

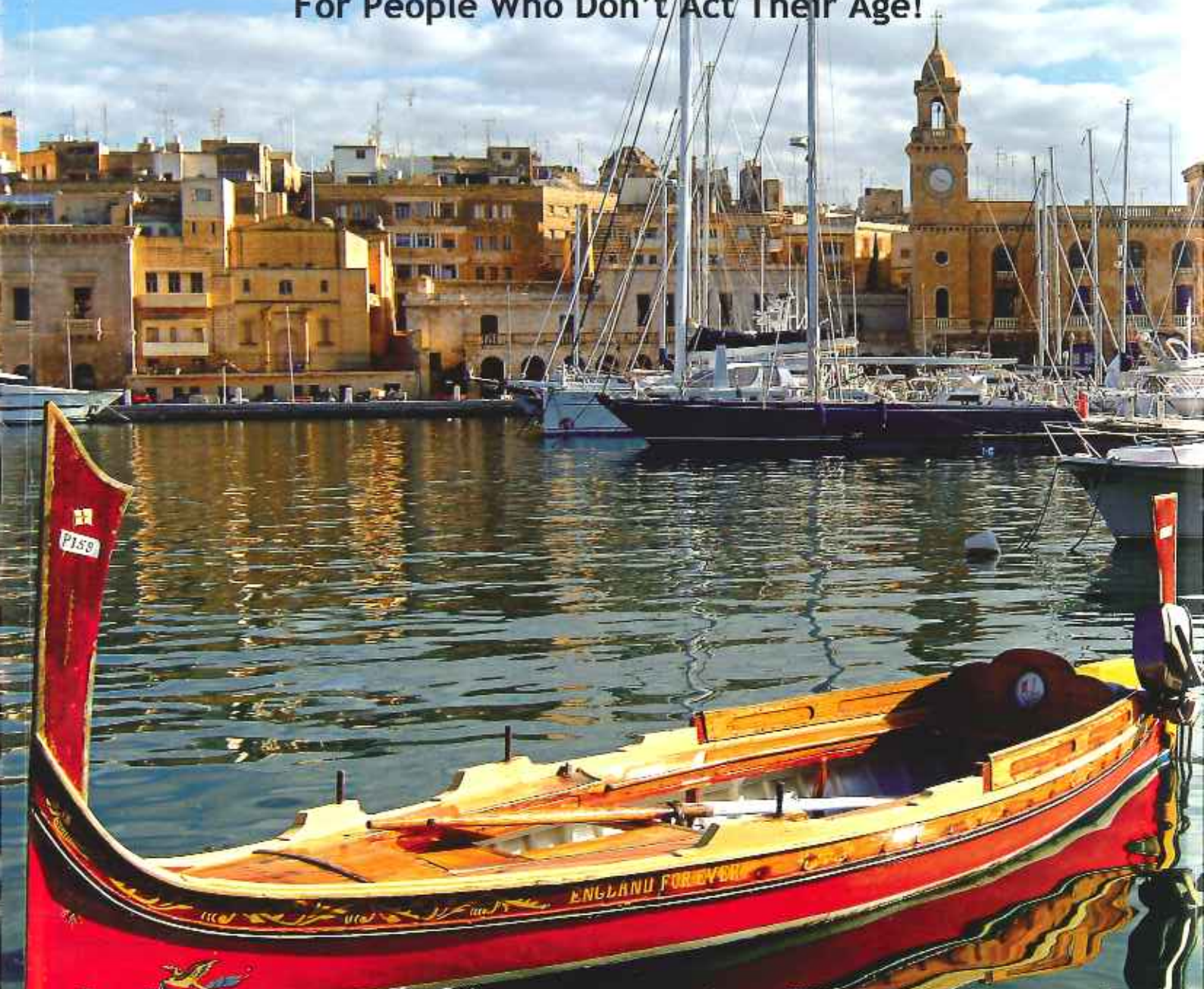
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SeniorTimes

For People Who Don't Act Their Age!



Magnificent Malta!

SeniorTimes travel club Malta offer

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- Get out and get fit!
- Walking under the Spanish Sun

Birgu Yacht Marina, Malta

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Valletta Harbour

Magnificent Malta!

