Malta

A MINI TRAVEL E-GUIDE

HotelREZ
HOTELS & RESORTS

+44 (0) 20 3598 2243 info@hotelrez.net www.hotelrez.co.uk

About

Presenting Malta

With a history that goes back 7,000 years, Malta is truly steeped in culture and heritage. HotelREZ Hotels & Resorts breaks down the best of the Maltese islands in this mini travel e-guide.

Facts

Capital: Valletta

Population: 452,515

Area: 316 sq. km/ 121 sq. mi

Trademarks: Maltese Cross, Luzzu (Maltese traditional fishing boat), Knights of St. John or Knights of Malta, smallest European Capital.

Currency: Euro

Timezone: CET (UTC+1)/CEST (UTC+2)

Language: Maltese (national and official)/English(official)

Average temperature: January Max. 15.1°C/59.18°F – Min. 9.5°C/49.1°F
August Max. 30.6°C/87.08°F – Min. 21.8°C/71.24°F

Visa: Citizens from the EU, USA, Brazil, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea or Chinese national holders of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) do NOT require a visa to enter Malta, provided their stay does not exceed 3 months. For other nationalities check the Visa requirements **here.**

Communications: Malta Country Code +356. There are various Internet Cafes on the islands and most hotels have Wi-Fi available.

Soaking Up The Culture

Read: The Siege of Malta, a historical novel by Walter Scott written from 1831 to 1832 and published posthumously in 2008. It tells the story of events surrounding the Great Siege of Malta by the Ottoman Turks in 1565.

Listen: Charles 'City' Gatt, one of the greatest Maltese musicians, veteran jazz drummer and founder of the Malta Jazz Festival; Ruben Zahra and the Nafra ensemble, the most important international exponent of Malta's folk music heritage.

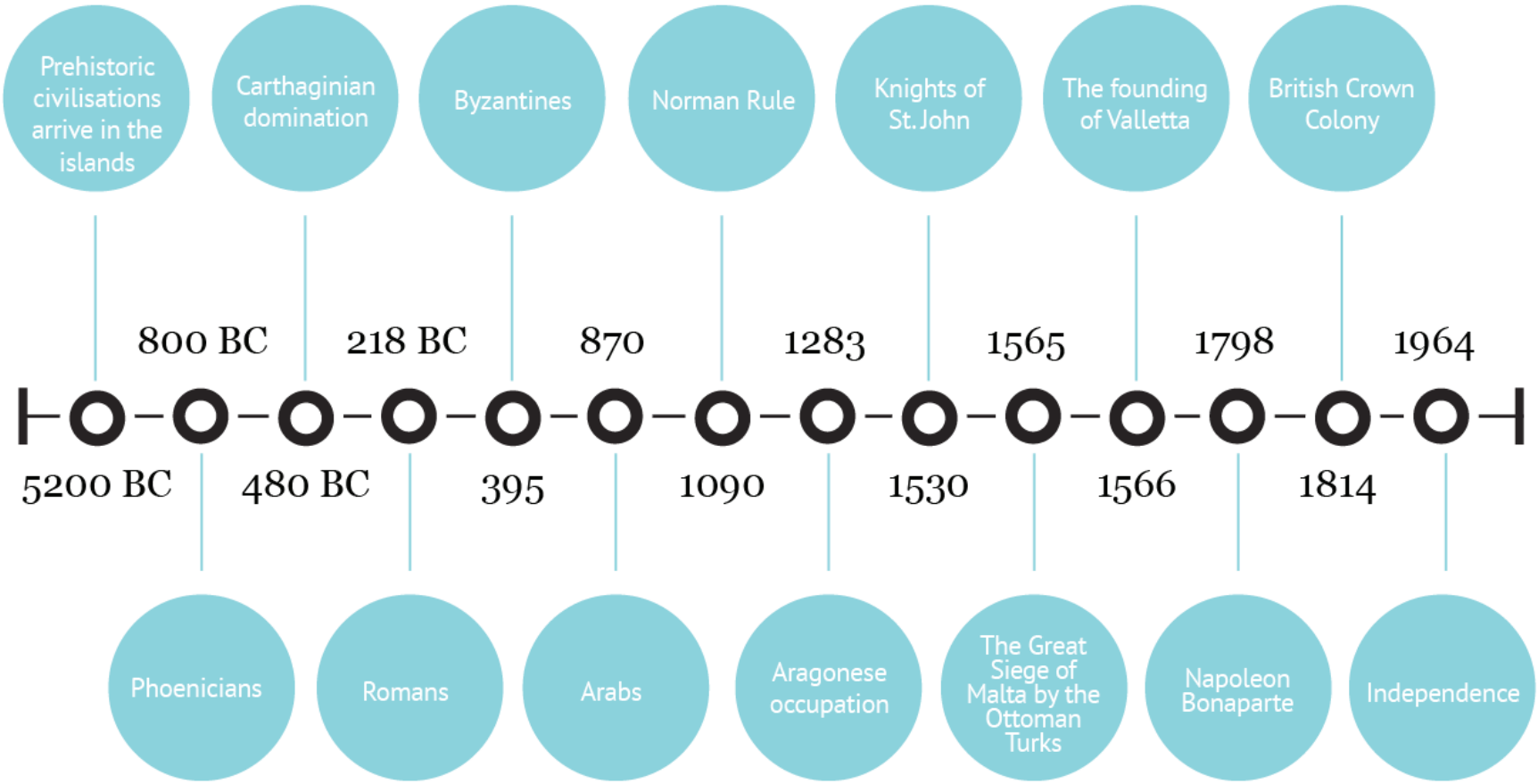
Watch: : Malta Story, a 1953 British war film, directed by Brian Desmond Hurst, which is based on the heroic air defence of Malta during the Siege of Malta in the Second World War.

