[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:EngvarB](/wiki/Template:EngvarB) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord)

**Malta** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:IPA-mt](/wiki/Template:IPA-mt)), officially known as the **Republic of Malta** ([Template:Lang-mt](/wiki/Template:Lang-mt)), is a [Southern European](/wiki/Southern_Europe) [island country](/wiki/Island_country) consisting of an [archipelago](/wiki/Archipelago) in the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea). It lies [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) south of [Italy](/wiki/Italy), [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) east of [Tunisia](/wiki/Tunisia), and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) north of [Libya](/wiki/Libya). The country covers just over [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), with a population of just under 450,000 (despite an extensive emigration programme since the Second World War),[[1]](#cite_note-1) making it one of the world's [smallest](/wiki/Microstate)[[2]](#cite_note-2)[[3]](#cite_note-3)[[4]](#cite_note-4) and [most densely populated](/wiki/List_of_countries_by_population_density) countries. The capital of Malta is [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta), which at 0.8 km2, is the smallest national capital in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union).[[5]](#cite_note-5) Malta has two official languages: [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_language) and [English](/wiki/English_language).

Malta's location has historically given it great strategic importance as a naval base, and a succession of powers, including the [Phoenicians](/wiki/Phoenicia), [Carthaginians](/wiki/Ancient_Carthage), [Romans](/wiki/Ancient_Rome), [Moors](/wiki/Emirate_of_Sicily), [Normans](/wiki/County_of_Sicily), [Sicilians](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sicily), [Spanish](/wiki/Habsburg_Spain), [Knights of St. John](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller), [French](/wiki/French_First_Republic) and [British](/wiki/British_Empire), have ruled the islands.

[King George VI](/wiki/George_VI) of the United Kingdom [awarded the George Cross to Malta](/wiki/Award_of_the_George_Cross_to_Malta) in 1942 for the country's bravery in the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War).[[6]](#cite_note-6) The George Cross continues to appear on Malta's national flag.[[7]](#cite_note-7) Under the Malta Independence Act, passed by the [British Parliament](/wiki/British_Parliament) in 1964, Malta gained independence from the United Kingdom as an independent sovereign [Commonwealth realm](/wiki/Commonwealth_realm), officially known from 1964 to 1974 as the [State of Malta](/wiki/State_of_Malta), with [Elizabeth II](/wiki/Elizabeth_II) as its head of state.[[8]](#cite_note-8) The country became a republic in 1974, and although no longer a Commonwealth realm, remains a current [member state](/wiki/Member_states_of_the_Commonwealth_of_Nations) of the Commonwealth of Nations. Malta was admitted to the [United Nations](/wiki/United_Nations) in 1964 and to the European Union in 2004; in 2008, it became part of the [Eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone).

Malta has a long Christian legacy and its [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Malta](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Malta) is claimed to be an [apostolic see](/wiki/Apostolic_see) because, according to the [Acts of the Apostles](/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles),[[9]](#cite_note-9) [Paul the Apostle](/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle) was shipwrecked on Malta.[[10]](#cite_note-10) [Catholicism](/wiki/Catholic_Church) is the [official](/wiki/State_religion) [religion in Malta](/wiki/Religion_in_Malta).<ref name=cia>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[11]](#cite_note-11) Malta is a popular tourist destination with its warm climate, numerous recreational areas, and architectural and historical monuments, including three [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](/wiki/World_Heritage_Site): [Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum](/wiki/Hypogeum_of_Ħal-Saflieni),[[12]](#cite_note-12) [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta),[[13]](#cite_note-13) and seven [Megalithic Temples](/wiki/Megalithic_Temples_of_Malta), which are some of the oldest free-standing structures in the world.[[14]](#cite_note-14)[[15]](#cite_note-15)<ref name=b1/>

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

The origin of the term *Malta* is uncertain, and the modern-day variation derives from the [Maltese language](/wiki/Maltese_language). The most common [etymology](/wiki/Etymology) is that the word *Malta* derives from the [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language) word [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), *meli*, "honey".[[16]](#cite_note-16) The ancient Greeks called the island [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang) (*Melitē*) meaning "[honey](/wiki/Honey)-sweet" (which was also, inter alia, the name of a [Nereid](/wiki/Nereid)[[17]](#cite_note-17)), possibly due to Malta's unique production of honey; an [endemic](/wiki/Endemism) species of [bee](/wiki/Maltese_honey_bee) lives on the island. The Romans went on to call the island Melita,[[18]](#cite_note-18) which can be considered either as a [latinisation](/wiki/Latinisation_of_names) of the Greek [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang) or the adaptation of the Doric Greek pronunciation of the same word [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang).[[19]](#cite_note-19) Another conjecture suggests that the word *Malta* comes from the [Phoenician](/wiki/Phoenician_language) word *Maleth* "a haven"[[20]](#cite_note-20) or "port"[[21]](#cite_note-21) in reference to Malta's many bays and [coves](/wiki/Cove). Few other etymological mentions appear in classical literature, with the term *Malta* appearing in its present form in the [*Antonine Itinerary*](/wiki/Antonine_Itinerary) (Itin. Marit. p. 518; Sil. Ital. xiv. 251).[[22]](#cite_note-22)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

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### Prehistory[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

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[Pottery](/wiki/Pottery) found by [archaeologists](/wiki/Archaeologists) at the [Skorba Temples](/wiki/Skorba_Temples) resembles that found in Italy, and suggests that the Maltese islands were first settled in 5200 BCE mainly by [Stone Age](/wiki/Stone_Age) hunters or farmers who had arrived from the Italian island of [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily), possibly the [Sicani](/wiki/Sicani). The extinction of the [dwarf hippos](/wiki/Hippopotamus_melitensis) and [dwarf elephants](/wiki/Palaeoloxodon_falconeri) has been linked to the earliest arrival of humans on Malta.[[23]](#cite_note-23) Prehistoric farming settlements dating to [Early Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic#Early_Neolithic) period were discovered in open areas and also in caves, such as [Għar Dalam](/wiki/Għar_Dalam).[[24]](#cite_note-24) The [Sicani](/wiki/Sicani) were the only tribe known to have inhabited the island at this time[[25]](#cite_note-25)[[26]](#cite_note-26) and are generally regarded as being closely related to the [Iberians](/wiki/Iberians).[[27]](#cite_note-27) The population on Malta grew [cereals](/wiki/Cereals), raised [livestock](/wiki/Livestock) and, in common with other ancient Mediterranean cultures, worshiped a [fertility figure](/wiki/Mother_goddess) represented in Maltese prehistoric artefacts exhibiting the proportions seen in similar statuettes, including the [Venus of Willendorf](/wiki/Venus_of_Willendorf).

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Ggantija_Temples_(1).jpg)[Ġgantija](/wiki/Ġgantija) [megalithic](/wiki/Megalith) temple complex [thumb|upright|The temple complex of](/wiki/File:Malta_16_Mnajdra.jpg) [Mnajdra](/wiki/Mnajdra) Pottery from the Għar Dalam phase is similar to pottery found in [Agrigento](/wiki/Agrigento), Sicily. A culture of [megalithis](/wiki/Megalith) temple builders then either supplanted or arose from this early period. Around the time of 3500 BC, these people built some of the oldest existing free-standing structures in the world in the form of the megalithic [Ġgantija](/wiki/Ġgantija) temples on [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo);<ref name=otsf>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> other early temples include those at [Ħaġar Qim](/wiki/Ħaġar_Qim) and [Mnajdra](/wiki/Mnajdra).<ref name=b1>Daniel Cilia, *Malta Before History* (2004: Miranda Publishers) ISBN 9990985081</ref>[[28]](#cite_note-28)[[29]](#cite_note-29) The temples have distinctive architecture, typically a complex trefoil design, and were used from 4000 to 2500 BCE. Animal bones and a knife found behind a removable altar stone suggest that temple rituals included [animal sacrifice](/wiki/Animal_sacrifice). Tentative information suggests that the sacrifices were made to the goddess of fertility, whose statue is now in the National Museum of Archaeology in Valletta.[[30]](#cite_note-30) The culture apparently disappeared from the Maltese Islands around 2500 BC. Archaeologists speculate that the temple builders fell victim to famine or disease, but this is not certain.

Another interesting archaeological feature of the Maltese islands often attributed to these ancient builders, are equidistant uniform grooves dubbed "cart tracks" or "cart ruts" which can be found in several locations throughout the islands with the most prominent being those found in [Misraħ Għar il-Kbir](/wiki/Misraħ_Għar_il-Kbir), which is informally known as "Clapham Junction". These may have been caused by wooden-wheeled carts eroding soft limestone.[[31]](#cite_note-31)[[32]](#cite_note-32) After 2500 BC, the Maltese Islands were depopulated for several decades until the arrival of a new influx of [Bronze Age](/wiki/Bronze_Age) immigrants, a culture that [cremated](/wiki/Cremation) its dead and introduced smaller megalithic structures called [dolmens](/wiki/Dolmen) to Malta.[[33]](#cite_note-33) In most cases there are small chambers here, with the cover made of a large slab placed on upright stones. They are claimed to belong to a population certainly different from that which built the previous megalithic temples. It is presumed the population arrived from [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily) because of the similarity of Maltese dolmens to some small constructions found in the largest island of the Mediterranean sea.<ref name=Piccolo-dolmens>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

### Greeks, Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Romans[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Phoenician traders,[[34]](#cite_note-34) who used the islands as a stop on their trade routes from the eastern [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) to [Cornwall](/wiki/Cornwall), joined the natives on the island.[[35]](#cite_note-35) The Phoenicians inhabited the area now known as [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina), and its surrounding town of [Rabat](/wiki/Rabat,_Malta), which they called [*Maleth*](/wiki/Melite_(ancient_city)).[[36]](#cite_note-36)[[37]](#cite_note-37) The [Romans](/wiki/Ancient_Rome), who also much later inhabited Mdina, referred to it (and the island) as *Melita*.[[18]](#cite_note-18) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Roman_Malta.jpg)[Roman](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) mosaic from the [Domvs Romana](/wiki/Domvs_Romana). After the [fall of Phoenicia](/wiki/Siege_of_Tyre_(332_BC)) in 332 BC, the area came under the control of [Carthage](/wiki/Carthage), a former Phoenician colony.[[38]](#cite_note-38) During this time the people on Malta mainly cultivated [olives](/wiki/Olive) and [carob](/wiki/Ceratonia_siliqua) and produced textiles.[[38]](#cite_note-38) During the [First Punic War](/wiki/First_Punic_War), the island was conquered after harsh fighting by [Marcus Atilius Regulus](/wiki/Marcus_Atilius_Regulus).<ref name=ei>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> After the failure of his expedition, the island fell back in the hands of Carthage, only to be conquered again in 218 BC, during the [Second Punic War](/wiki/Second_Punic_War), by Roman Consul [Tiberius Sempronius Longus](/wiki/Tiberius_Sempronius_Longus_(consul_218_BC)).<ref name=ei/> Since then, Malta became [*Foederata Civitas*](/wiki/Civitas), a designation that meant it was exempt from paying [tribute](/wiki/Tribute) or the rule of [Roman law](/wiki/Roman_law), and fell within the jurisdiction of [the province of Sicily](/wiki/Sicilia_(Roman_province)).[[18]](#cite_note-18) Punic influence, however, remained vibrant on the islands with the famous [Cippi of Melqart](/wiki/Cippi_of_Melqart), pivotal in deciphering the [Punic language](/wiki/Punic_language), dedicated in the 2nd century BC.[[39]](#cite_note-39)[[40]](#cite_note-40) Also the local Roman coinage, which ceased in the first century BC,[[41]](#cite_note-41) indicates the slow pace of the island's Romanization, since the very last locally minted coins still bear inscriptions in [Ancient Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) on the obverse (like "MEΛΙΤΑΙΩ", meaning "of the Maltese") and Punic motives, showing the resistance of the Greek and Punic cultures.[[42]](#cite_note-42) In the 1st century BC, Roman Senator and orator [Cicero](/wiki/Cicero) commented on the importance of the [Temple of Juno](/wiki/Tas-Silġ), and on the extravagant behaviour of the Roman governor of Sicily, [Verres](/wiki/Verres).<ref name=vm>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> During the 1st century BC the island was mentioned by [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) and [Diodorus Siculus](/wiki/Diodorus_Siculus): the latter praised its harbours, the wealth of its inhabitants, its lavishly decorated houses and the quality of its textile products. In 2nd century, Emperor [Hadrian](/wiki/Hadrian) (r. 117–38) upgraded the status of Malta to [*municipium*](/wiki/Municipium) or free town: the island local affairs were administered by four [*quattuorviri iuri dicundo*](/wiki/Duumviri) and a municipal senate, while a Roman [procurator](/wiki/Procurator_(Roman)), living in [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina), represented the [proconsul](/wiki/Proconsul) of Sicily.<ref name=ei/> In 58 AD, [Paul the Apostle](/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle) was washed up on the islands together with [Luke the Evangelist](/wiki/Luke_the_Evangelist) after their ship was wrecked on the islands.<ref name=ei/> [Paul the Apostle](/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle) remained on the islands three months, preaching the Christian faith, which has since thrived on Malta.<ref name=ei/> Few archaeological relics survive in Malta today from the Roman period, the sole exception being the Roman Domus, just outside the walls of Mdina.

