

Title:

Royals Put Malta Hotels Back On Map

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479

Summary:

The visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the island of Malta to open the recent Commonwealth meeting resulted in nearly a week of positive coverage for the island on television, print media and the internet.

While Malta has often been overlooked as a holiday destination, the coverage has come immediately before the traditional holiday booking period for the summer with Malta hotels, holiday companies and property agents hoping that it will boost awareness of this often forgotten island.

Keywords:

Malta, Mellieha, Qawra, Sliema, Valletta, St Paul's Bay, St Julian's, Bugibba, car hire, hotels, holidays, property, real estate, Malta flights

Article Body:

For a Mediterranean island with good year round weather, a friendly local English speaking population and facilities to rival that of any of her competitors, Malta is a suprisingly often forgotten island for many people planning a holiday in the Mediterranean.

Malta missed some of her own government's tourist targets in 2005, but a recent visit by Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh resulted in four days of positive media coverage in the island's most important market - the United Kingdom - and also in over 50 other countries attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, including Canada and Australia.

The Queen began her official visit to Malta before she opened the meeting, and was warmly greeted by friendly islanders.

Malta was governed by the British for a hundred and fifty years, and became independent in 1964. But the island has retained many British characteristics, including driving on the left, and British visitors account for nearly half of the island's tourists.

The George Cross ranks with the Victoria Cross as Britain's highest award for

bravery - and Malta was awarded the Cross in 1942 by King George VI for the island's resistance to German attempts to occupy the island, with Malta being under almost constant attack from June 1940.

As well as the challenge of drawing tourists away from other Mediterranean islands like Mallorca and Menorca, Malta has had to face the additional challenge of new holiday destinations in the former Eastern Bloc opening up, such as Bulgaria and Croatia, which tend to be cheaper.

Brighter Future

But where the Maltese tourist board has singularly failed to market the island's appeal to the mass holiday market with any degree of success in recent years, the Queen's visit has come at the right time for hotels and holiday companies hoping for a good 2006.

Tribune Properties, a British based company specialising in overseas properties including Malta comment:

'Malta is not a high priority on the list of holiday destinations for many British people compared to the Spanish Costas, Canary and Balearic Islands. The visit of the Queen showed Malta in a very positive light, and hopefully the island's tourist officials will be able to capitalise on the trip and increase hotel and holiday bookings in the months ahead. Given Malta's past record of promotion though if 2006 sees an increase in visitors it will be despite of the official promotions, and not because of it.'

More good news for the Malta holiday industry came in October with the announcement that low cost airlines had been given the right to fly to the island.

'This will help both the hotel and property industries in Malta' add Tribune. 'With the cost of getting to the island coming down, Malta should see her share of the short stay European holiday market increase substantially, increasing employment locally and benefitting the economy overall'.