Speak: Learn a few basic sentences with this **Survival Guide** to Maltese.

Cook: From pastizzi to bragioli, get your head around Maltese cuisine with this **crash course**.

History

The history of Malta is a long and colourful one dating back to pre-historic civilization, after which a succession of conquerors and different cultures took possession of these small but strategically important territories over the centuries.



Heritage and Culture

The Maltese Islands have three sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

1. Valletta the fortress city

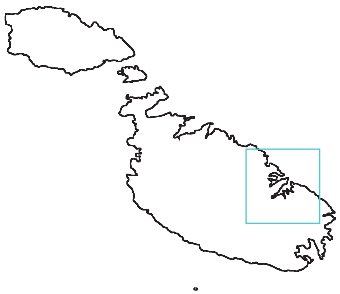
Valletta is named after its founder, the Grand Master of the Order of St. John, Jean Parisot de la Valette. The fortress city grew on the arid rock of Mount Sceberras peninsula, which rises steeply from two deep harbours, the Marsamxett and Grand Harbour. Valletta has been given many labels over the years, all recalling its rich historical past. It is the city built by the Knights of St John; a masterpiece of the Baroque; a European Art City and a World Heritage City. Today, it is one of the most concentrated historic areas in the world.

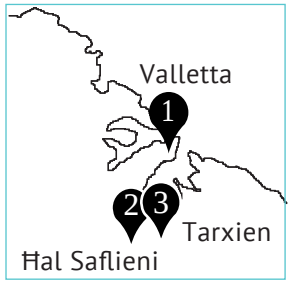
2. Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum

The Hypogeum, a labyrinth of underground chambers probably used as both a burial site and a temple, is one of Malta's highlights. Excavation has yielded a wealth of archaeological findings including pottery, human bones, personal ornaments such as beads and amulets, little carved animals and larger figurines.

3. Tarxien Temples

An archaeological complex dating from approximately 3150 BC, the Tarxien consist of three separate, but attached, temple structures. Excavation of the site revealed that it was used extensively for rituals, which probably involved animal sacrifice. Many of the decorated slabs discovered on site were relocated indoors for protection, and can be visited at the Museum of Archaeology in Valletta.





Taste

Flavours

As with its culture and heritage, Maltese cuisine is an eclectic mix of Mediterranean cooking with several influences from the many civilisations who occupied the Islands over the centuries.

Maltese cuisine

Bigilla

A glass of local wine with friends is always best enjoyed with a dish of sun ripped olives, some ġbejniet (local sheep's cheeses), and some bigilla (thick pate of broad bean and garlic) served with galletti (Maltese crackers).