In 395, when the [Roman Empire was divided for the last time](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire#Divisions_of_the_Roman_Empire) at the death of [Theodosius I](/wiki/Theodosius_I), Malta, following Sicily, fell under the control of the [Western Roman Empire](/wiki/Western_Roman_Empire).[[43]](#cite_note-43) During the [Migration Period](/wiki/Migration_Period) as the [Western Roman Empire declined](/wiki/Fall_of_the_Western_Roman_Empire), Malta came under attack and was conquered or occupied a number of times.[[41]](#cite_note-41) From 454 to 464 the islands was subdued by the [Vandals](/wiki/Vandals), and after 464 by the [Ostrogoths](/wiki/Ostrogoths).<ref name=ei/> In 533 [Belisarius](/wiki/Belisarius), on his way to conquer the [Vandal Kingdom](/wiki/Vandal_Kingdom) in North Africa, reunited the islands under Imperial ([Eastern](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire)) rule.<ref name=ei/> Little is known about the Byzantine rule in Malta: the island depended on the [theme of Sicily](/wiki/Sicily_(theme)) and had Greek Governors and a small Greek garrison.<ref name=ei/> While the bulk of population continued to be constituted by the old, Latinized dwellers, during this period its religious allegiance oscillated between the [Pope](/wiki/Pope) and the [Patriarch of Constantinople](/wiki/Ecumenical_Patriarchate_of_Constantinople).<ref name=ei/> The Byzantine rule introduced [Greek](/wiki/Greeks) families to the Maltese collective.[[44]](#cite_note-44) Malta remained under the [Byzantine Empire](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) until 870, when it fell to the Arabs.<ref name=ei/>[[45]](#cite_note-45)

### Muslim period and the Middle Ages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also)

Malta became involved in the Muslim–Byzantine Wars, and the conquest of Malta is closely linked with [that of Sicily](/wiki/Muslim_conquest_of_Sicily) that began in 827 after admiral [Euphemius'](/wiki/Euphemius_(Sicily)) betrayal of his fellow Byzantines, requesting that the [Aghlabids](/wiki/Aghlabids) invade the island.[[46]](#cite_note-46)The Muslim chronicler and geographer [al-Himyari](/wiki/Kitab_al-Rawd_al-Mitar) recounts that in 870 AD, following a violent struggle against the occupying Byzantines, the Muslim invaders, first led by Halaf al-Hadim, and later by Sawada ibn Muhammad,[[47]](#cite_note-47) looted and pillaged the island, destroying the most important buildings, and leaving it practically uninhabited until it was recolonised by the Muslims from Sicily in 1048–1049 AD.[[47]](#cite_note-47) It is uncertain whether this new settlement took place as a consequence of demographic expansion in Sicily, as a result of a higher standard of living in Sicily (in which case the recolonisation may have taken place a few decades earlier), or as a result of civil war which broke out among Muslim rulers of Sicily in 1038.[[48]](#cite_note-48)The Muslims introduced new [irrigation](/wiki/Irrigation), some fruits and cotton and the [Siculo-Arabic](/wiki/Siculo-Arabic) language was adopted on the island from Sicily: it would eventually evolve into the [Maltese language](/wiki/Maltese_language).[[49]](#cite_note-49) The Christians on the island were allowed [freedom of religion](/wiki/Freedom_of_religion); they had to pay [jizya](/wiki/Jizya), a tax for non-Muslims, but were exempt from the tax that Muslims had to pay ([zakat](/wiki/Zakat)).[[50]](#cite_note-50)

### Norman conquest[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[thumb|left|upright|](/wiki/File:Roger_I_of_Sicily.jpg)[Roger I of Sicily](/wiki/Roger_I_of_Sicily) returned Malta to Christian rule. The [Normans](/wiki/Normans) captured Malta in 1091, as part of their [conquest of Sicily](/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_Sicily).[[51]](#cite_note-51) The Norman leader, [Roger I of Sicily](/wiki/Roger_I_of_Sicily), was welcomed by the native Christians.[[18]](#cite_note-18) The notion that Count Roger I reportedly tore off a portion of his checkered red-and-white banner and presented it to the [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_people) – forming the basis of the modern [flag of Malta](/wiki/Flag_of_Malta) in gratitude for having fought on his behalf – is founded in myth.[[18]](#cite_note-18)[[52]](#cite_note-52) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Malta_by_Piri_Reis.jpg)[Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) map of Malta, by [Piri Reis](/wiki/Piri_Reis)

The Norman period was productive; Malta became part of the newly formed [Kingdom of Sicily](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sicily) which also covered the island of Sicily and the southern half of the [Italian Peninsula](/wiki/Italian_Peninsula).[[18]](#cite_note-18) The Catholic Church was reinstated as the state religion with Malta under the [See of Palermo](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Palermo), and some [Norman architecture](/wiki/Norman_architecture) sprung up around Malta especially in its ancient capital [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina).[[18]](#cite_note-18) [Tancred, King of Sicily](/wiki/Tancred,_King_of_Sicily), the last Norman monarch, made Malta a [fief](/wiki/Fief) of the kingdom and installed a [count of Malta](/wiki/Count_of_Malta). As the islands were much desired due to their strategic importance, it was during this time the men of Malta were [militarised](/wiki/Militarization) to fend off capture attempts; early counts were skilled [Genoese](/wiki/Republic_of_Genoa) [privateers](/wiki/Privateer).[[18]](#cite_note-18) The kingdom passed on to the dynasty of [Hohenstaufen](/wiki/Hohenstaufen) from 1194 until 1266. During this period, when Frederick II of Hohenstaufen began to reorganise his Sicilian kingdom, Western culture and religion began to exert their influence more intensely.[[53]](#cite_note-53)Malta formed part of the [Holy Roman Empire](/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire) for 72 years. Malta was declared a county and a [marquisate](/wiki/Marquess), but its trade was totally ruined. For a long time it remained solely a fortified [garrison](/wiki/Garrison).[[54]](#cite_note-54) A mass expulsion of Arabs occurred in 1224 and the entire Christian male population of [Celano](/wiki/Celano) in Abruzzo was deported to Malta in the same year.[[18]](#cite_note-18) In 1249 [Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor](/wiki/Frederick_II,_Holy_Roman_Emperor), decreed that all remaining Muslims be expelled from Malta[[55]](#cite_note-55) or impelled to convert[[56]](#cite_note-56)[[57]](#cite_note-57) For a brief period the kingdom passed to the [Capetian House of Anjou](/wiki/Capetian_House_of_Anjou), but high taxes made the dynasty unpopular in Malta, due in part to [Charles of Anjou's](/wiki/Charles_I_of_Naples) war against the Republic of Genoa, and the island of [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo) was sacked in 1275.[[18]](#cite_note-18) A large revolt on Sicily known as the [Sicilian Vespers](/wiki/Sicilian_Vespers) followed these attacks, that saw the Peninsula separating into the Kingdom of Naples.

### Crown of Aragon rule and the Knights of Malta[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|Flag of the Aragonese](/wiki/File:Bandiera_del_Regno_di_Sicilia_4.svg) [Kingdom of Sicily](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sicily) Malta was ruled by the [House of Barcelona](/wiki/House_of_Barcelona), an Aragonese dynasty from 1282 to 1409,<ref name=culturalheritage.gov.mt> [Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> with the Aragonese aiding the Maltese insurgents in the [Sicilian Vespers](/wiki/Sicilian_Vespers) in [a naval battle in Grand Harbour in 1283](/wiki/Battle_of_Malta).

Relatives of the [kings of Aragon](/wiki/List_of_Aragonese_monarchs) ruled the island until 1409, when it formally passed to the [Crown of Aragon](/wiki/Crown_of_Aragon). Early on in the Aragonese ascendancy, the sons of the monarchy received the title, "Count of Malta". During this time much of the local nobility was created. However, by 1397 the bearing of the title "Count of Malta" reverted to a feudal basis with two families fighting over the distinction, which caused some conflict. This led the [Martin I of Sicily](/wiki/Martin_I_of_Sicily) to abolish the title. Dispute over the title returned when the title was reinstated a few years later and the Maltese, led by the local nobility, rose up against Count Gonsalvo Monroy.[[18]](#cite_note-18) Although they opposed the Count, the Maltese voiced their loyalty to the [Sicilian Crown](/wiki/List_of_monarchs_of_Sicily), which so impressed [Alfonso V of Aragon](/wiki/Alfonso_V_of_Aragon) that he did not punish the people for their rebellion. Instead, he promised never to grant the title to a third party, and incorporated it back into the crown. The city of [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina) was given the title of *Città Notabile* as a result of this sequence of events.[[18]](#cite_note-18) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:JPDV.jpg)[Jean Parisot de Valette](/wiki/Jean_Parisot_de_Valette), the founder of [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta) [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Malta_Mdina_BW_2011-10-05_12-41-38.JPG)[St. Paul's Cathedral, Mdina](/wiki/St._Paul's_Cathedral,_Mdina) built in the [Baroque](/wiki/Baroque_architecture) style. On 23 March 1530,[[58]](#cite_note-58) [Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor](/wiki/Charles_V,_Holy_Roman_Emperor), gave the islands to the [Knights Hospitaller](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller) under the leadership of Frenchman [Philippe Villiers de L'Isle-Adam](/wiki/Philippe_Villiers_de_L'Isle-Adam), [Grand Master of the Order](/wiki/List_of_Princes_and_Grand_Masters_of_the_Sovereign_Military_Order_of_Malta),[[59]](#cite_note-59)<ref name=autogenerated2>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> in perpetual lease for which they had to pay an annual [tribute of one single Maltese Falcon](/wiki/Tribute_of_the_Maltese_Falcon).<ref name=autogenerated6>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[61]](#cite_note-61)[[62]](#cite_note-62)[[63]](#cite_note-63)[[64]](#cite_note-64)[[65]](#cite_note-65)[[66]](#cite_note-66)[[67]](#cite_note-67) These knights, a military religious order now known as the [Knights of Malta](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller), had been driven out of [Rhodes](/wiki/Rhodes) by the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) in 1522.

In 1551, the population of the island of [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo) (around 5,000 people) were taken as slaves by [Barbary pirates](/wiki/Barbary_pirates) and brought to the [Barbary Coast](/wiki/Barbary_Coast) in present-day [Libya](/wiki/Libya).

The knights, led by Frenchman [Jean Parisot de Valette](/wiki/Jean_Parisot_de_Valette), Grand Master of the Order, withstood the [Great Siege of Malta](/wiki/Great_Siege_of_Malta) by the Ottomans in 1565.<ref name=autogenerated2/> The knights, with the help of Spanish and Maltese forces, were victorious and repelled the attack. Speaking of the battle [Voltaire](/wiki/Voltaire) said, "Nothing is better known than the siege of Malta."[[68]](#cite_note-68)[[69]](#cite_note-69) After the siege they decided to increase Malta's [fortifications](/wiki/Fortification), particularly in the inner-harbour area, where the new city of [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta), named in honour of Valette, was built. They also established [watchtowers](/wiki/Watchtower) along the coasts – the [Wignacourt](/wiki/Wignacourt_towers), [Lascaris](/wiki/Lascaris_towers) and [De Redin towers](/wiki/De_Redin_towers) – named after the Grand Masters who ordered the work. The Knights' presence on the island saw the completion of many architectural and cultural projects, including the embellishment of Città Vittoriosa (modern [Birgu](/wiki/Birgu)), the construction of new cities including Città Rohan (modern [Żebbuġ](/wiki/Żebbuġ)) and Città Hompesch (modern [Żabbar](/wiki/Żabbar)) and the introduction of new academic and social resources. Approximately 11,000 people out of a population of 60,000 died of [plague](/wiki/Plague_(disease)) in 1675.[[70]](#cite_note-70) [thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Michelangelo_Caravaggio_021.jpg)[*The Beheading of Saint John*](/wiki/The_Beheading_of_Saint_John_the_Baptist_(Caravaggio)), by [Caravaggio](/wiki/Caravaggio). Oil on canvas, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Oratory of the [Co-Cathedral](/wiki/St._John's_Co-Cathedral).

### French period[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

The Knights' reign ended when [Napoleon](/wiki/Napoleon_I_of_France) captured Malta on his way to [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt) during the [French Revolutionary Wars](/wiki/French_Revolutionary_Wars:_Campaigns_of_1798) in 1798. Over the years preceding Napoleon's capture of the islands, the power of the Knights had declined and the Order had become unpopular. This was around the time when the universal values of freedom and liberty were incarnated by the [French Revolution](/wiki/French_Revolution). People from both inside the Order and outside appealed to [Napoleon Bonaparte](/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte) to oust the Knights. Napoleon Bonaparte did not hesitate. His fleet arrived in 1798, en route to his expedition of Egypt. As a ruse towards the Knights, Napoleon asked for safe harbour to resupply his ships, and then turned his guns against his hosts once safely inside Valletta. Grand Master [Hompesch](/wiki/Ferdinand_von_Hompesch_zu_Bolheim) capitulated, and Napoleon entered Malta.

[thumb|right|150px|Bust of Bonaparte at](/wiki/File:Napoleonbonapartemalta.jpg) [Palazzo Parisio](/wiki/Palazzo_Parisio_(Valletta)) in Valetta

During 12–18 June 1798, Napoleon resided at the [Palazzo Parisio](/wiki/Palazzo_Parisio_(Valletta)) in Valletta.[[71]](#cite_note-71)[[72]](#cite_note-72)[[73]](#cite_note-73) He reformed national administration with the creation of a Government Commission, twelve municipalities, a public finance administration, the abolition of all feudal rights and privileges, the [abolition of slavery](/wiki/Abolitionism_in_France) and the granting of freedom to all Turkish and Jewish slaves.[[74]](#cite_note-74)<ref name=stbenedict>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> On the judicial level, a family code was framed and twelve judges were nominated. [Public education](/wiki/Public_education) was organised along principles laid down by Bonaparte himself, providing for primary and secondary education.<ref name=stbenedict/>[[75]](#cite_note-75) He then sailed for Egypt leaving a substantial garrison in Malta.

