

A meeting place for thousands of years, the Maltese Islands boast one of the best climates in the world and an abundance of facilities for hosting corporate events

The Mediterranean’s best kept secret

Perched in the azure blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea between Sicily and North Africa and only three hours away from London, Malta brings together a uniquely rich cultural heritage, an honoured tradition of hospitality, and a diverse range of activities available for conference and incentive groups.

Not many destinations have thousands of years’ experience as a meeting place. But the Maltese Islands, comprising Malta, Gozo and Comino, have played host to everyone from St Paul to latter-day presidents and from EU conferences to small groups. Whatever the size, formality or informality of your event, Malta has the expertise and venues to suit.

Recently voted as one of the best climates in the world and with 7,000 years of history, the islands provide a blend of both modern and past, creating a unique flavour for your conference or event. This Mediterranean gem offers a rural landscape dominated by limestone architecture and historical relics evident of years of civilization. Graced by the welcoming smile of the Maltese people, a burgeoning nightlife, local and international cuisine and a host of activities from rock-climbing to jeep safaris, business travellers are set to enjoy an event-packed programme. This collection of world-class accommodation and activities offers an attractive package for conference organisers and incentive travel.

A member of the EU since 2004, the euro replaces the Maltese Lira in January 2008 and this new status will grant Malta international recognition as a place for foreign investment. This investment has seen the strengthening of the product offering with new hotels due to open shortly and increased conference and incentive travel facilities. While the islands continue to develop infrastructure and increase capacity levels, they are forging a path towards greater sustainable tourism.

Suzanne Cassar Dimech, MTA MICE Segment Head reports: “The main geographic markets which bring MICE business to the islands are the UK, Germany, Italy, France and the Benelux region. It is in these core markets that the Malta Tourism Authority is strengthening its efforts in order to consolidate the islands’ image. In addition to consolidating our position in Europe, we intend targeting larger conferences – initially those of up to 3,500 delegates, particularly the associations meeting sector.”

The islands benefit from over one million tourist arrivals annually, with up to nine percent of these attributed to business travellers. The UK and Italian markets continue to dominate the incoming conference market and the outlook for 2008 is looking good for growth from the European continent. Chris Fenech, newly appointed Director for UK and Ireland comments: “Over the last few years Malta has become even

more accessible to the British market with daily flights from Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton as well as year-round services form Manchester and other UK regional airports – the frequent connections offer convenience and allows for a variety of combinations for business travel from relaxation in one of the island’s international spas, to fun incentive breaks or week-long company conferences.”

Malta’s central Mediterranean location between Europe and Africa provides the ideal hub for business and incentive travel. Increased airline capacity out of Europe is providing more options for Malta as a conference and incentive venue. Clickair commences operations out of Barcelona in early June 2007 with new Thursday and Monday departures. The national carrier Air Malta has extended operations with a new Liverpool connection and GB Airways now offer daily flights out of both Manchester and Gatwick. Travel times from European destinations vary from only one hour from Rome, just over two hours from Frankfurt and three hours from the UK, positioning Malta as an ideal choice for an incentive break or business meeting. Major airlines offer direct flights from a variety of UK airports, with Air Malta, providing scheduled and chartered flights from main gateways in both Europe and Africa and over 40 flights per week on the major UK routes including, daily flights from London Gatwick and twice daily flights, year

round from London Heathrow.

Whilst small in size, Malta is big on service and quality and has all the amenities and services to cater to the needs of conference and incentive groups. The islands are continually developing, with new conference and hotel establishments providing an impetus to discover the magical Melita – the island of honey. An abundance of four and five star accommodation, historical venues, modern meeting facilities are on offer with dedicated ground support in the form of specialist destination management companies. Malta also offers a variety of magnificent castles, palazzos and forts, which can be used as private function venues. Other magnificent settings guaranteed to make the occasion unique, include film sets, village squares, museums and exclusive sea-front facilities.

Scheduled to open in July, the newly rebuilt Excelsior Grand Hotel (www.grandhotelexcelsior.com.mt) is a five star luxurious city and resort hotel overlooking the Marsamxett Harbour and Manoel Island. Set in the 16th century bastion walls of Valletta, the UNESCO world heritage capital of Malta, the hotel’s facilities include a grand lobby, elegant ballroom that can accommodate seating for up to 600 people, along with meeting and multi-purpose function rooms featuring the latest technologies.