John Low on the marvel that is Malta

Now is a good time to visit Malta: they have just converted to the Euro, and unlike Ireland and many other EC countries prices have not been 'rounded up' from the old Maltese Lira. Instead they have gone to great pains to keep prices down. As a result you will find eating out, having a few drinks, and buying presents and souvenirs a pleasantly reasonable experience. The celebrated Maltese lace is a 'must' and it's possible to pick up examples of the highest quality at prices that will surprise. Service charges, like dry cleaning and getting things fixed are also remarkably

modest. I had a new leather strap fixed to my watch. I gave in the watch and was told to come back in half an hour – not next week as in Ireland – and was presented with a first-class job. Cost: €8. So if you have a problem with a watch, want something adjusted on a piece of jewellery, an intricate tailoring job or the like, get it done in Malta. Most towns, and particularly Valletta, have specialists working from tiny hole-in-the-wall 'shops', the like of which have long since disappeared at home. And invariably it's service with a smile from a people renowned for their courtesy and good manners. It's hard to make a Maltese cross!

Your first impression of Malta is that it has been fashioned out of a huge slab of honey-coloured limestone, resulting in a mind-boggling profusion of intricately designed and decorated buildings: villas with arresting galleries, terraces with carved balconies, apartment blocks, hotels, imposing public buildings, and churches, lots and lots of churches, probably more per hundred metres than even the Eternal City can offer.

'Malta' is three islands: Malta, Gozo, and in between, the smallest, Comino, which is largely uninhabited but does have one hotel. Malta, the largest and principal island, is linked by Gozo by



Balluta Festa

a regular ferry service which takes about 30 minutes

Valletta: A World Heritage Site

Valletta is very much the commercial and administrative heart of the island which makes it all the more interesting and rewarding when you are looking for somewhere to eat. The well-founded ploy applies – look for the places where the locals and workers are eating. There's a huge selection of reasonably priced restaurants offering wide-ranging fare, which is largely based on Italian staples such as pasta,

but often with a Maltese twist. Fish figures prominently, with some delicious grilled dishes. Rabbit is almost the national dish, and, if like me, you're not squeamish about devouring little bunnies in a delicious sauce, with vegetables, you will find it on most menus. A good place for restaurants is Old Bakery Street. One I can heartily recommend is Rubino. From outside it looks like an old-fashioned sweetshop. But step inside – mind the steep step – and you enter a characterful, whitewashed room, with

Maximum Temperatures

January	15 Deg C
February	15
March	17
April	19
May	23
June	27
July	30
August	30
September	28
October	24
November	20
December	17

simple furniture but with immaculate linen tablecloths, shining glassware and cutlery, and very friendly staff. It is popular with local office workers, so get there early for lunch or dinner. (Better still, book: local number 212246 56). It features a number of fish dishes, as well as the ubiquitous rabbit, and other meat and poultry. Expect to pay around €60 for two aperitifs, starters, mains, desserts, bottle of wine and water, and liquors. To do it justice, you need to spend at least a day in Valletta, if you are not staying in or near the city. It is spectacular, with grand, pedestrianised shopping 'boulevards', (some distinctly Parisian but without the traffic) character-stuffed laneways, churches, palaces and the amazing set-piece... the harbour. It comes as no surprise that the city is listed as a World Heritage Site.

What to see

A 'must' is St John's Cathedral in Valletta, the spiritual 'home' of the Knights. Celebrated for its baroque beauty, and the tombs of the Knights. For good measure, the building also houses two Caravaggio paintings – The Beheading of John the Baptist, and St Jerome. There are eight separate chapels, each one dedicated to the various 'languages' of the Order of the Knights of St John, better known as the Knights of Malta. (Hence the eight sides to the Maltese Cross).



MEGALITHIC MARVELS

Malta and Gozo witnessed the first trace of man some 7,000 years ago. A thousand years before Stonehenge, dozens of megalithic temples were built all over the islands. The huge stone complexes, which makes of the temples of Ggantija, Hagar Qim, Mnajdra, Tarxien and the underground Hypogeum at Hall Saflieni are most impressive and be visited. The Ggantija temples on Gozo are thought to be the oldest free-standing structures in the world.

Mdina, the walled former first capital city of the island. St Paul is said to have lived here after being shipwrecked on the islands. As you would expect it is teeming with antiquities, notably the Roman Muscum which stands on the site of a Roman town house. The fine mosaic floor and other mosaics date back to the 1st Century AD.