The French forces left behind became unpopular with the Maltese, due particularly to the French forces' hostility towards Catholicism and pillaging of local churches to fund Napoleon's war efforts. French financial and religious policies so angered the Maltese that they rebelled, forcing the French to depart. Great Britain, along with the [Kingdom of Naples](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Naples) and the [Kingdom of Sicily](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Sicily), sent ammunition and aid to the Maltese and Britain also sent [her navy](/wiki/Royal_Navy), which blockaded the islands.<ref name=stbenedict/>

General [Claude-Henri Belgrand de Vaubois](/wiki/Claude-Henri_Belgrand_de_Vaubois) surrendered his French forces in 1800.<ref name=stbenedict/> Maltese leaders presented the island to Sir [Alexander Ball](/wiki/Alexander_Ball), asking that the island become a British [Dominion](/wiki/Dominion). The Maltese people created a Declaration of Rights in which they agreed to come "under the protection and sovereignty of the King of the free people, His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland". The Declaration also stated that "his Majesty has no right to cede these Islands to any power...if he chooses to withdraw his protection, and abandon his sovereignty, the right of electing another sovereign, or of the governing of these Islands, belongs to us, the inhabitants and aborigines alone, and without control."[[76]](#cite_note-76)[[77]](#cite_note-77)

### British Empire and the Second World War[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|150px|Plaque of the](/wiki/File:British_palazzo_parisio.jpg) [Rights of man](/wiki/Rights_of_man) during the [British Protectorate](/wiki/Crown_colony_of_Malta) (1802) at [Palazzo Parisio](/wiki/Palazzo_Parisio_(Valletta)) [thumb|The heavily bomb-damaged Kingsway (now Republic Street) in](/wiki/File:BombDamageMalta.jpg) [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta) during the [Siege of Malta](/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_(World_War_II)), 1942. In 1814, as part of the [Treaty of Paris](/wiki/Treaty_of_Paris_(1814)),[[76]](#cite_note-76)[[78]](#cite_note-78) Malta officially became a part of the [British Empire](/wiki/British_Empire) and was used as a shipping way-station and fleet headquarters. After the [Suez Canal](/wiki/Suez_Canal) opened in 1869, Malta's position halfway between the [Strait of Gibraltar](/wiki/Strait_of_Gibraltar) and Egypt proved to be its main asset, and it was considered an important stop on the way to India, a central trade route for the British. Because of its position, several culinary and botanical products were introduced in Malta; some examples (derived from the National Book of Trade Customs found in the National Library) include wheat (for bread making) and bacon.

Between 1915 and 1918, during the [First World War](/wiki/First_World_War), Malta became known as *the Nurse of the Mediterranean* due to the large number of wounded soldiers who were accommodated in Malta.[[79]](#cite_note-79) In 1919 British troops fired on a rally protesting against new taxes, killing four Maltese men. The event, known as [Sette Giugno](/wiki/Sette_Giugno) (Italian for *7 June*), is commemorated every year and is one of five National Days.[[80]](#cite_note-80)[[81]](#cite_note-81) Before the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War), Valletta was the location of the [Royal Navy's](/wiki/Royal_Navy) [Mediterranean Fleet's](/wiki/British_Mediterranean_Fleet) headquarters. However, despite [Winston Churchill's](/wiki/Winston_Churchill) objections,<ref name=BJandCS-p36>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> the command was moved to [Alexandria](/wiki/Alexandria), [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt), in April 1937 fearing it was too susceptible to air attacks from Europe.<ref name=BJandCS-p36/>[[82]](#cite_note-82)<ref name=ElliottP--pxx>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

During the Second World War, Malta played a very important role for the [Allies](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_II); being a British colony, situated close to Sicily and the [Axis](/wiki/Axis_Powers) shipping lanes, Malta was bombarded by the Italian and German air forces. Malta was used by the British to launch attacks on the Italian navy and had a submarine base. It was also used as a listening post, reading German radio messages including [Enigma](/wiki/Enigma_(machine)) traffic.<ref name=CP-p42-44>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> The bravery of the Maltese people during the second [Siege of Malta](/wiki/Siege_of_Malta_(World_War_II)) moved [King George VI](/wiki/George_VI_of_the_United_Kingdom) to award the [George Cross](/wiki/Award_of_the_George_Cross_to_Malta) to Malta on a collective basis on 15 April 1942 "to bear witness to a heroism and devotion that will long be famous in history". Some historians argue that the award caused Britain to incur disproportionate losses in defending Malta, as British credibility would have suffered if Malta surrendered, [as British forces in Singapore had done](/wiki/Battle_of_Singapore).[[83]](#cite_note-83) A depiction of the George Cross now appears in the upper hoist corner of the [Flag of Malta](/wiki/Flag_of_Malta). The collective award remained unique until April 1999, when the [Royal Ulster Constabulary](/wiki/Royal_Ulster_Constabulary) became the second[Template:Spaced ndashand](/wiki/Template:Spaced_ndash), to date, the only other[Template:Spaced ndashrecipient](/wiki/Template:Spaced_ndash) of a collective George Cross.[[84]](#cite_note-84)

### Independence and Republic[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|Monument to the independence of Malta in](/wiki/File:Denkmal_an_die_Unabhängigkeit_Maltas_in_Valletta.jpg) [Floriana](/wiki/Floriana) [thumb|right|Malta joined the European Union in 2004 and signed the](/wiki/File:Tratado_de_Lisboa_13_12_2007_(081).jpg) [Lisbon Treaty](/wiki/Lisbon_Treaty) in 2007.

Malta achieved its independence on 21 September 1964 ([Independence Day](/wiki/Independence_Day_(Malta))) after intense negotiations with the United Kingdom, led by Maltese Prime Minister [George Borġ Olivier](/wiki/George_Borġ_Olivier). Under its 1964 constitution, Malta initially retained Queen [Elizabeth II](/wiki/Elizabeth_II_of_the_United_Kingdom) as [Queen of Malta](/wiki/Queen_of_Malta) and thus [Head of State](/wiki/Head_of_State), with a [Governor-General](/wiki/Governor-General) exercising executive authority on her behalf. In 1971, the [Malta Labour Party](/wiki/Malta_Labour_Party) led by [Dom Mintoff](/wiki/Dom_Mintoff) won the General Elections, resulting in Malta declaring itself a republic on 13 December 1974 ([Republic Day](/wiki/Republic_Day_(Malta))) within the [Commonwealth](/wiki/Commonwealth_of_Nations), with the [President](/wiki/President_of_Malta) as [head of state](/wiki/Head_of_state). A defence agreement signed soon after independence (and re-negotiated in 1972) expired on 31 March 1979.

Malta adopted a policy of [neutrality](/wiki/Neutral_country) in 1980.[[85]](#cite_note-85) In 1989, Malta was the venue of a [summit](/wiki/Malta_Summit) between US President [George H.W. Bush](/wiki/George_H.W._Bush) and Soviet leader [Mikhail Gorbachev](/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev), their first face-to-face encounter, which signalled the end of the [Cold War](/wiki/Cold_War).[[86]](#cite_note-86) On 16 July 1990, Malta, through its foreign minister, [Guido de Marco](/wiki/Guido_de_Marco), applied to join the European Union.[[87]](#cite_note-87) After tough negotiations, a referendum was held on 8 March 2003, which resulted in a favourable vote.[[88]](#cite_note-88) General Elections held on 12 April 2003, gave a clear mandate to the Prime Minister, [Eddie Fenech Adami](/wiki/Eddie_Fenech_Adami), to sign the Treaty of accession to the European Union on 16 April 2003 in [Athens](/wiki/Athens), Greece.[[89]](#cite_note-89) Malta joined the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union) on 1 May 2004.[[90]](#cite_note-90) Following the European Council of 21–22 June 2007, Malta joined the [eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) on 1 January 2008.[[91]](#cite_note-91)

## Politics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|The Courthouse,](/wiki/File:Malta_Valletta_BW_2011-10-07_10-41-05.JPG) [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta). [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Malta is a republic[[92]](#cite_note-92) whose [parliamentary system](/wiki/Parliamentary_system) and [public administration](/wiki/Public_administration) are closely modelled on the [Westminster system](/wiki/Westminster_system). Malta had the second-highest [voter turnout](/wiki/Voter_turnout) in the world (and the highest for nations without [mandatory voting](/wiki/Mandatory_voting)), based on election turnout in national [lower house](/wiki/Lower_house) elections from 1960 to 1995.[[93]](#cite_note-93) The [unicameral](/wiki/Unicameral) [House of Representatives](/wiki/House_of_Representatives_of_Malta), (Maltese: *Kamra tad-Deputati*), is elected by direct universal suffrage through [single transferable vote](/wiki/Single_transferable_vote) every five years, unless the House is dissolved earlier by the [President](/wiki/President_of_Malta) on advice of the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Malta).

The House of Representatives is made up of 69 members of parliament. However, where a party wins an absolute majority of votes, but does not have a majority of seats, that party is given additional seats to ensure a parliamentary majority. The [Constitution of Malta](/wiki/Constitution_of_Malta) provides that the president appoint as prime minister the member of the House who is best able to command a (governing) majority in the House.

The [President of Malta](/wiki/President_of_Malta) is appointed for a five-year term by a resolution of the House of Representatives carried by a simple majority. The role of the president as head of state is largely ceremonial. The main political parties are the [Nationalist Party](/wiki/Partit_Nazzjonalista), which is a [Christian democratic](/wiki/Christian_democracy) party, and the [Labour Party](/wiki/Partit_Laburista), which is a [social democratic](/wiki/Social_democracy) party. The Labour Party is currently at the helm of the government, the Prime Minister being [Joseph Muscat](/wiki/Joseph_Muscat). The Nationalist Party, with [Simon Busuttil](/wiki/Simon_Busuttil) as its leader, is in opposition. There are a number of smaller political parties in Malta that presently have no parliamentary representation.

Until the [Second World War](/wiki/Second_World_War), Maltese politics was dominated by the [language question](/wiki/Languages_of_Malta) fought out by [Italophile](/wiki/Italophile) and [Anglophile](/wiki/Anglophile) parties.[[94]](#cite_note-94) Post-War politics dealt with constitutional questions on the relations with Britain (first with [integration](/wiki/Maltese_integration_into_the_United_Kingdom_referendum,_1956) then [independence](/wiki/Independence_Day_(Malta))) and, eventually, relations with the [European Union](/wiki/History_of_Malta#EU_membership).

### Administrative divisions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Malta_location_map.svg)[Administrative divisions](/wiki/Local_councils_of_Malta) of Malta.

Malta has had a system of local government since 1993,[[95]](#cite_note-95) based on the [European Charter of Local Self-Government](/wiki/European_Charter_of_Local_Self-Government). The country is divided into [five regions](/wiki/Regions_of_Malta), with each region having its own Regional Committee, serving as the intermediate level between local government and national government.[[96]](#cite_note-96) The regions are divided into [local councils](/wiki/Local_councils_of_Malta), of which there are currently 68 (54 in Malta and 14 in [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo)). Sixteen "hamlets", which form part of larger councils, have their own Administrative Committee. The [six districts](/wiki/Districts_of_Malta) (five on the main island) serve primarily statistical purposes.[[97]](#cite_note-97) Each council is made up of a number of councillors (from 5 to 13, depending on and relative to the population they represent). A mayor and a [deputy mayor](/wiki/Deputy_mayor) are elected by and from the councillors. The executive secretary, who is appointed by the council, is the executive, administrative and financial head of the council. Councillors are elected every four years through the [single transferable vote](/wiki/Single_transferable_vote). People who are eligible to vote in the election of the Maltese [House of Representatives](/wiki/House_of_Representatives_of_Malta) as well as resident [citizens of the EU](/wiki/Citizenship_of_the_European_Union) are eligible to vote. Due to system reforms, no elections were held before 2012. Since then, elections have been held every two years for an alternating half of the councils.

Local councils are responsible for the general upkeep and embellishment of the locality (including repairs to non-arterial roads), allocation of local wardens and refuse collection; they also carry out general administrative duties for the central government such as collection of government rents and funds and answer government-related public inquiries.

### Foreign relations[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

The Republic of Malta has the following [sister cities](/wiki/Twin_towns_and_sister_cities):

* [Template:Flagicon](/wiki/Template:Flagicon) [Bainbridge Island, Washington](/wiki/Bainbridge_Island,_Washington)

In addition, a number of individual cities, towns and villages in Malta have sister cities abroad: see [List of twin towns and sister cities in Malta](/wiki/List_of_twin_towns_and_sister_cities_in_Malta)

Aside from this, Malta, as a member of the European Union, has bilateral relations with most of Europe. The country's bilateral relations in other continents are very limited, with some having non-existent bilateral relations. Japan, Philippines and Australia have expressed cooperation with Malta for future bilateral relations.

