aboard a dgħajsa, Malta's traditional colourful fishing boats

- Discovering Malta's wartime history at the Underground Valletta experience

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Return flights from London Gatwick, including baggage and transfers
- Guided sightseeing with local leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- 7 nights' accommodation in Mellieħa
- 7 breakfasts, 1 lunch & 7 dinners
- All in-destination transport & entrance fees (as per itinerary)

ITINERARY - ITINERARY

Day 1 **Arrival Day**

Arrive in Malta and transfer to your hotel in the coastal village of Mellieħa. Settle in, unpack, and enjoy time at leisure.

Day 2 **Discover Valletta**

After breakfast, meet your expert local guide for a half-day tour of Valletta. Discover the UNESCO-listed capital's grand Baroque architecture, historic streets, and far-reaching views across the harbour.

Visit St John's Co-Cathedral, known for its richly decorated interior and paintings by Caravaggio. We'll continue our day of discovery at the Grand Master's Palace, once the seat of the Knights of St John (the alternate name of the famed group of Christian warrior-monks known as the Knights Hospitaller) and now the official seat of Malta's president. Hear about the origins of this Catholic military order as you explore the restored State Rooms and Armoury, home to an impressive collection of centuries old armour and weapons.

We later return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure. You could relax by the rooftop pool or explore some of Mellieħa's many highlights. Perhaps you'd like to dive further into Malta's wartime history at the Mellieħa Air Raid Shelter where waxwork scenes show what life was like for islanders taking refuge during WWII. Or, visit Popeye Village, a purpose-built film set which served as the setting for the 1980 musical production of *Popeye* starring Robin Williams and Shelly Duval.

Alternatively, head up to one of the island's impressive watchtowers such as the 17th-century Għajn Tuffieħa Tower which commands views over Golden Bay, or The White Tower, constructed by a Grand Master of the Knights of St John to defend the coast.

Gather together for dinner this at the hotel this evening.

Day 3 **Gozo and its ancient treasures**

Today, we travel to Ċirkewwa and take the ferry to Gozo. With its rural landscapes, attractive villages, and relaxed pace of life, Malta's sister island has a character all its own.

Explore the island capital, Victoria, also known as Rabat, and step inside the walls of its fortified old quarter, Ċittadella. Visit the Old Prison and the cathedral before continuing to the UNESCO-listed Ġgantija Temples. Dating back more than 5,500 years, these remarkable megalithic structures are older than the pyramids of Egypt and the excellent on-site museum offers a glimpse into a mystery that still puzzles archaeologists today – just how were these ancient megastructures built? We return to Malta by ferry this afternoon.

Day 4 Malta's prehistoric heritage

We delve further into Malta's extraordinary prehistoric past today on a half-day excursion to the south of the island.

Accompanied by an expert local guide, we visit Ħaġar Qim, a UNESCO-listed temple complex in a spectacular clifftop setting overlooking the Mediterranean. Dating back to between 3600 and 3200 BC, it offers a fascinating insight into the lives and beliefs of Malta's earliest inhabitants. There'll also be time for a gentle coastal ramble around the site and its surrounding cliffs.

The afternoon is at leisure to relax beside one of the hotel pools or explore some of Mellieħa's many highlights. Perhaps you'd like to stroll along the sands of Mellieħa Bay and enjoy a dip in the sea, or visit one of the nearby nature reserves such as Il-Majjistral Nature and History Park, a habitat for a variety of wild plants, or Għadira, one of the few places for birdwatching on the island thanks to its wetland and salt marsh habitats.

Day 5 Maltese food and traditions

Get to know Malta through its flavours on a day dedicated to the island's culinary traditions. We start with a walking tour of Mdina, known as the Silent City, before heading into neighbouring Rabat, one of the best spots on the island to try authentic Maltese cuisine. We begin by sampling freshly baked pastizzi, a much-loved Maltese savoury pastry, accompanied by Kinnie, the island's distinctive bittersweet soft drink.