Other snacks not to miss, are ħobs biż-żejt, made from a thick slice of crusty Maltese bread soaked in olive oil and rubbed with juicy red tomatoes and topped with mint, a little onion, garlic, tuna or anchovies and capers.

Braġjoli

Bragioli is a rich beef dish and a Maltese specialty. The traditional version of the recipe involves a stuffing made with bread - ideally the typical Maltese bread Hobz Malti - as well as bacon, garlic, parsley, and wedges of hardboiled egg - all stuffed inside beefsteaks.

The bragioli is then garnished with sautéed onions, carrot and bay leaves, and slowly braised in a robust local red wine.

Pastizzi

Pastizz (plural pastizzi) is a savoury pastry from Malta. Pastizzi usually have a filling either of ricotta or of mushy peas, and are called pastizzi tal-irkotta, "cheesecakes", or pastizzi tal-piżelli, "peacakes".

On a cold winter's day try the hot ricotta pastizzi which are perfect with a glass of wine or cup of coffee.

Lampuki

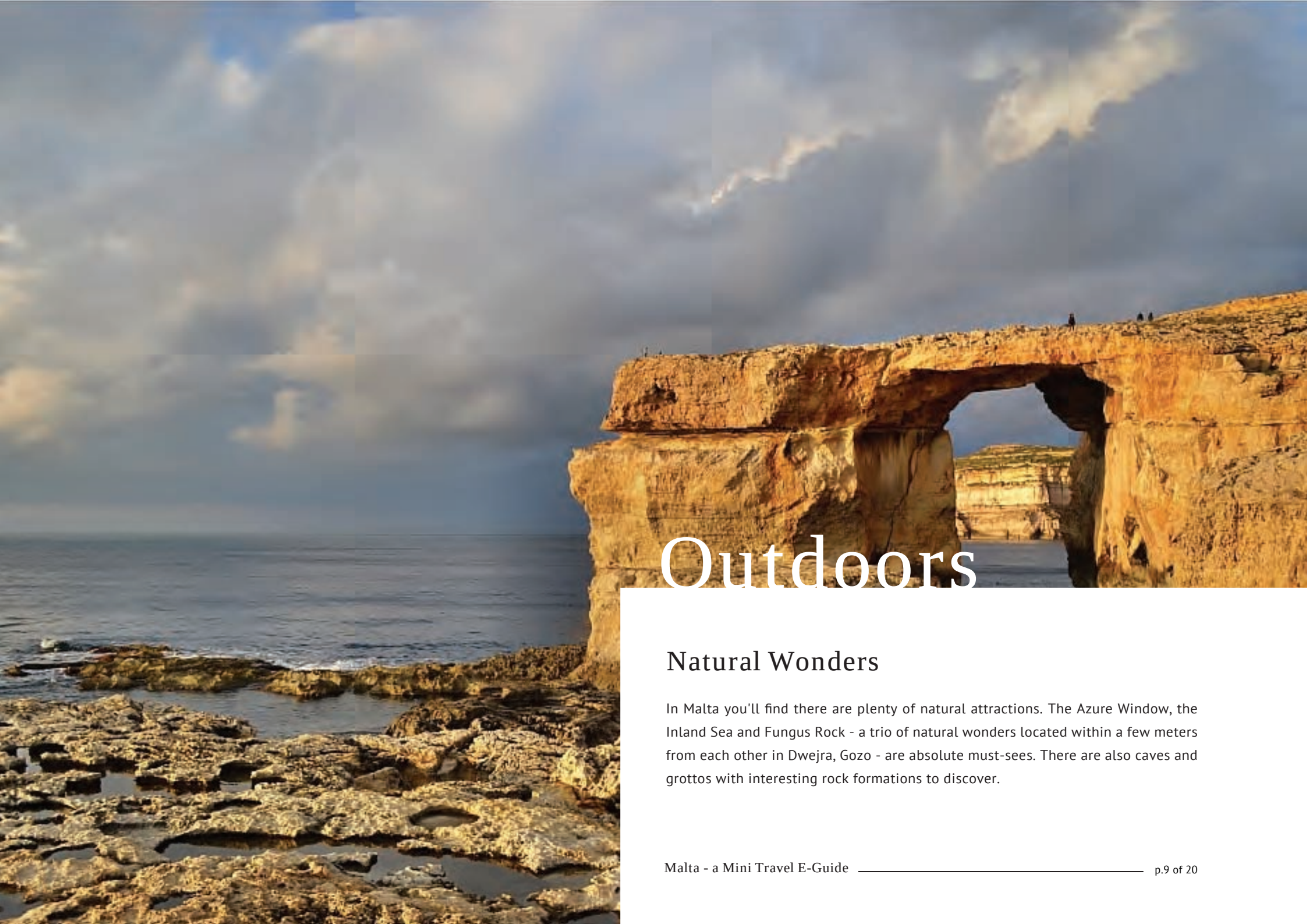
Lampuki, in Maltese, or common dolphin fish in English, is a surface-dwelling ray-finned fish found in off-shore temperate, tropical and subtropical waters worldwide and very common to Malta.