### Military[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:US_Navy_111205-N-FV216-139_The_Armed_Forces_of_Malta_counter_piracy_vessel_protection_detachment_demonstrates_aerial_boarding_procedures_during_Eur.jpg)[*Protector*-class patrol boats](/wiki/Protector-class_coastal_patrol_boat) of the [Maritime Squadron of the AFM](/wiki/Maritime_Squadron_of_the_Armed_Forces_of_Malta).

The objectives of the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) are to maintain a military organisation with the primary aim of defending the islands' integrity according to the defence roles as set by the government in an efficient and cost-effective manner. This is achieved by emphasising the maintenance of Malta's territorial waters and airspace integrity.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The AFM also engages in combating terrorism, fighting against illicit drug trafficking, conducting anti-illegal immigrant operations and patrols and anti-illegal fishing operations, operating [search and rescue](/wiki/Search_and_rescue) (SAR) services, and physical/electronic security/surveillance of sensitive locations. Malta's search-and-rescue area extends from east of [Tunisia](/wiki/Tunisia) to west of [Crete](/wiki/Crete), covering an area of around 250,000 km2.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

As a military organisation, the AFM provides backup support to the [Malta Police Force](/wiki/Malta_Police_Force) (MPF) and other government departments/agencies in situations as required in an organised, disciplined manner in the event of national emergencies (such as natural disasters) or internal security and bomb disposal.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

On another level, the AFM establishes and/or consolidates [bilateral co-operation](/wiki/Bilateralism) with other countries to reach higher operational effectiveness related to AFM roles.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [left|thumb|left|Topographic map of Malta](/wiki/File:General_map_of_Malta.svg)

Malta is an [archipelago](/wiki/Archipelago) in the central [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean) (in its eastern basin), some [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) south of the Italian island of [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily) across the [Malta Channel](/wiki/Malta_Channel). Only the three largest islands – [Malta](/wiki/Malta_Island) (Malta), [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo) (Għawdex) and [Comino](/wiki/Comino) (Kemmuna) – are inhabited. The smaller islands (see below) are uninhabited. The islands of the archipelago lie on the Malta plateau, a shallow shelf formed from the high points of a [land bridge](/wiki/Land_bridge) between Sicily and North Africa that became isolated as sea levels rose after the last [Ice Age](/wiki/Ice_Age).[[98]](#cite_note-98) The archipelago is therefore situated in the zone between the Eurasian and African tectonic plates.[[99]](#cite_note-99)[[100]](#cite_note-100) Numerous bays along the indented coastline of the islands provide good harbours. The landscape consists of low hills with terraced fields. The highest point in Malta is [Ta' Dmejrek](/wiki/Ta'_Dmejrek), at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), near [Dingli](/wiki/Dingli). Although there are some small rivers at times of high rainfall, there are no permanent rivers or lakes on Malta. However, some watercourses have fresh water running all year round at [Baħrija](/wiki/Baħrija) near [Ras ir-Raħeb](/wiki/Ras_ir-Raħeb), at l-Imtaħleb and San Martin, and at Lunzjata Valley in Gozo.

[Phytogeographically](/wiki/Phytogeography), Malta belongs to the Liguro-Tyrrhenian province of the [Mediterranean Region](/wiki/Mediterranean_Region) within the [Boreal Kingdom](/wiki/Boreal_Kingdom). According to the [WWF](/wiki/World_Wide_Fund_for_Nature), the territory of Malta belongs to the [ecoregion](/wiki/Ecoregion) of "Mediterranean Forests, Woodlands and Scrub".[[101]](#cite_note-101)[thumb|Maltese landscape, Għadira](/wiki/File:View_of_Nature_Reserve_from_St._Agatha's_Tower.JPG)

The minor islands that form part of the archipelago are uninhabited and include:

[Template:Colbegin](/wiki/Template:Colbegin)

* Barbaġanni Rock ([Gozo](/wiki/Gozo))
* [Cominotto](/wiki/Cominotto), (*Kemmunett*)
* Dellimara Island ([Marsaxlokk](/wiki/Marsaxlokk))
* [Filfla](/wiki/Filfla) ([Żurrieq](/wiki/Żurrieq))/([Siġġiewi](/wiki/Siġġiewi))
* Fessej Rock
* [Fungus Rock](/wiki/Fungus_Rock), (*Il-Ġebla tal-Ġeneral*) ([Gozo](/wiki/Gozo))
* Għallis Rock ([Naxxar](/wiki/Naxxar))
* Ħalfa Rock ([Gozo](/wiki/Gozo))
* Large Blue Lagoon Rocks ([Comino](/wiki/Comino))
* [Islands of St. Paul](/wiki/Islands_of_St._Paul)/Selmunett Island ([Mellieħa](/wiki/Mellieħa))
* [Manoel Island](/wiki/Manoel_Island), which connects to the town of [Gżira](/wiki/Gżira), on the mainland, via a bridge
* Mistra Rocks ([San Pawl il-Baħar](/wiki/San_Pawl_il-Baħar))
* Taċ-Ċawl Rock ([Gozo](/wiki/Gozo))
* Qawra Point/Ta' Fraben Island ([San Pawl il-Baħar](/wiki/San_Pawl_il-Baħar))
* Small Blue Lagoon Rocks ([Comino](/wiki/Comino))
* Sala Rock ([Żabbar](/wiki/Żabbar))
* Xrobb l-Għaġin Rock ([Marsaxlokk](/wiki/Marsaxlokk))
* Ta' taħt il-Mazz Rock

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### Climate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Blue Lagoon Bay between](/wiki/File:Blue_Lagoon_and_Cominotto.JPG) [Comino](/wiki/Comino) and [Cominotto](/wiki/Cominotto) island Malta has a [Mediterranean climate](/wiki/Mediterranean_climate) ([Köppen climate classification](/wiki/Köppen_climate_classification) *Csa*),<ref name=cia/>[[102]](#cite_note-102) with very mild winters and warm to hot summers. Rain occurs mainly in autumn and winter, with summer being generally dry. According to [International Living](/wiki/International_Living), Malta is the country with the best climate in the world.[[103]](#cite_note-103) The average yearly temperature is around [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night. In the coldest month – January – the typically maximum temperature ranges from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and minimum [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night. In the warmest month – August – the typically maximum temperature ranges from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and minimum [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night. Generally – summers/holiday season lasts to 8 months, starting from around mid-April with temperatures [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night, ending in November with temperatures [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night, although also in the remaining 4 months temperatures sometimes reach [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert). Amongst all capitals in the continent of Europe, Valletta – the capital of Malta has the warmest winters, with average temperatures of around [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night in the period January–February. In March and December average temperatures is around [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) during the day and [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) at night.[[104]](#cite_note-104) Large fluctuations in temperature are rare.

Average annual temperature of the sea is [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert), from [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in February to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in August. In the 6 months – from June to November – the average sea temperature exceeds [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).[[105]](#cite_note-105)[[106]](#cite_note-106)[[107]](#cite_note-107) [Sunshine duration](/wiki/Sunshine_duration) hours total around 3,000 per year (the highest results in Europe), from an average 5.2 hours of sunshine duration per day in December to an average above 12 hours in July.[[106]](#cite_note-106)[[108]](#cite_note-108) This is about double that of cities in the northern half of Europe, for comparison: London – 1,461;<ref name=London\_climate>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> however, in winter it has up to four times more sunshine; for comparison: in December, London has 37 hours of sunshine<ref name=London\_climate/> whereas Malta has above 160.

[Template:Weather box](/wiki/Template:Weather_box)

### Urbanisation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

According to [Eurostat](/wiki/Eurostat), Malta is composed of two [Larger Urban Zones](/wiki/Larger_Urban_Zones) nominally referred to as "Valletta" (the main island of Malta) and "Gozo".[[109]](#cite_note-109) According to [Demographia](/wiki/Demographia), state is identified as urban area.[[110]](#cite_note-110) According to [European Spatial Planning Observation Network](/wiki/European_Spatial_Planning_Observation_Network), Malta is identified as Functional Urban Area (FUA).[[111]](#cite_note-111) According to United Nations, about 95% area of Malta is urban area and the number grows every year.[[112]](#cite_note-112) Also, according to the results of ESPON and EU Commission studies, "*the whole territory of Malta constitutes a single urban region*".[[113]](#cite_note-113) Occasionally in the media and official publications Malta is referred to as a [city-state](/wiki/City-state).[[114]](#cite_note-114)[[115]](#cite_note-115) Also, the Maltese coat-of-arms bears a [mural crown](/wiki/Mural_crown) described as "representing the fortifications of Malta and denoting a City State".[[116]](#cite_note-116) Malta, with area of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) and population of 0.4 million, is one of the [most densely populated](/wiki/List_of_sovereign_states_and_dependent_territories_by_population_density) countries worldwide.

## Economy[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Refimprove section](/wiki/Template:Refimprove_section) [thumb|Valletta's maritime industrial zone](/wiki/File:AIDAcara_Valetta.jpg) Malta is classified as an [advanced economy](/wiki/Advanced_economy) together with 32 other countries according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[[117]](#cite_note-117) Until 1800 Malta depended on cotton, tobacco and its shipyards for exports. Once under British control, they came to depend on [Malta Dockyard](/wiki/Malta_Dockyard) for support of the [Royal Navy](/wiki/Royal_Navy), especially during the [Crimean war](/wiki/Crimean_war) of 1854. The military base benefited craftsmen and all those who served the military.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

In 1869, the opening of the [Suez Canal](/wiki/Suez_Canal) gave Malta's economy a great boost, as there was a massive increase in the shipping which entered the port. Ships stopping at Malta's docks for refuelling helped the [Entrepôt](/wiki/Entrepôt) trade, which brought additional benefits to the island.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

However, towards the end of the 19th century the economy began declining, and by the 1940s Malta's economy was in serious crisis. One factor was the longer range of newer merchant ships that required less frequent refuelling stops. [thumb|left|The dolphin show at Mediterraneo Marine Park. Tourism generates a significant part of the GDP of Malta.](/wiki/File:Mediterraneo_dolphin_show_1.JPG) Currently, Malta's major resources are [limestone](/wiki/Limestone), a favourable geographic location and a productive labour force. Malta produces only about 20% of its food needs, has limited freshwater supplies because of the drought in the summer and has no domestic energy sources, aside from the potential for [solar energy](/wiki/Solar_energy) from its plentiful sunlight.[[118]](#cite_note-118) The economy is dependent on foreign trade (serving as a freight trans-shipment point), manufacturing (especially electronics and textiles) and tourism.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Film production](/wiki/Films_shot_in_Malta) is a growing contributor to the Maltese economy.[[119]](#cite_note-119) The first film was shot in Malta in 1925 (*Sons of the Sea*);[[120]](#cite_note-120) over 100 feature films have been entirely or partially filmed in the country since then[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed). Malta has served as a "double" for a wide variety of locations and historic periods including Ancient Greece, Ancient and Modern Rome, Iraq, the Middle East and many more[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed). The Maltese government introduced financial incentives for filmmakers in 2005.[[121]](#cite_note-121) The current financial incentives to foreign productions currently[Template:When](/wiki/Template:When) stand at 25% with an additional 2% if Malta stands in as Malta; meaning a production can get up to 27% back on their eligible spending incurred in Malta[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed).

[thumb|right|Malta is part of a monetary union, the](/wiki/File:Eurozone.svg) [eurozone](/wiki/Eurozone) (dark blue) The government is investing heavily in education, including college.

In preparation for Malta's membership in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union), which it joined on 1 May 2004, it [privatised](/wiki/Privatised) some state-controlled firms and liberalised markets. For example, the government announced on 8 January 2007 that it was selling its 40% stake in [MaltaPost](/wiki/MaltaPost), to complete a privatisation process which has been ongoing for the past five years. In 2010, Malta managed to privatise telecommunications, postal services, shipyards and shipbuilding.

Malta has taken important and substantial steps to establish itself as a global player in the cross-border fund administration business. Competing against countries like [Ireland](/wiki/Republic_of_Ireland) and [Luxembourg](/wiki/Luxembourg), Malta has a unique combination of a multi-lingual workforce and a strong [legal system](/wiki/Law_of_Malta). Malta has a mixed reputation for transparency and a DAW Index score of 6, although both are expected to improve as Malta increasingly adopts more comprehensive legislative framework for financial services.[[122]](#cite_note-122) The [Maltese alphabet](/wiki/Maltese_alphabet) consists of 30 letters based on the [Latin alphabet](/wiki/Latin_alphabet), including the [diacritically](/wiki/Diacritic) altered letters [*ż*](/wiki/Ż), [*ċ*](/wiki/Ċ) and [*ġ*](/wiki/Ġ), as well as the letters [*għ*](/wiki/Għ), [*ħ*](/wiki/Ħ), and [*ie*](/wiki/Ie_(digraph)).

Maltese has a Semitic base with substantial borrowing from [Sicilian](/wiki/Sicilian_language), [Italian](/wiki/Italian_language), a little [French](/wiki/French_language), and more recently and increasingly, English.[[158]](#cite_note-158) The hybrid character of Maltese was established by a long period of Maltese-Sicilian urban bilingualism gradually transforming rural speech and which ended in the early 19th century with Maltese emerging as the vernacular of the entire native population. The language includes different dialects that can vary greatly from one town to another or from one island to another.