Next, roll up your sleeves for a hands-on cooking class. Local chefs will introduce traditional ingredients and recipes and demonstrate how to make *bigilla* (a typical bean dip) and h*obz biz-zejt* (bread with oil and tomatoes) before helping you prepare your own Maltese dishes. Afterwards, sit down together to enjoy the meal you've created, and take away culinary tips and tricks to impress friends and family with back home.

Day 6 The legacy of the Knights

We'll visit Fort St Angelo today, which has guarded the entrance to the Grand Harbour for centuries and played a central role in Malta's military history. Discover Malta's maritime history and the enduring legacy of the Knights of St John. The order ruled the islands from 1530 to 1798, transforming Malta into a heavily fortified crusader stronghold who famously masterminded an against-all-odds defence of it during the Great Siege of 1565 by the Ottoman Empire.

Then take to the water aboard a traditional dgħajsa. These distinctive Maltese boats have carried passengers across the Grand Harbour since the time of the Knights. Cruise past Valletta and the Three Cities while enjoying wonderful views of the historic waterfront and fortifications.

Day 7 Hidden Valletta and farewell dinner

Like a huge open-air museum, there's so much to see in Valletta, so we return again today to uncover the city's hidden passageways, noble homes, and wartime history.

Descend beneath the streets on a guided visit to the Underground Valletta experience. Discover the subterranean tunnels, reservoirs, and chambers that supported the fortified city during the Great Siege and how they were extended into air-raid shelters during WWII, helping the Allies defend Malta against a savage campaign of bombardment by Axis powers keen to seize the island for its strategic location in the Mediterranean.

We'll also explore the Lascaris War Rooms, which were used as a wartime Allied command centre, and finish at the Saluting Battery, overlooking the magnificent Grand Harbour. Afterwards we return to the hotel where the rest of the afternoon is at leisure.

This evening, gather at a local restaurant for a farewell dinner and raise a glass to your discoveries in Malta and Gozo.

Day 8 **Departure**

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.

DAILY WALK OPTIONS



Gentle walking grade 1

Short, easy walks on level paths with no stiles. Ideal for relaxed walking and active sightseeing. Typically, 2-3 miles (3-5km) or less, with little if any 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.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Safety Information

Walking Safety

Walks may be changed for safety reasons and are subject to a maximum and minimum number of guests.

Leaders always consider the safety of the group as a whole and may need to alter or curtail the walk if the conditions dictate. Your leader may refuse to accept a guest where clothing, equipment or behaviour is unsuitable. In the event of a problem all leaders carry a mobile phone, first aid kit, group shelter, spare maps and a compass.

Please note: If you choose to leave the group your leader is no longer responsible for you.

In the event of a problem

If you become separated from your group, please stay where you are. Your leader will retrace their steps to find you.

All our walk leaders carry a mobile phone, group shelter, spare maps and a compass. In the unlikely event your leader is incapacitated, please use any emergency kit in their rucksack and call the emergency services (call 999 in the UK, or 112 overseas).

Please then try to call the hotel where you are staying to let them know there is a problem.

We advise you carry a copy of these trip notes or note down the contact phone number for your accommodation (details in the travel section) should you need them in case of emergency.

If you have any cause for complaints regarding accommodation, you should notify your leader who can then attempt to rectify the problem.

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.

Trip information

Our Discovery holidays give you the opportunity to immerse yourself in the culture of the local area through active sightseeing. On each Discovery day, you will be walking throughout the course of the day as you explore the venues and locations we visit. You'll also be hopping on and off coaches, trains, boats and cable cars throughout, depending upon your itinerary - you should expect to spend the majority of the day on your feet. Most of this walking will be at attractions but some may be across country tracks or footpaths or through guided walking tours in towns and cities. Be sure to bring sturdy shoes. There may also be stairs to climb at the venues and locations you visit. At some venues and locations, there may also be uneven surfaces, such as cobbles, rocky paths or uneven surfaces.

LOCAL CURRENCY

The local currency is the Euro (€)

ELECTRICITY

Electricity information for Malta

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

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.

Document produced: 25 November 2026