A trip to the Marsaxlokk fish market on Sunday morning will show you just how varied the fish catch is in Maltese waters. Look out for Lampuki Pie (fish pie) and Aljotta (fish soup).

Imqaret

Imqaret is a traditional Maltese sweet made with pastry and a filling of dates. The word imqaret in Maltese, is the plural of maqrut (diamond shaped) and it signifies the diamond shape of the sweets.

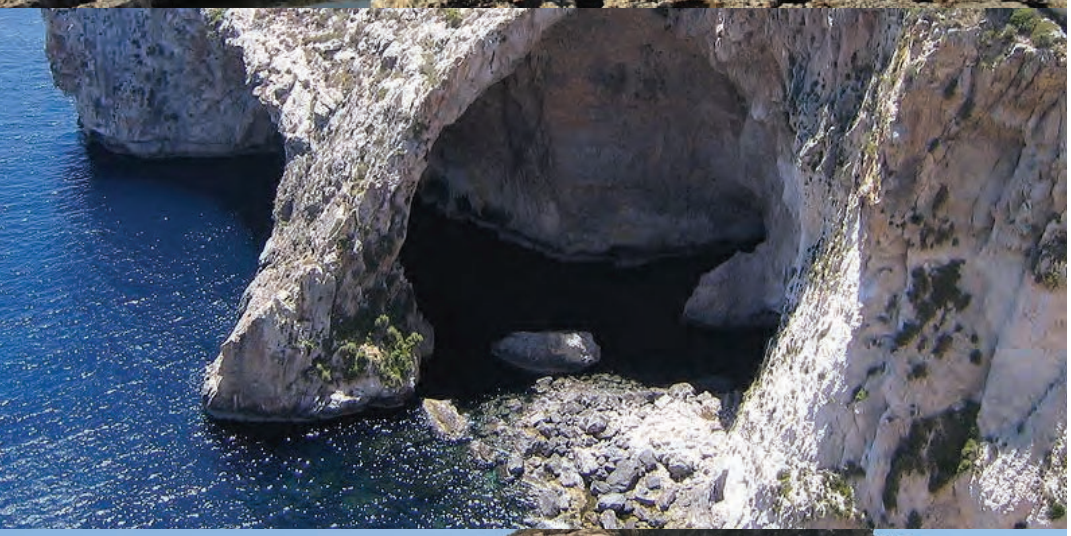
It is very popular in Malta and it is sold in street markets, particularly around religious holidays and village festivals. On hot summer days try it served with ice-cream.



Outdoors

Natural Wonders

In Malta you'll find there are plenty of natural attractions. The Azure Window, the Inland Sea and Fungus Rock - a trio of natural wonders located within a few meters from each other in Dwejra, Gozo - are absolute must-sees. There are also caves and grottos with interesting rock formations to discover.