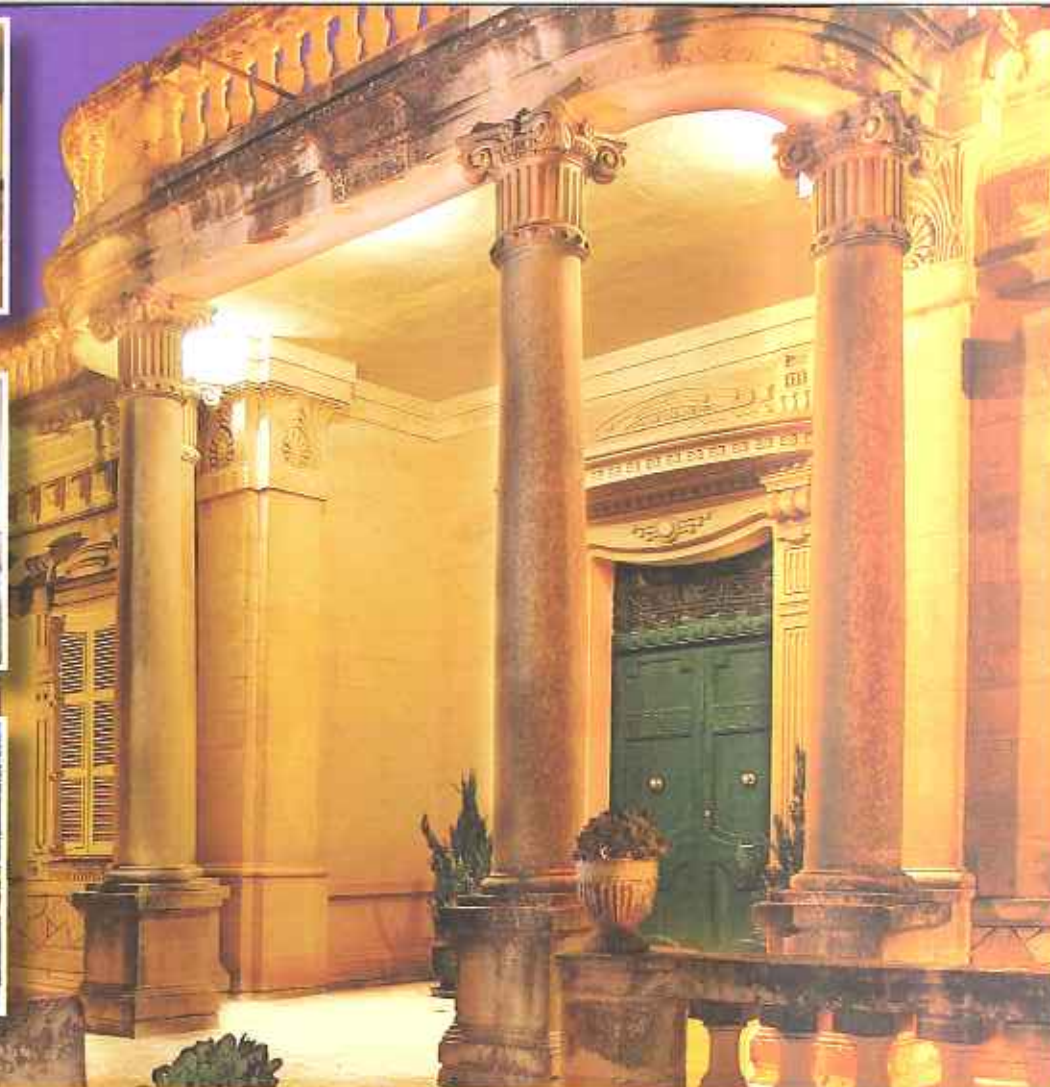
The east coast fishing village of Marsaxlokk is well worth a trip. It is the island's main fishing harbour and is celebrated for its colourful traditional fishing boats, the Luzzus, each painted with an eye on their prows to ward off

evil spirits. It is a busy, bustling place with lots of good value bars and restaurants. The caterics range from the very basic, serving Lampuka – virtually Malta's national fish and with a similar texture to cod to the slightly more 'upmarket', but nevertheless friendly and family orientated, ir-Rizza. Recommended, very busy at weekends, but pleasant for mid-week lunch. Ring 2165 1569. www.ir-rizza.com



Tombs of the Knights on the floor of St. John's Cathedral

Malta Shopfronts



SeniorTimes Travel Club In Association with the **5* Corinthia Palace Hotel & Spa**
Offer you luxurious seven nights in Magnificent Malta

located in the centre of the Island, opposite the Presidential Palace and San Anton Botanical Gardens, the hotel is set in its own nature and landscaped gardens and is the perfect base from which to explore the island. It is only 4 km from the Walled City of Medina, 6 km from the Capital Valletta and 7 km from the resort of St Julian's, yet far enough to offer a world of tranquillity and relaxation.