The [Eurobarometer](/wiki/Eurobarometer) states that 100% of the population speak Maltese. Also, 88% of the population speak English, 66% speak Italian, and 17% speak French.[[159]](#cite_note-159) This widespread knowledge of [second languages](/wiki/Second_language) makes Malta one of the most multilingual countries in the [European Union](/wiki/European_Union). A study collecting public opinion on what language was "preferred" discovered that 86% of the population express a preference for Maltese, 12% for English, and 2% for Italian.<ref name=LinguisticView/> Still, Italian television channels from Italy-based broadcasters, such as [Mediaset](/wiki/Mediaset) and [RAI](/wiki/RAI), reach Malta and remain popular.<ref name=LinguisticView>Ignasi Badia i Capdevila; [A view of the linguistic situation in Malta](http://www6.gencat.net/llengcat/noves/hm04primavera-estiu/a_badia2_3.htm); NovesSl; 2004. Retrieved 24 February 2008</ref>[[160]](#cite_note-160)[[161]](#cite_note-161)

### Largest cities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Largest cities of Malta](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Malta)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|The façade of](/wiki/File:St_Johns_Co-Cathedral.jpg) [St. John's Co-Cathedral](/wiki/St._John's_Co-Cathedral) The [Constitution of Malta](/wiki/Constitution_of_Malta) declares [Catholicism](/wiki/Christianity_in_Malta) as the state religion although [entrenched provisions](/wiki/Entrenched_clause) for the freedom of religion are made. Freedom House and the [CIA World Factbook](/wiki/CIA_World_Factbook) report that 98% of the population is Catholic.

There are more than 360 churches in Malta, Gozo and Comino, or one church for every 1,000 residents. The parish church (Maltese: *"il-parroċċa"*, or *"il-knisja parrokkjali"*) is the architectural and geographic focal point of every Maltese town and village, and its main source of civic pride. This civic pride manifests itself in spectacular fashion during the local village *festas*, which mark the day of the patron saint of each parish with marching bands, religious processions, special [Masses](/wiki/Holy_Mass), [fireworks](/wiki/Fireworks) (especially petards) and other festivities. [thumb|The](/wiki/File:Domen_i_Mosta.jpg) [Mosta Dome](/wiki/Rotunda_of_Mosta) known as "Ir-Rotunda"

Malta is an [Apostolic See](/wiki/Apostolic_See); the [Acts of the Apostles](/wiki/Acts_of_the_Apostles) tells of how [St. Paul](/wiki/Paul_of_Tarsus), on his way from Jerusalem to Rome to face trial, was shipwrecked on the island of "Melite", which many Bible scholars identify with Malta, an episode dated around AD 60.[[10]](#cite_note-10) As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul spent three months on the island on his way to Rome, curing the sick including the father of Publius, the "chief man of the island". Various traditions are associated with this account. The shipwreck is said to have occurred in the place today known as [St Paul's Bay](/wiki/St_Paul's_Bay). The Maltese saint, [Saint Publius](/wiki/Saint_Publius) is said to have been made Malta's first bishop and a grotto in [Rabat](/wiki/Rabat,_Malta), now known as "St Paul's Grotto" (and in the vicinity of which evidence of Christian burials and rituals from the 3rd century AD has been found), is among the earliest known places of Christian worship on the island.

Further evidence of Christian practices and beliefs during the period of Roman persecution appears in [catacombs](/wiki/Catacombs) that lie beneath various sites around Malta, including St Paul's Catacombs and St Agatha's Catacombs in Rabat, just outside the walls of [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina). The latter, in particular, were beautifully frescoed between 1200 and 1480, although marauding [Turks](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) defaced many of them in the 1550s. There are also a number of cave churches, including the grotto at [Mellieħa](/wiki/Sanctuary_of_Our_Lady_of_Mellieħa), which is a Shrine of the Nativity of Our Lady where, according to legend, [St. Luke](/wiki/St._Luke) painted a picture of the [Madonna](/wiki/The_Madonna). It has been a place of pilgrimage since [medieval](/wiki/Medieval) times.

The Acts of the [Council of Chalcedon](/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon) record that in 451 AD, a certain Acacius was Bishop of Malta (*Melitenus Episcopus*). It is also known that in 501 AD, a certain Constantinus, *Episcopus Melitenensis*, was present at the [Fifth Ecumenical Council](/wiki/Second_Council_of_Constantinople). In 588 AD, [Pope Gregory I](/wiki/Pope_Gregory_I) deposed Tucillus, *Miletinae civitatis episcopus* and the clergy and people of Malta elected his successor Trajan in 599 AD. The last recorded Bishop of Malta before the invasion of the islands was a Greek named Manas, who was subsequently incarcerated at [Palermo](/wiki/Palermo).[[162]](#cite_note-162) Maltese historian, [Giovanni Francesco Abela](/wiki/Giovanni_Francesco_Abela), states that following their conversion to Christianity at the hand of [St. Paul](/wiki/Saul_of_Tarsus), the Maltese retained their Christian religion, despite the [Fatimid](/wiki/Fatimid) invasion.[[163]](#cite_note-163) Abela's writings describe Malta as a divinely ordained "bulwark of Christian, European civilization against the spread of Mediterranean Islam".[[164]](#cite_note-164) The native Christian community that welcomed [Roger I of Sicily](/wiki/Roger_I_of_Sicily)[[18]](#cite_note-18) was further bolstered by immigration to Malta from Italy, in the 12th and 13th centuries.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:ZTN_city_center.jpg)[Żejtun](/wiki/Żejtun) city centre parish church For centuries, the Church in Malta was subordinate to the [Diocese of Palermo](/wiki/Diocese_of_Palermo), except when it was under [Charles of Anjou](/wiki/Charles_of_Anjou), who appointed bishops for Malta, as did – on rare occasions – the Spanish and later, the Knights. Since 1808 all bishops of Malta have been Maltese. As a result of the [Norman](/wiki/History_of_Malta#Kingdom_of_Sicily) and Spanish periods, and the rule of the Knights, Malta became the devout Catholic nation that it is today. It is worth noting that the Office of the [Inquisitor of Malta](/wiki/Roman_Inquisition) had a very long tenure on the island following its establishment in 1530: the last Inquisitor departed from the Islands in 1798, after the Knights capitulated to the forces of [Napoleon Bonaparte](/wiki/Napoleon_Bonaparte). During the period of the [Republic of Venice](/wiki/Republic_of_Venice), several Maltese families emigrated to [Corfu](/wiki/Corfu). Their descendants account for about two-thirds of the community of some 4,000 Catholics that now live on that island.

The patron saints of Malta are [Saint Paul](/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle), [Saint Publius](/wiki/Saint_Publius) and [Saint Agatha](/wiki/Agatha_of_Sicily). Although not a patron saint, [St George Preca](/wiki/George_Preca) (San Ġorġ Preca) is greatly revered as the second canonised Maltese saint after [St. Publius](/wiki/St._Publius) Malta‘s first acknowledged saint (canonised in the year 1634). [Pope Benedict XVI](/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI) canonised him on 3 June 2007. Also, a number of Maltese individuals are recognised as [Blessed](/wiki/Beatification), including [Maria Adeodata Pisani](/wiki/Maria_Adeodata_Pisani) and [Nazju Falzon](/wiki/Nazju_Falzon), with [Pope John Paul II](/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II) having [beatified](/wiki/Beatified) them in 2001.

Various Roman Catholic religious orders are present in Malta, including the [Jesuits](/wiki/Jesuits), [Franciscans](/wiki/Franciscans), [Dominicans](/wiki/Dominican_Order) and [Little Sisters of the Poor](/wiki/Little_Sisters_of_the_Poor).

Most congregants of the local [Protestant](/wiki/Protestant) churches are not Maltese; their congregations draw on the many British retirees living in the country and vacationers from many other nations. There are approximately 600 [Jehovah's Witnesses](/wiki/Jehovah's_Witnesses).[[165]](#cite_note-165) [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) (LDS Church), the Bible Baptist Church, and the [Fellowship of Evangelical Churches](/wiki/Fellowship_of_Evangelical_Churches) each have about 60 affiliates. There are also some churches of other denominations, including [St. Andrew's Scots Church](/wiki/St._Andrew's_Scots_Church,_Malta) in Valletta (a joint [Presbyterian](/wiki/Presbyterian) and [Methodist](/wiki/Methodist_Church_of_Great_Britain) congregation) and [St Paul's Anglican Cathedral](/wiki/St_Paul's_Anglican_Cathedral), and a [Seventh-day Adventist](/wiki/Seventh-day_Adventist_Church) church in [Birkirkara](/wiki/Birkirkara). A [New Apostolic Church](/wiki/New_Apostolic_Church) congregation was founded in 1983 in Gwardamangia.[[166]](#cite_note-166) The Jewish population of Malta reached its peak in the Middle Ages under Norman rule. In 1479, Malta and [Sicily](/wiki/Sicily) came under [Aragonese](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Aragon) rule and the [Alhambra Decree](/wiki/Alhambra_Decree) of 1492 forced all Jews to leave the country, permitting them to take with them only a few of their belongings. Several dozen Maltese Jews may have [converted](/wiki/Religious_conversion) to Christianity at the time to remain in the country. Today, there is one Jewish congregation.[[166]](#cite_note-166) [Zen Buddhism](/wiki/Zen_Buddhism) and the [Bahá'í Faith](/wiki/Bahá'í_Faith) claim some 40 members.[[166]](#cite_note-166) There is one Muslim mosque, the [Mariam Al-Batool Mosque](/wiki/Mariam_Al-Batool_Mosque). A Muslim primary school recently opened. Of the estimated 3,000 [Muslims in Malta](/wiki/Islam_in_Malta), approximately 2,250 are foreigners, approximately 600 are naturalised citizens, and approximately 150 are native-born Maltese.[[167]](#cite_note-167)

### Migration[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

#### Inbound migration[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[thumb|African immigrants at the](/wiki/File:Malta-halfar-containers-nov2009.jpg) [Ħal Far](/wiki/Ħal_Far) refugee camp.

As an EU member state and a party to the [Schengen Agreement](/wiki/Schengen_Agreement), Malta applies the [EU's visa policy](/wiki/Visa_policy_in_the_European_Union). This means that to enter the country:

* Nationals of the EU and the [European Economic Area (EEA)](/wiki/European_Economic_Area) ([Norway](/wiki/Norway), [Iceland](/wiki/Iceland) and [Liechtenstein](/wiki/Liechtenstein)) and their special territories and of [Switzerland](/wiki/Switzerland) require only a passport or a national identity card. Except for Croatian nationals, citizens of this category of countries do not require a [permit](/wiki/Work_permit) to stay and work legally in Malta.[[168]](#cite_note-168)\*Nationals of a number of non-EU and non-EEA countries (most countries of the [Western Balkans](/wiki/Western_Balkans), most countries of the American continent, Australia, [New Zealand](/wiki/New_Zealand), [South Korea](/wiki/South_Korea), [Malaysia](/wiki/Malaysia) and Japan) require only a passport and do not need a [visa](/wiki/Visa_(document)) to reside in Malta for less than 90 days.
* Nationals of other countries need a passport and a [visa](/wiki/Visa_(document)) to enter the country, visas being valid for one month.

The estimated net inflow (using data for 2002 to 2004) was of 1,913 persons yearly. Over the last 10 years, Malta accepted back a yearly average of 425 returning emigrants.[[151]](#cite_note-151) During 2006, a total of 1,800 illegal immigrants reached Malta making the crossing from the North African coast. Most of them intended to reach mainland Europe and happened to come to Malta due to their sub-standard vessels breaking down or being caught by Maltese and other EU officials.[[169]](#cite_note-169)[[170]](#cite_note-170) In the first half of 2006, 967 irregular immigrants arrived in Malta[Template:Spaced ndashalmost](/wiki/Template:Spaced_ndash) double the 473 who arrived in the same period in 2005.[[171]](#cite_note-171) Many immigrants have perished in the journey across the Mediterranean, with one notable incident being the [May 2007 Malta migrant boat disaster](/wiki/May_2007_Malta_migrant_boat_disaster). Since that time, there have been several additional boat sinkings, and only as recently as April 2015, some 700 immigrants perished en route to Italy when their boat capsized.[[172]](#cite_note-172) Nonetheless, Maltese communities formed in these regions. By 1900, for example, British consular estimates suggest that there were 15,326 Maltese in [Tunisia](/wiki/Tunisia), and in 1903 it was claimed that 15,000 people of Maltese origin were living in [Algeria](/wiki/Algeria).<ref name=Attard>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref>

Malta experienced significant emigration as a result of the collapse of a construction boom in 1907 and after the Second World War, when the [birth rate](/wiki/Birth_rate) increased significantly, but in the 20th century most emigrants went to destinations in the [New World](/wiki/New_World), particularly to Australia, Canada and the United States. After the Second World War, Malta's Emigration Department would assist emigrants with the cost of their travel. Between 1948 and 1967, 30 per cent of the population emigrated.<ref name=Jones/> Between 1946 and the late 1970s, over 140,000 people left Malta on the assisted passage scheme, with 57.6% migrating to Australia, 22% to the UK, 13% to Canada and 7% to the United States.<ref name=King>[Template:Cite journal](/wiki/Template:Cite_journal)</ref>

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|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Maltese migration patterns (1946–1996)[[176]](#cite_note-176) | | | | |
| **Country** | **To** | **From** | **Net migration** | **Return %** |
| **Australia** | 86,787 | 17,847 | 68,940 | 21.56 |
| **Canada** | 19,792 | 4,798 | 14,997 | 24.24 |
| **UK** | 31,489 | 12,659 | 18,830 | 40.20 |
| **USA** | 11,601 | 2,580 | 9,021 | 22.24 |
| **Other** | 1,647 | 907 | 740 | 55.07 |
| **Total** | 155,060 | 39,087 | 115,973 | 25.21 |

[Template:Col-end](/wiki/Template:Col-end)

Emigration dropped dramatically after the mid-1970s and has since ceased to be a social phenomenon of significance. However, since Malta joined the EU in 2004 [expatriate](/wiki/Expatriate) communities emerged in a number of European countries particularly in [Belgium](/wiki/Maltese_in_Belgium) and [Luxembourg](/wiki/Luxembourg).

### Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Uni-20malta.jpg)[University of Malta](/wiki/University_of_Malta) [thumb|Library in](/wiki/File:Bibliothek_in_Malta,_in_Valletta.JPG) [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta)

Primary schooling has been compulsory since 1946; secondary education up to the age of sixteen was made compulsory in 1971. The state and the [Church](/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Church) provide education free of charge, both running a number of schools in Malta and [Gozo](/wiki/Gozo), including [De La Salle College](/wiki/De_La_Salle_College_(Malta)) in [Cospicua](/wiki/Cospicua), [St. Aloysius' College](/wiki/St_Aloysius'_College_(Malta)) in [Birkirkara](/wiki/Birkirkara), [St. Paul's Missionary College](/wiki/St._Paul's_Missionary_College) in [Rabat, Malta](/wiki/Rabat,_Malta), St. Joseph's School in [Blata l-Bajda](/wiki/Blata_l-Bajda) and [Saint Monica Girls' School](/wiki/List_of_schools_in_Malta) in [Mosta](/wiki/Mosta). [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), state schools are organised into networks known as Colleges and incorporate kindergarten schools, primary and secondary schools. A number of private schools are run in Malta, including [San Andrea School](/wiki/San_Andrea_School) and [San Anton School](/wiki/San_Anton_School) in the valley of L-Imselliet (l/o [Mġarr](/wiki/Mġarr)), [St. Martin's College](/wiki/St._Martin's_College) in Swatar and St. Michael's School in [San Ġwann](/wiki/San_Ġwann). St. Catherine's High School, Pembroke offers an International Foundation Course for students wishing to learn English before entering mainstream education. [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), there are two international schools, Verdala International School and QSI Malta. The state pays a portion of the teachers' salary in Church schools.[[177]](#cite_note-177) Education in Malta is based on the [British model](/wiki/Education_in_the_United_Kingdom). Primary school lasts six years. At the age of 11 pupils sit for an examination to enter a secondary school, either a [church school](/wiki/Church_school) (the Common Entrance Examination) or a [state school](/wiki/State_school). Pupils sit for SEC [O-level](/wiki/O-level) examinations at the age of 16, with passes obligatory in certain subjects such as mathematics, English and [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_language). Pupils may opt to continue studying at a [sixth form college](/wiki/Sixth_form_college) such as [Gan Frangisk Abela Junior College](/wiki/Gan_Frangisk_Abela_Junior_College), [St. Aloysius' College](/wiki/St_Aloysius'_College_(Malta)), Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary, [De La Salle College](/wiki/De_La_Salle_College_(Malta)), St Edward's College, or else at another post-secondary institution such as [MCAST](/wiki/MCAST). The sixth form course lasts for two years, at the end of which students sit for the Matriculation examination. Subject to their performance, students may then apply for an undergraduate [degree](/wiki/Academic_degree) or diploma.

The [University of Malta](/wiki/University_of_Malta) (U.o.M.) provides Tertiary education at diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate level. The adult [literacy rate](/wiki/Literacy_rate) is 99.5%.[[178]](#cite_note-178) Maltese and English are both used to teach pupils at primary and secondary school level, and both languages are also compulsory subjects. [Public schools](/wiki/Public_school_(government_funded)) tend to use both Maltese and English in a balanced manner. Private schools prefer to use English for teaching, as is also the case with most departments of the [University of Malta](/wiki/University_of_Malta); this has a limiting effect on the capacity and development of the Maltese language.<ref name=LinguisticView/> Most university courses are in English.<ref name=MED/>[Template:Dead link](/wiki/Template:Dead_link)

Of the total number of pupils studying a first foreign language at secondary level, 51% take Italian whilst 38% take French. Other choices include German, Russian, Spanish, Latin, Chinese and Arabic.<ref name=LinguisticView/>[Template:Dead link](/wiki/Template:Dead_link)[[179]](#cite_note-179) Malta is also a popular destination to study the English language, attracting over 80,000 students in 2012.[[180]](#cite_note-180)

### Healthcare[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|The Sacra Infermeria was used as a hospital from the 16th to 20th centuries. It is now the](/wiki/File:Malta_-_Valletta_-_Triq_il-Mediterran-Triq_it-Tramuntana_-_Mediterranean_Conference_Centre_01_ies.jpg) [Mediterranean Conference Centre](/wiki/Mediterranean_Conference_Centre). [thumb|](/wiki/File:Mater_Dei_01.jpg)[Mater Dei Hospital](/wiki/Mater_Dei_Hospital) [thumb|Medical Student taking blood pressure during an event organized by the local medical student association](/wiki/File:MMSA_Checking_Blood_Pressure.JPG)

Malta has a long history of providing [publicly funded health care](/wiki/Publicly_funded_health_care). The first hospital recorded in the country was already functioning by 1372.[[181]](#cite_note-181)Today, Malta has both a public healthcare system, known as the government healthcare service, where healthcare is free at the point of delivery, and a [private healthcare](/wiki/Private_healthcare) system.[[182]](#cite_note-182)[[183]](#cite_note-183) Malta has a strong general practitioner-delivered primary care base and the public hospitals provide secondary and tertiary care. The Maltese Ministry of Health advises foreign residents to take out private medical insurance.[[184]](#cite_note-184) Malta also boasts voluntary organisations such as Alpha Medical (Advanced Care), the Emergency Fire & Rescue Unit (E.F.R.U.), St John Ambulance and Red Cross Malta who provide first aid/nursing services during events involving crowds.

The [Mater Dei Hospital](/wiki/Mater_Dei_Hospital), Malta's primary hospital, opened in 2007. It has one of the largest medical buildings in Europe.

The [University of Malta](/wiki/University_of_Malta) has a [medical school](/wiki/Medical_school) and a Faculty of [Health Sciences](/wiki/Health_Sciences), the latter offering diploma, degree (BSc) and postgraduate degree courses in a number of health care disciplines.

The [Medical Association of Malta](/wiki/Medical_Association_of_Malta) represents practitioners of the medical profession. The [Malta Medical Students' Association](/wiki/Malta_Medical_Students'_Association) (MMSA) is a separate body representing Maltese medical students, and is a member of [EMSA](/wiki/European_Medical_Students'_Association) and [IFMSA](/wiki/International_Federation_of_Medical_Students'_Associations). [MIME](/wiki/Malta_Institute_for_Medical_Education), the Maltese Institute for Medical Education, is an institute set up recently to provide CME to physicians in Malta as well as medical students. The [Foundation Program](/wiki/Foundation_Program) followed in the UK has been introduced in Malta to stem the 'brain drain' of newly graduated physicians to the British Isles. The [Malta Association of Dental Students](/wiki/Malta_Association_of_Dental_Students) (MADS) is a student association set up to promote the rights of Dental Surgery Students studying within the faculty of Dental Surgery of the University of Malta. It is affiliated with [IADS](/wiki/IADS), the International Association of Dental Students.

See also [Health in Malta](/wiki/Health_in_Malta)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The culture of Malta reflects the various cultures that have come into contact with the Maltese Islands throughout the centuries, including neighbouring Mediterranean cultures, and the cultures of the nations that ruled Malta for long periods of time prior to its [independence](/wiki/Independence_Day_(Malta)) in 1964.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Manoel_theatre_(12851453033).jpg)[Manoel Theatre](/wiki/Manoel_Theatre), Europe's third-oldest working theatre. Now Malta's National Theatre and home to the [Malta Philharmonic Orchestra](/wiki/Malta_Philharmonic_Orchestra). While Maltese music today is largely Western, traditional Maltese music includes what is known as [għana](/wiki/Għana_(folk_music)). This consists of background [folk guitar](/wiki/Folk_guitar) music, while a few people, generally men, take it in turns to argue a point in a sing-song voice. The aim of the lyrics, which are improvised, is to create a friendly yet challenging atmosphere, and it takes a number of years of practice to be able to combine the required artistic qualities with the ability to [debate](/wiki/Debate) effectively.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Documented Maltese literature is over 200 years old. However, a recently unearthed love ballad testifies to literary activity in the local tongue from the Medieval period. Malta followed a Romantic literary tradition, culminating in the works of [Dun Karm Psaila](/wiki/Dun_Karm_Psaila), Malta's National Poet. Subsequent writers like [Ruzar Briffa](/wiki/Ruzar_Briffa) and [Karmenu Vassallo](/wiki/Karmenu_Vassallo) tried to estrange themselves from the rigidity of formal themes and versification.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

It was late in the 1960s that Maltese literature experienced its most radical transformation among poets, prose writers and dramatists. Names of significant poets that stand out from the last quarter of the 20th century include [Mario Azzopardi](/wiki/Mario_Azzopardi), [Victor Fenech](/wiki/Victor_Fenech), [Oliver Friggieri](/wiki/Oliver_Friggieri), [Joe Friggieri](/wiki/Joe_Friggieri), [Charles Flores](/wiki/Charles_Flores), [Daniel Massa](/wiki/Daniel_Massa), [Maria Ganado](/wiki/Maria_Ganado), [Lillian Sciberras](/wiki/Lillian_Sciberras) and [Achille Mizzi](/wiki/Achille_Mizzi). In prose, [Frans Sammut](/wiki/Frans_Sammut) (The National Modern Author of Malta), [Paul P. Borg](/wiki/Paul_P._Borg) and [Joe J. Camilleri](/wiki/Joe_J._Camilleri) led the [avant-garde](/wiki/Avant-garde) meanwhile among the prominent names in theatre are [Francis Ebejer](/wiki/Francis_Ebejer), [Alfred Sant](/wiki/Alfred_Sant), [Doreen Micallef](/wiki/Doreen_Micallef), [Oreste Calleja](/wiki/Oreste_Calleja), Joe Friggieri and [Martin Gauci](/wiki/Martin_Gauci).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The next generation of writers widened the tracks further, especially in prose. [Guze' Stagno](/wiki/Guze'_Stagno), [Karl Schembri](/wiki/Karl_Schembri) and [Clare Azzopardi](/wiki/Clare_Azzopardi) are young writers fast establishing themselves while in poetry, significant names include [Adrian Grima](/wiki/Adrian_Grima), [Immanuel Mifsud](/wiki/Immanuel_Mifsud), [Norbert Bugeja](/wiki/Norbert_Bugeja) and [Simone Inguanez](/wiki/Simone_Inguanez).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) [thumb|Typical architecture built in recent years in Malta.](/wiki/File:San_Giulian,_Marina.jpg)

In literary criticism, [Peter Serracino Inglott](/wiki/Peter_Serracino_Inglott), Oliver Friggieri and [Charles Briffa](/wiki/Charles_Briffa) introduced perceptive historical, philosophical and psycho-social themes into Maltese theory. [Ivan Callus](/wiki/Ivan_Callus), current Head of the English Department at the [University of Malta](/wiki/University_of_Malta), is also an internationally known literary critic in academic circles for the English language.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Other writers, born in Malta or of Maltese descent, have established careers abroad. These included the novelist [Trezza Azzopardi](/wiki/Trezza_Azzopardi), best-selling children's author [Saviour Pirotta](/wiki/Saviour_Pirotta) and comic-book artist/journalist [Joe Sacco](/wiki/Joe_Sacco).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Art and architecture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[thumb|left|Lower Barrakka Gardens](/wiki/File:Vallettaupperbarraccagardens.JPG)

Maltese architecture has been influenced by many different Mediterranean cultures and British architecture over its history. The first settlers on the island constructed [Ġgantija](/wiki/Ġgantija), one of the oldest manmade freestanding structures in the world. The Neolithic temple builders 3800–2500 BC endowed the numerous temples of Malta and Gozo with intricate bas relief designs, including spirals evocative of the tree of life and animal portraits, designs painted in red ochre, ceramics and a vast collection of human form sculptures, particularly the Venus of Malta. These can be viewed at the temples themselves (most notably, the [Hypogeum](/wiki/Hypogeum_of_Ħal-Saflieni) and Tarxien Temples), and at the National Museum of Archaeology in [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta). Malta is currently undergoing several large-scale building projects, including the construction of [SmartCity Malta](/wiki/SmartCity_Malta), the [M-Towers](/wiki/M-Towers) and [Pendergardens](/wiki/Pendergardens), while areas such as the [Valletta Waterfront](/wiki/Valletta_Waterfront) and [Tigné Point](/wiki/Tigné_Point) have been or are being renovated.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The Roman period introduced highly decorative mosaic floors, marble colonnades and classical statuary, remnants of which are beautifully preserved and presented in the Roman Domus, a country villa just outside the walls of [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina). The early Christian frescoes that decorate the [catacombs](/wiki/Catacombs) beneath Malta reveal a propensity for eastern, [Byzantine](/wiki/Byzantine) tastes. These tastes continued to inform the endeavours of [medieval](/wiki/Medieval) Maltese artists, but they were increasingly influenced by the [Romanesque](/wiki/Romanesque_art) and [Southern Gothic](/wiki/Southern_Gothic) movements. Towards the end of the 15th century, Maltese artists, like their counterparts in neighbouring Sicily, came under the influence of the School of [Antonello da Messina](/wiki/Antonello_da_Messina), which introduced [Renaissance](/wiki/Renaissance) ideals and concepts to the decorative arts in Malta.[[185]](#cite_note-185) Malta's temples such as Imnajdra are full of history and have a story behind them.