The shores of Sliema, located in the north east of the island, will be home to a new five star deluxe boutique hotel – The Palace (www.thepalacemalta.com). Boasting 161 bedrooms and themed suites, the Palace is ideally situated between Maltese town houses and urban villas in close proximity to the seaside, shopping areas and nearby bars of Spinola Bay. A unique feature of the hotel is the art gallery with its collection of contemporary art and sculpture. Business travel facilities include an executive lounge ideal for one to one meetings and overlooking the hotel courtyard. This is supported by a fully equipped business centre including secretarial and modern meeting services. Conferences for up to 200

can be held in the Royal Hall, State Hall or the 200-year-old Palazzo Capua. Boasting seven state-of-the-art meeting rooms, the Palace also offers three ‘news’ themed restaurants, including The Talk of the Town Café and The Tabloid, where one can experience fashionable dining and a distinctive ambience. This combination of facilities means the Palace can cater for private events, exclusive functions or large conferences.

Hotel establishments continue to upgrade facilities to cater to the standards of conference delegates. Suncrest Hotel (www.suncresthotel.com), located in the picturesque bay of Qawra, launched new delegate packages following an extensive refurbishment programme which saw enhanced conference facilities. The Ramla Bay Resort (www.ramlabayresort.com), situated on the northernmost shore of Malta with spectacular views of Comino and Gozo, recently expanded its accommodation capacity and refurbished public areas. Now complete with 180 rooms and top-notch conference facilities, this four star resort offers a distinct Mediterranean flavour. Facilities include a heated indoor pool, jacuzzi and an exercise room, complete with massage room, steam room and sauna.

Ta’ Qali is home to Malta’s newest and largest convention centre designed to the meet the indoor space needs of sizeable delegations. The Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre (www.mfcc.com.mt) is an adaptable venue suitable for any event. Utilising award-winning Tension Fabric Structures, the venue can accommodate a crowd of up to 10,000 seated and 22,000 standing.

The MICE industry is also benefiting from new quality standards in the form of the Malta Tourism Authority’s Eco-Certification Scheme. Launched in 2002, the scheme aims to improve hotels’ environmental performance and increase environmental awareness amongst employees. Achieving the eco label status is seen to help build the incentive towards attaining the internationally recognised EU Eco-label. Leading five- and- four star accommodation

establishments have already been awarded certification, including the Hilton Malta, Le Meridien Phoenicia, Corinthia San Gorg Hotel, Corinthia Marina Hotel, Dolmen Resort Hotel, Selmun Palace Hotel, Barcelo Riviera Resort & Spa, Santana Hotel, Sunflower Hotel and Victoria Hotel.

Ensuring a quality infrastructure is part of Malta’s strategic vision. Malta joins 36 countries in the Blue Flag Programme, including Europe, South Africa, Morocco, New Zealand, Canada. St George’s Bay, located in the St Julian’s area, has recently been awarded Blue Flag status; an indication that the MICE industry is being strongly supported by government initiatives to ensure that infrastructure meets both tourism and environmental requirements with a move towards promoting sustainable tourism. The Blue Flag Programme is an international eco-label recognised by both tourists and tour operators. It is administered by the Foundation for Environmental Education represented in Malta by Nature Trust. The move towards gaining international accreditation is increasing the islands competitiveness as a destination.

The Malta Tourism Authority has a dedicated MICE Segment Team to help provide detailed information and a variety of services to help organisers in planning their conference. In addition, there is overseas representation in the major source markets including UK, Germany, Italy, Spain and France and more recently, a new office is to open later this year in Rome. This follows the appointment of Mr Simon Camilleri Kamsky to the new position of Director Southern Europe.

Malta’s blend of accessibility, short transfer times and compact size, provide both convenience and the flexibility to create a memorable event. Overleaf, Marika Reynolds comments on her recent conference to Malta.

Images featured are provided courtesy of the Malta Tourism Authority, Alliance Group, The Palace, Excelsior Grand Hotel and CIS Malta



Case study: partner conference and sales kick off, Malta 2006

By Marika Reynolds, Presentations International Ltd



When my client asked us to look for a location for their two events and said it had to be a warm venue with good outdoor activity options, as well as offer an excellent venue to hold the meeting, we looked at many options, but Malta stood out from all the rest for a multitude of reasons.

Yes, it had the great weather and excellent hotel options, but it also had something that not many locations have these days, charm.