- Transfers: Airport – Hotel – Airport in a classic car
- Welcome Drink on arrival
- Seven nights accommodation in a deluxe room including Buffet Breakfast
- Traditional Maltese gift upon Arrival
- Four Course Dinner every evening in the award winning Villa Corinthia Restaurant
- 20% privilege in all Food & Beverage Outlets
- Complimentary use of the Athenaeum Spa by Algorithem, consisting of an Indoor Pool, Whirlpool, Sauna (Garden and) Fitness Room
- Complimentary full day excursion visiting the highlights of Malta, including lunch in one of the village's restaurants
- Complimentary full day tour of the sister island Gozo, including lunch in a typical Gozitan Village

1st April 2008 – 31st October 2008
€1447 per couple sharing in a Twin Room
€1032 per Twin Room for sole use

1st November 2008 – 31st March 2009
€1186 per couple sharing in a Twin Room
€837 per Twin Room for sole use

Additional Nights at €117 per night per couple on bed and breakfast basis

On Request

Privilege price for organized Trips around Malta

Free transport from Monday to Friday with our courtesy bus to the capital city Valletta Sliema, the Golf Club and to our beach resort during the summer season

Further information and booking contact
Zab at SeniorTimes on 01-6761811
(terms & conditions apply, subject to availability, accommodation only)





Another Religious Festival

When to visit

Malta, is of course a popular destination for many during the peak summer months, and with numerous cruise ships calling in to Valletta, the island can become somewhat claustrophobic at this period. A better time to visit is the Autumn, early Winter or Spring when temperatures are generally still pleasant, there are less crowds, and hotels and package deal prices unbelievably reasonable. For example I stayed in the five-star Corinthia Palace Spa Hotel in St Anton – in the north-west of the island but close to Valletta and all the other centres – in February when bed and breakfast rates were around €50 a night. Now this is a hotel in the grand tradition: magnificent edifice, with impressive foyer, courteous staff of the old school, exceedingly comfortable bedrooms, two restaurants, café, and a cocktail bar with resident pianist. And of course first-class spa facilities, and a courtesy bus to and from Valletta several times a day.

Typical of the five-star treatment is the endless choice of breakfast foods: you can have an omelette made to order, or choose a fry, maybe cheese and meats, with freshly-baked breads and rolls, fruits, yoghurts and every cereal and fruit juice under the sun. Tuck in and forget lunch!

'EVENTFUL' HISTORY

Malta, not to be too fine a point on it, has a colourful history - a history which makes Ireland's appear almost Elysian by comparison. From as far back as 5000BC when the first known inhabitants arrived from Sicily, Malta's militarily strategic location in the heart of the Mediterranean proved irresistible to, among others, the Romans, Phoenicians, Cartesians, Normans, Spanish, Arabs, Turks, French, and finally the British. The Germans, of course, also made their mark when they almost bombed the island into starvation in 1942 in an attempt to destroy the vitally important Valletta dockyard. They failed but killed thousands in the attempt, including many when, during a performance, the Opera House - its shell still visible today - took a direct hit.

Just across the road are the famed St Anton Gardens, rammed with exotic plants and trees, and you are within a few minutes walking distance of several quaint villages. (See the *Senior Times Travel Club special offer* in this issue).

Car hire

Car hire prices are good value and if you have not already pre-booked, you can get yourself a very good deal at the airport, particularly in the off-peak periods.

And of course the big advantage in Malta is you drive on the left-hand side. (And speaking of driving on the left-hand side of the road, Malta also uses the three flat-pin electrical plug system – so no need to pack those Continental adaptors.)

However, when driving be warned: the roads are variable, ranging from good to Third World. And road signs are not a model of consistency – but what's the rush? A recent big dollop of EC dosh – about three quarters of a billion Euro – will no doubt smooth out some of the potholes, and if you persist you will be rewarded by discovering some magical little towns and villages.