[thumb|Saint Jerome Writing, by Caravaggio. Held in St John's Co-Cathedral, Valletta.](/wiki/File:CaravaggioJeromeValletta.jpg)

The artistic heritage of Malta blossomed under the [Knights of St. John](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller), who brought Italian and Flemish [Mannerist](/wiki/Mannerist) painters to decorate their palaces and the churches of these islands, most notably, [Matteo Perez d'Aleccio](/wiki/Matteo_Perez_d'Aleccio), whose works appear in the [Magisterial Palace](/wiki/Grandmaster's_Palace_in_Valletta) and in the [Conventual Church of St. John](/wiki/St._John's_Co-Cathedral) in Valletta, and Filippo Paladini, who was active in Malta from 1590 to 1595. For many years, Mannerism continued to inform the tastes and ideals of local Maltese artists.[[185]](#cite_note-185) The arrival in Malta of [Caravaggio](/wiki/Caravaggio), who painted at least seven works during his 15-month stay on these islands, further revolutionised local art. Two of Caravaggio's most notable works, [*The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist*](/wiki/The_Beheading_of_Saint_John_the_Baptist_(Caravaggio)) and [*Saint Jerome Writing*](/wiki/Saint_Jerome_Writing_(Valletta)), are on display in the [Oratory](/wiki/Oratory_(worship)) of the Conventual Church of St. John. His legacy is evident in the works of local artists Giulio Cassarino (1582–1637) and Stefano Erardi (1630–1716). However, the [Baroque](/wiki/Baroque) movement that followed was destined to have the most enduring impact on Maltese art and architecture. The glorious vault paintings of the celebrated Calabrese artist, [Mattia Preti](/wiki/Mattia_Preti) transformed the severe, Mannerist interior of the Conventual Church St. John into a Baroque masterpiece. Preti spent the last 40 years of his life in Malta, where he created many of his finest works, now on display in the Museum of Fine Arts in [Valletta](/wiki/Valletta). During this period, local sculptor [Melchior Gafà](/wiki/Melchiorre_Cafà) (1639–1667) emerged as one of the top Baroque sculptors of the Roman School.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[thumb|left|*The Siege of Malta – Flight of the Turks*, by Matteo Perez d'Aleccio](/wiki/File:Siege_of_malta_3.jpg)

During the 17th and 18th century, [Neapolitan](/wiki/Naples) and [Rococo](/wiki/Rococo) influences emerged in the works of the Italian painters [Luca Giordano](/wiki/Luca_Giordano) (1632–1705) and [Francesco Solimena](/wiki/Francesco_Solimena) (1657–1747), and these developments can be seen in the work of their Maltese contemporaries such as Giovanni Nicola Buhagiar (1698–1752) and Francesco Zahra (1710–1773). The Rococo movement was greatly enhanced by the relocation to Malta of Antoine de Favray (1706–1798), who assumed the position of court painter to Grand Master Pinto in 1744.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Neo-classicism](/wiki/Neo-classicism) made some inroads among local Maltese artists in the late 18th century, but this trend was reversed in the early 19th century, as the local Church authorities – perhaps in an effort to strengthen Catholic resolve against the perceived threat of Protestantism during the early days of British rule in Malta – favoured and avidly promoted the religious themes embraced by the [Nazarene movement](/wiki/Nazarene_movement) of artists. [Romanticism](/wiki/Romanticism), tempered by the naturalism introduced to Malta by [Giuseppe Calì](/wiki/Giuseppe_Calì), informed the "salon" artists of the early 20th century, including Edward and Robert Caruana Dingli.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Parliament established the National School of Art in the 1920s. During the reconstruction period that followed the Second World War, the emergence of the "Modern Art Group", whose members included Josef Kalleya (1898–1998), George Preca (1909–1984), Anton Inglott (1915–1945), Emvin Cremona (1919–1986), Frank Portelli (b. 1922), Antoine Camilleri (b. 1922) and Esprit Barthet (b. 1919) greatly enhanced the local art scene. In Valletta, the [National Museum of Fine Arts](/wiki/National_Museum_of_Fine_Arts,_Malta) features work from artists such as [H. Craig Hanna](/wiki/H._Craig_Hanna).<ref name=MaltaInd>["Right Outside my Window"](http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2006-04-23/news/right-outside-my-window-90329/), *The Malta Independent*, 23 April 2006. Retrieved 11 June 2014</ref>

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|upright|](/wiki/File:Malta_Pastizzi.JPG)[*Pastizzi*](/wiki/Pastizzi), a typical Maltese snack [thumb|upright|](/wiki/File:Malta_ftira.JPG)[*Ftira*](/wiki/Ftira), a type of Maltese bread Maltese cuisine shows strong Sicilian and English influences as well as influences of [Spanish](/wiki/Spanish_cuisine), [Maghrebin](/wiki/Maghreb_cuisine) and [Provençal](/wiki/Provençal_cuisine) cuisines. A number of regional variations, particularly with regards to Gozo, can be noted as well as seasonal variations associated with the seasonal availability of produce and Christian feasts (such as [Lent](/wiki/Lent), Easter and Christmas). Food has been important historically in the development of a national identity in particular the traditional *fenkata* (i.e. the eating of stewed or fried rabbit).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The favourite Maltese beverage was documented to be the [Kinnie](/wiki/Kinnie) according to the National Statistics Office.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Customs[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

A 2010 [Charities Aid Foundation](/wiki/Charities_Aid_Foundation) study found that Maltese were the most generous peoples in the world, with 83% contributing to charity.[[186]](#cite_note-186) Maltese folktales include various stories about mysterious creatures and supernatural events. These were most comprehensively compiled by the scholar (and pioneer in Maltese [archaeology](/wiki/Archaeology)) [Manwel Magri](/wiki/Manuel_Magri)[[187]](#cite_note-187) in his core criticism "*Ħrejjef Missirijietna*" ("Fables from our Forefathers"). This collection of material inspired subsequent researchers and academics to gather traditional [tales](/wiki/Folklore), [fables](/wiki/Fable) and [legends](/wiki/Legend) from all over the Archipelago.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Magri's work also inspired a series of comic books (released by Klabb Kotba Maltin in 1984): the titles included *Bin is-Sultan Jiźźewweġ x-Xebba tat-Tronġiet Mewwija* and *Ir-Rjieħ*. Many of these stories have been popularly re-written as Children's literature by authors writing in [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_language), such as [Trevor Żahra](/wiki/Trevor_Żahra). While giants, witches and dragons feature in many of the stories, some contain entirely Maltese creatures like the [Kaw kaw](/wiki/Kaw_kaw), [Il-Belliegħa](/wiki/Il-Belliegħa) and [L-Imħalla](/wiki/L-Imħalla) among others. The traditional Maltese obsession with maintaining spiritual (or ritual) purity[[188]](#cite_note-188) means that many of these creatures have the role of guarding forbidden or restricted areas and attacking individuals who broke the strict codes of conduct that characterised the island's pre-industrial society.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Traditions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

Traditional Maltese proverbs reveal a cultural importance of childbearing and fertility: "*iż-żwieġ mingħajr tarbija ma fihx tgawdija*" (a childless marriage cannot be a happy one). This is a belief that Malta shares with many other Mediterranean cultures. In Maltese folktales the local variant of the classic closing formula, "and they all lived happily ever after" is "*u għammru u tgħammru, u spiċċat*" (and they lived together, and they had children together, and the tale is finished).[[189]](#cite_note-189) Rural Malta shares in common with Mediterranean society a number of superstitions regarding fertility, menstruation and pregnancy, including the avoidance of cemeteries during the months leading up to childbirth, and avoiding the preparation of certain foods during menses. Pregnant women are encouraged to satisfy their [cravings](/wiki/Food_craving) for specific foods, out of fear that their unborn child will bear a representational birth mark (Maltese: *xewqa*, literally "desire" or "craving"). Maltese and Sicilian women also share certain traditions that are believed to predict the sex of an unborn child, such as the cycle of the moon on the anticipated date of birth, whether the baby is carried "high" or "low" during pregnancy, and the movement of a wedding ring, dangled on a string above the abdomen (sideways denoting a girl, back and forth denoting a boy).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Traditionally, Maltese newborns were baptised as promptly as possible, should the child die in infancy without receiving this vital Sacrament; and partly because according to Maltese (and Sicilian) folklore an unbaptised child is not yet a Christian, but "still a Turk". Traditional Maltese delicacies served at a baptismal feast include *biskuttini tal-magħmudija* (almond macaroons covered in white or pink icing), *it-torta tal-marmorata* (a spicy, heart-shaped tart of chocolate-flavoured almond paste), and a liqueur known as *rożolin*, made with rose petals, violets and almonds.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

On a child's first birthday, in a tradition that still survives today, Maltese parents would organise a game known as *il-quċċija*, where a variety of symbolic objects would be randomly placed around the seated child. These may include a hard-boiled egg, a Bible, [crucifix](/wiki/Crucifix) or [rosary beads](/wiki/Rosary_beads), a book, and so on. Whichever object the child shows most interest in is said to reveal the child's path and fortunes in adulthood.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Money refers to a rich future while a book expresses intelligence and a possible career as a teacher. Infants who select a pencil or pen will be writers. Choosing Bibles or rosary beads refers to a clerical or monastic life. If the child chooses a hard-boiled egg, it will have a long life and many children. More recent additions include calculators (refers to accounting), thread (fashion) and wooden spoons (cooking and a great appetite).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[thumb|Re-enactment of a traditional Maltese 18th century wedding](/wiki/File:Maltesewedding.jpg)

Traditional Maltese weddings featured the bridal party walking in procession beneath an ornate canopy, from the home of the bride's family to the parish church, with singers trailing behind serenading the bride and groom. The Maltese word for this custom is *il-ġilwa*. This custom along with many others has long since disappeared from the islands, in the face of modern practices.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

New wives would wear the [għonnella](/wiki/Għonnella), a traditional item of Maltese clothing. However, it is no longer worn in modern Malta. Today's couples are married in churches or chapels in the village or town of their choice. The nuptials are usually followed by a lavish and joyous wedding reception, often including several hundred guests. Occasionally, couples will try to incorporate elements of the traditional Maltese wedding in their celebration. A resurgent interest in the traditional wedding was evident in May 2007, when thousands of Maltese and tourists attended a traditional Maltese wedding in the style of the 16th century, in the village of [Żurrieq](/wiki/Żurrieq). This included *il-ġilwa*, which led the bride and groom to a wedding ceremony that took place on the [parvis](/wiki/Parvis) of St. Andrew's Chapel. The reception that followed featured folklore music ([*għana*](/wiki/Għana)) and dancing.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Festivals[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

[thumb|The statue of St. George at the *festa* of](/wiki/File:The_statue_of_St._George_issuing_from_the_Basilica_on_the_thrid_Sunday_of_July.jpg) [Victoria, Gozo](/wiki/Victoria,_Gozo).

Local festivals, similar to those in Southern Italy, are commonplace in Malta and Gozo, celebrating weddings, [christenings](/wiki/Baptism) and, most prominently, [saints'](/wiki/Saints) days, honouring the patron saint of the local parish. On saints' days, the *festa* reaches its apex with a [High Mass](/wiki/Mass_(liturgy)) featuring a sermon on the life and achievements of the patron saint, after which a [statue](/wiki/Statue) of the religious patron is taken around the local streets in solemn procession, with the faithful following in respectful prayer. The atmosphere of religious devotion quickly gives way to several days of celebration and revelry: band processions, [fireworks](/wiki/Fireworks), and late night parties.