Malta is steeped in history, with some of the most beautiful locations for offsite gala dinners, but in terms of service offerings, they are definitely not stuck in the dark ages! Everything from sushi restaurants, to state of the art technology, Malta is most definitely in 2007.

About our conference

We organised a three-day partner conference and a two-day sales kick off at the new Radisson SAS Golden Sands resort.

We welcomed our partners by taking them offsite to the Phoenicia Poolside Terrace for a BBQ at sunset. The view was spectacular, and really set the scene for our event.

The following morning we had our opening plenary session in the grand ballroom at the Radisson Golden Sands, which had a 'Rev it up' theme. CIS Malta decorated the room perfectly with racing car parts to enhance the atmosphere.

Our coffee breaks were held out on the terrace next to the ballroom, which had views over Golden Sands Bay, and lunches were served on the terrace next to the private beach outside Agliolio's restaurant. Everyone loved the outdoor feel to the event and made them feel like they were experiencing a little bit of Malta, even though they were attending a conference.

Then, with CIS's team, we organised different activities for the partners to choose from. Options included; golf, cycling and wine-tasting at Meridiana, spa treatments in the Myoka Spa as well as sailing.

The partners returned from their afternoon activities saying they had had the most amazing time. Sailing came out top, but all were very, very successful options.

We concluded the event with a gala dinner in the crescent rooms overlooking the beach, with a disco on the beach afterwards.

The following day the partners reluctantly left,

but not before they commented that this was the best event they had ever attended and could they come back again next year?

Themes

The internal sales kick-off had a totally different feel, with an army sign-up theme.

They were all sent off on a sailing regatta for the afternoon when they first arrived with missions. Army caps and bandanas, along with a sunblock stick, were handed out before they went onboard.

When they arrived back at the hotel, they were dropped off at the beach where CIS had set up an army camp, all with authentic tents, tables, bench seats, netting and an army jeep. It looked amazing.

The CEO then arrived on speed boat in full army uniform, jumped up on the back of the jeep and gave them their mission for the rest of the event.

A BBQ dinner on the beach followed in their army camp, along with games like football and volleyball that they could play. Along with a huge bonfire, the atmosphere was perfect. The following day was quite heavy going with meetings from early morning until the evening, so we broke up the day with lunch on the beach with beach games again, and in the afternoon coffee break we served up ice cream. Perfect for a such a warm sunny day.


That night we held a black and white gala dinner/passing out ceremony in the Crescent Rooms which was a perfect end to a perfect event.

Again, it was considered the best event they had attended. This was a compliment that should be aimed at everyone involved:

Radisson SAS Golden Sands Resort offered a truly excellent service to all our clients and treated us all like royalty.

Commitment and professionalism

CIS Malta, with Joe and his team, put in all their hard work during our two meetings. I have been very impressed by their professionalism, their commitment to our project, their flexibility, their pro-activity and their willingness to sort out any requests that we threw at them.

I am delighted that we had the opportunity to work with CIS Malta (www.cismalta.com). I also very much appreciated their positive attitude and their ability to keep on smiling even in the line of fire! Don't ever loose these superb qualities. I can't wait to take my next group to Malta! 



Commando Beach theme, and (below) barbecue



Malta Tourism Authority contacts:

London

Marie Anne Barthett Brown
Senior Manager MICE UK & Ireland
DDI:020 88 77 6993
Email: marianne.barthettbrown@visitmalta.com
www.visitmalta.com/business-travel
Address: Malta Tourist Office, Unit C, Park House,
14 Northfields, London SW18 1DD

Head Office – Malta

Suzanne Cassar Dimech
MICE Segment Head
Email: Suzanne.dimech@visitmalta.com

Nadine Brincat
MICE Segment Coordinator
Email: nadine.brincat@visitmalta.com

Overseas network

Austria
Corinna Ziegler
Email: corinna.ziegler@urlaubmalta.com

Benelux
Marianne Hoogveen
Email: marianne.hoogveen@malta.be

France
Thierry Durand
Email: thierry.durand@visitemalte.com

Germany
Uta Nubl
Fremdenverkehrsamt Malta
Email: utl.nubl@urlaubmalta.com

Italy
Matteo Prato
Adam & Partner
Email: matteo.p@adam.it

Russia
Anthony Caruana
Email: info@malta.ru

Scandinavia
Patricia O'Connell
Email: patricia.oconnell@malta.se

Spain
Maria de Pereda
Over MCW
Email: mdepereda@over-marketing.com