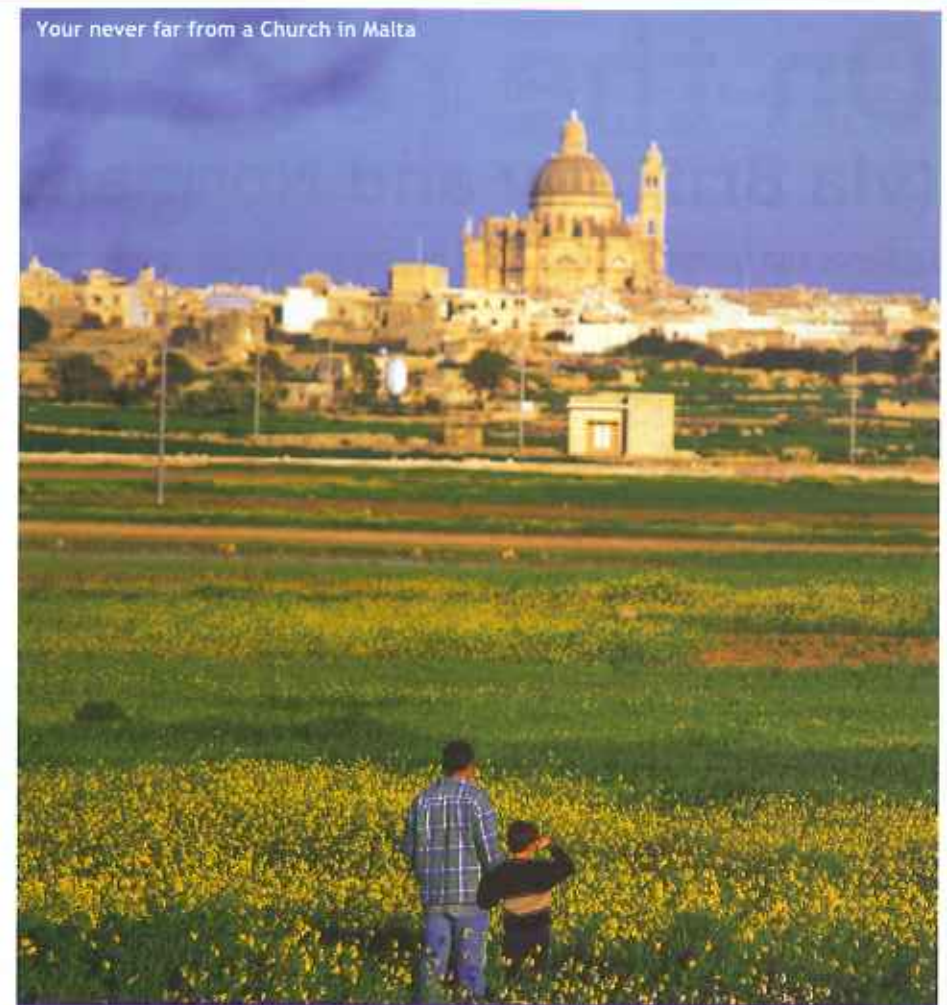
Public transport

Public transport is cheap. From the main bus terminus in Valletta you can visit virtually every corner of the island, and bus most towns and villages are well served. The average length of bus trip is around 25 minutes and the longest trip is just under an hour. An interesting bonus is that many buses in the fleet are magnificently maintained vintage forties and fifties vehicles.

Getting there

Check with your local travel agent for specific deals. A number of companies offer packages, including Budget, Bellair and Panorama. Ryanair are the only airline flying direct from Dublin to Malta, and very reasonable rates can be got in low season. For example two return flights in October will cost only about €150. The flight takes approx. three and a half hours.

Your never far from a Church in Malta



The Corinthia Palace Hotel & SPA, forms part of Corinthia's Premier Collection - an exclusive selection of award-winning hotels that are market leaders in their respective destinations.

Positioned in the centre of the Island, opposite the Presidential Palace and San Anton Botanical Gardens, this stunning 5-star hotel boasts the finest accommodation, comfort and facilities.

Set in its own mature and landscaped gardens, the Corinthia Palace is the perfect base from which to explore the island. It is only 4 km from the Walled City of Medina, 6 km from the Capital Valletta and 7 km from the resort of St Julian's. (See the Senior Times Travel Club off for this hotel in this issue).