[Carnival](/wiki/Maltese_Carnival) (Maltese: *il-karnival ta' Malta*) has had an important place on the cultural calendar after [Grand Master](/wiki/Grand_Master_(order)) [Piero de Ponte](/wiki/Piero_de_Ponte) introduced it to the islands in 1535. It is held during the week leading up to [Ash Wednesday](/wiki/Ash_Wednesday), and typically includes masked balls, fancy dress and grotesque mask competitions, lavish late-night parties, a colourful, ticker-tape parade of allegorical [floats](/wiki/Float_(parade)) presided over by King Carnival (Maltese: *ir-Re tal-Karnival*), marching bands and costumed revellers.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Holy Week](/wiki/Holy_Week_in_Malta) (Maltese: *il-Ġimgħa Mqaddsa*) starts on [Palm Sunday](/wiki/Palm_Sunday) (*Ħadd il-Palm*) and ends on [Easter Sunday](/wiki/Easter_Sunday) (*Ħadd il-Għid*). Numerous religious traditions, most of them inherited from one generation to the next, are part of the [paschal](/wiki/Easter) celebrations in the Maltese Islands, honouring the death and resurrection of Jesus.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Mnarja, or l-Imnarja (pronounced *lim-nar-ya*) is one of the most important dates on the Maltese cultural calendar. Officially, it is a national festival dedicated to the feast of [Saints](/wiki/Saint) [Peter](/wiki/St._Peter) and [St. Paul](/wiki/Saul_of_Tarsus). Its roots can be traced back to the pagan [Roman](/wiki/Roman_Republic) feast of *Luminaria* (literally, "the illumination"), when torches and bonfires lit up the early summer night of 29 June.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

A national feast since the rule of the [Knights](/wiki/Knights_Hospitaller), Mnarja is a traditional Maltese festival of food, religion and music. The festivities still commence today with the reading of the *"bandu"*, an official governmental announcement, which has been read on this day in Malta since the 16th century. Originally, Mnarja was celebrated outside St. Paul's Grotto, in the north of Malta. However, by 1613 the focus of the festivities had shifted to the Cathedral of [St. Paul](/wiki/Paul_of_Tarsus), in [Mdina](/wiki/Mdina), and featured torchlight processions, the firing of 100 petards, horseraces, and races for men, boys and slaves. Modern Mnarja festivals take place in and around the woodlands of [Buskett](/wiki/Buskett), just outside the town of [Rabat](/wiki/Rabat_Malta).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

It is said that under the Knights, this was the one day in the year when the Maltese were allowed to hunt and eat [wild rabbit](/wiki/Hare), which was otherwise reserved for the hunting pleasures of the Knights. The close connection between Mnarja and rabbit stew (Maltese: *"fenkata"*) remains strong today.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

In 1854 British governor [William Reid](/wiki/William_Reid_(British_Army_officer)) launched an agricultural show at Buskett which is still being held today. The farmers' exhibition is still a seminal part of the Mnarja festivities today.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Mnarja today is one of the few occasions when participants may hear traditional Maltese "[għana](/wiki/Għana)". Traditionally, grooms would promise to take their brides to Mnarja during the first year of marriage. For luck, many of the brides would attend in their wedding gown and veil, although this custom has long since disappeared from the islands.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Isle of MTV is a one-day music festival produced and broadcast on an annual basis by MTV. The festival has been arranged annually in Malta since 2007, with major pop artists performing each year. 2012 saw the performances of worldwide acclaimed artists Flo Rida, Nelly Furtado and Will.I.Am at Fosos Square in Floriana. Over 50,000 people attended, which marked the biggest attendance so far.[[190]](#cite_note-190) In 2009 the first New Year's Eve street party was organised in Malta, parallel to what other major countries in the world organise. Although the event was not highly advertised and controversial, due to the closing of an arterial street on the day, it is deemed to have been successful and will most likely be organised every year.[[191]](#cite_note-191) The Malta International Fireworks Festival is an annual festival that has been arranged in the Grand Harbour of Valletta since 2003. The festival offers fireworks displays of a number of Maltese as well as foreign fireworks factories. The festival is usually held in the last week of April every year.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Media[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

[Template:Further](/wiki/Template:Further) The most widely read and financially the strongest newspapers are published by Allied Newspapers Ltd., mainly [*The Times*](/wiki/The_Times_(Malta)) (27%) and *The Sunday Times* (51.6%). Due to [bilingualism](/wiki/Bilingualism) half of the newspapers are published in English and the other half in [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_language). The Sunday newspaper *It-Torċa* ("The Torch") published by the Union Press, a subsidiary of the [General Workers' Union](/wiki/General_Workers'_Union_(Malta)), is the widest Maltese language paper. Its sister paper, [*L-Orizzont*](/wiki/L-Orizzont) ("The Horizon"), is the Maltese daily with biggest circulation. There is a high number of daily or weekly newspapers, there is one paper for every 28,000 people. Advertising, sales and [subsidies](/wiki/Subsidies) are the three main methods of financing newspapers and magazines. However, most of the papers and magazines tied to institutions are subsidised by the same institutions, they depend on advertising or subsidies from their owners.[[192]](#cite_note-192) There are eight [terrestrial television](/wiki/Terrestrial_television) channels in Malta: [TVM](/wiki/TVM_(Malta)), [TVM2](/wiki/TVM2), [Parliament TV](/wiki/Parliament_TV_(Malta)), [One](/wiki/One_(Maltese_TV_channel)), [NET Television](/wiki/NET_Television_(Malta)), [Smash Television](/wiki/Smash_Television), [F Living](/wiki/F_Living) and [Xejk](/wiki/Xejk). These channels are transmitted by digital terrestrial, free-to-air signals on [UHF](/wiki/Ultra_high_frequency) channel 66.[[193]](#cite_note-193) The state and [political parties](/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_Malta) subsidise most of the funding of these television stations. TVM, TVM2 and Parliament TV are operated by [Public Broadcasting Services](/wiki/Public_Broadcasting_Services), the [national broadcaster](/wiki/Public_broadcasting) and member of the [EBU](/wiki/European_Broadcasting_Union). Media.link Communications Ltd., the owner of NET Television, and [One Productions Ltd](/wiki/One_Productions_Ltd)., the owner of One, are affiliated with the [Nationalist](/wiki/Nationalist_Party_(Malta)) and [Labour](/wiki/Labour_Party_(Malta)) parites, respectively. The rest are privately owned. The Malta Broadcasting Authority supervises all local broadcasting stations and ensures their compliance with legal and licence obligations as well as the preservation of due impartiality; in respect of matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy; while fairly apportioning broadcasting facilities and time between persons belong to different political parties. The Broadcasting Authority ensures that local broadcasting services consist of public, private and community broadcasts that offer varied and comprehensive programming to cater for all interests and tastes.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The Malta Communications Authority reported that there were 147,896 pay TV subscriptions active at the end of 2012, which includes analogue and digital cable, pay digital terrestrial TV and IPTV.[[194]](#cite_note-194) For reference the latest census counts 139,583 households in Malta.[[195]](#cite_note-195) Satellite reception is available to receive other European television networks such as the [BBC](/wiki/BBC) from Great Britain and [RAI](/wiki/RAI) and [Mediaset](/wiki/Mediaset) from Italy.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

### Holidays[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=43)]

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Maltese public holidays | |
| **Day** | **Holiday** |
| 1 January | New Year's Day |
| 10 February | [St. Paul's Shipwreck](/wiki/St_Paul's_Shipwreck) |
| 19 March | [St. Joseph](/wiki/Saint_Joseph's_Day) |
| 31 March | [Freedom Day](/wiki/Freedom_Day_(Malta)) |
| March/April (date changes) | [Good Friday](/wiki/Good_Friday) |
| 1 May | [Labour Day](/wiki/International_Workers'_Day) |
| 7 June | [Sette Giugno](/wiki/Sette_Giugno) |
| 29 June | [St. Peter and St. Paul (L-Imnarja)](/wiki/Feast_of_Saints_Peter_and_Paul) |
| 15 August | [The Assumption (Santa Marija)](/wiki/Assumption_of_Mary) |
| 8 September | [Our Lady of Victories](/wiki/Victory_Day_(Malta)) |
| 21 September | [Independence Day](/wiki/Independence_Day_(Malta)) |
| 8 December | [Immaculate Conception](/wiki/Immaculate_Conception) |
| 13 December | [Republic Day](/wiki/Republic_Day_(Malta)) |
| 25 December | Christmas Day |

### Sport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=44)]

[thumb|The](/wiki/File:Malta_TaQali.JPG) [Ta' Qali National Stadium](/wiki/Ta'_Qali_National_Stadium) is the home ground of the [Malta national football team](/wiki/Malta_national_football_team) Association football (soccer) is the most popular sport in Malta. The national stadium is called [Ta' Qali Stadium](/wiki/Ta'_Qali_Stadium). The [national football team](/wiki/Malta_national_football_team) has won several matches over big opponents that reached the final phases in [World Cups](/wiki/FIFA_World_Cup), such as [Belgium](/wiki/Belgium_national_football_team) and [Hungary](/wiki/Hungary_National_football_team). Recently a large number of football grounds have been built throughout the island. The top football league in Malta is called the [Maltese Premier League](/wiki/Maltese_Premier_League), and consists of 12 teams. [Futsal](/wiki/Futsal) is also very popular.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Waterpolo](/wiki/Waterpolo) is also very popular in Malta. The [Malta national waterpolo team](/wiki/Malta_national_waterpolo_team) has achieved some great results against strong teams, and has competed in the Olympics twice. Maltese clubs participate in the European Club competitions organised by LEN, are seen as being in the top 10 waterpolo leagues in Europe.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Rugby league](/wiki/Rugby_league) is played in Malta. In September 2015 the [national men's team](/wiki/Malta_national_rugby_league_team) was ranked 23rd in the world. The national team are known as the [Malta Knights](/wiki/Maltese_Rugby_League_Association), and boast players currently playing in the [European Superleague](/wiki/European_Superleague).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Rugby union](/wiki/Rugby_union) is popular in Malta. In March 2014 the [national men's team](/wiki/Malta_national_rugby_union_team) was ranked 43rd in the world. They have recently been achieving great success, defeating teams including [Sweden](/wiki/Sweden_national_rugby_union_team), [Croatia](/wiki/Croatia_national_rugby_union_team) and [Latvia](/wiki/Latvia_national_rugby_union_team).[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

[Motorsport](/wiki/Motorsport) includes drag racing represented by the Malta Drag Racing Association, with recent high ranking Maltese dragsters in official FIA European championships. There is also autocross (ASMK), hill climb (Island Car Club), motocross, karting and banger racing championships.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Malta also hosts a [snooker](/wiki/Snooker) round, the [Malta Cup](/wiki/Malta_Cup), which [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of) became a non-ranking event.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) In 2008 Malta's [Tony Drago](/wiki/Tony_Drago) was a member of a victorious European [Mosconi Cup](/wiki/Mosconi_Cup) team, which was played in Portomaso, Malta.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed) [Claudio Cassar](/wiki/Claudio_Cassar) was [World Blackball Champion](/wiki/List_of_world_eight-ball_champions) in 2014.

Boxer [Jeff Fenech](/wiki/Jeff_Fenech) is of Maltese descent.[[196]](#cite_note-196) Recently contact sports such as [Boxing](/wiki/Boxing) and [Kickboxing](/wiki/Kickboxing) have become increasingly popular.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Malta is a good place for surfing and offers a lot of different surf spots.[[197]](#cite_note-197) During winter time most of the beaches transform into surfer hangouts.

Along with other sports, tennis is a popular activity in Malta and Gozo. The islands offer a wide range of options for both beginners and elite players. Clubs are spread out across Malta and games are being played on a regular basis all year around.<http://maltatennis.com>

There are over 1,200 [rock climbing](/wiki/Rock_climbing) routes in Malta. The island offers a mixture of both [trad climbing](/wiki/Trad_climbing) and [sport climbing](/wiki/Sport_climbing) and also offers a good variety of [bouldering](/wiki/Bouldering) and [deep water soloing](/wiki/Deep_water_soloing). The geography and small size of the island makes the climbing easily accessible. The sport is growing in popularity with local communities, as well as tourists and visitors.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

Boċċi is the Maltese version of the Italian game of [bocce](/wiki/Bocce), French [pétanque](/wiki/Pétanque) and British [bowls](/wiki/Bowls). Other than certain differences in rules and the ground on which the game is played, one of the most obvious differences between Maltese boċċi and foreign equivalents is the shape of the bowls themselves which tend to be cylindrical rather than spherical in shape. Many small clubs (usually called Klabbs tal-Boċċi in [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_language)) can be found in Maltese and Gozitan localities, and are usually well-frequented and are quite active on a local and European level.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

The South End Core is a group of supporters or "[ultras](/wiki/Ultras)" who support the Maltese national teams. They mainly support football, [futsal](/wiki/Futsal), water polo and rugby. They organise decorations, banners, chanting and [tifo](/wiki/Tifo) to support their country.[Template:Citation needed](/wiki/Template:Citation_needed)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=45)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Outline of Malta](/wiki/Outline_of_Malta)
* [Endemic Maltese wildlife](/wiki/Endemic_Maltese_wildlife)
* [Index of Malta-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Malta-related_articles)
* [List of Maltese people](/wiki/List_of_Maltese_people)
* [List of tallest buildings in Malta](/wiki/List_of_tallest_buildings_in_Malta)
* [Malta Farmhouses](/wiki/Gozo_Farmhouse)
* [Pharaoh Hound](/wiki/Pharaoh_Hound) (National dog of Malta)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=46)]

### Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=47)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

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### Attribution[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=49)]

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* [Template:Cite encyclopedia](/wiki/Template:Cite_encyclopedia)

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=51)]

[Template:Sister project links](/wiki/Template:Sister_project_links)

Government

* [Gov.mt](http://www.gov.mt/)[Template:Spaced ndashMaltese](/wiki/Template:Spaced_ndash) Government official site
* [Laws of Malta](http://justiceservices.gov.mt/LOM.aspx?pageid=24)[Template:Spaced ndashThe](/wiki/Template:Spaced_ndash) Official Laws of Malta website.
* [The Maltese Armed Forces official website](http://www.afm.gov.mt/)
* [Malta Environment and Planning Authority's](http://www.mepa.org.mt/) [GIS](/wiki/Geographic_information_system)

General information

* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Malta](http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/govpubs/for/malta.htm) from *UCB Libraries GovPubs*
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Malta profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17597837) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)
* [Template:Osmrelation-inline](/wiki/Template:Osmrelation-inline)
* [Migration Malta](http://www.wix.com/btrcameron/migrationmalta) – An information source on immigration and Malta (scholarly articles, policy documents, press releases etc.)

Media

* [The Times of Malta](http://www.timesofmalta.com/)
* [Malta Film Commission](http://www.mfc.com.mt/)

Travel

* [Official Maltese Tourism website](http://www.visitmalta.com/)
* [Valletta Living History Official Website](http://www.maltaattraction.com/)

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