1. Blue Grotto - Outskirts of Qrendi, Malta

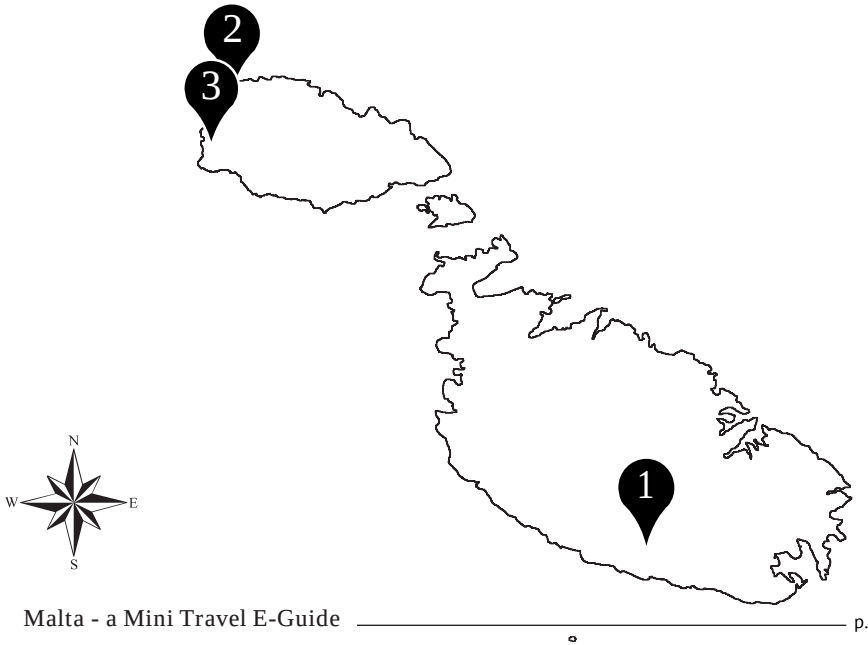
A number of caves, including the Blue Grotto, which is the biggest one, can be reached by boat from Wied iz-Zurrieq, on the outskirts of the town of Qrendi.

2. Azure Window - Dwerja, outskirts of San Lawrenz, Gozo

One of the most photographed vistas of the Islands, particularly spectacular during winter when waves crash high inside the arch.

3. Fungus Rock - Dwerja, Gozo

A small islet in the form of a 60 metres high massive lump of limestone in Dwejra, on the coast of Gozo. It is called Fungus rock due to the discovery of the common Malta fungus growing on the rock's flat top by the Knights of St. John. Thought to have medicinal properties the Knights used it for dressing wounds and cure dysentery.



Adventure & Outdoors

Best for:

1. Diving

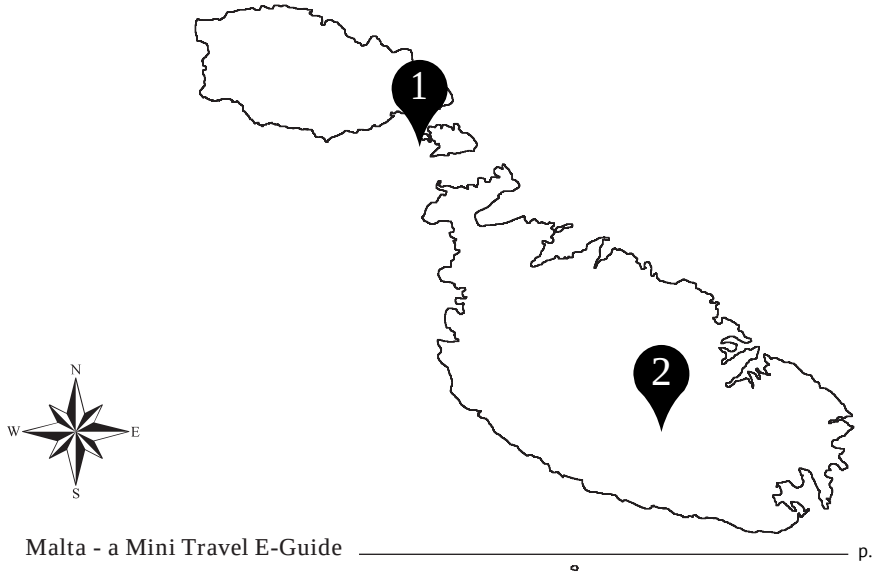
One of the top spots for diving in Malta is The Inland Sea. A lagoon of shallow seawater on the island of Gozo, linked to the Mediterranean Sea through an opening formed by a narrow natural arch, the Inland Sea was elected by ocean explorer Jaques Costeau as one of his top ten dives!

Find out more about Scuba Diving in Malta **here**

2. Climbing

The rocky terrain and sheer cliffs that characterise much of the Maltese archipelago make it ideal for practicing rock climbing. There are over 1300 climbing routes to choose from, and of course, with good weather throughout most of the year, the Maltese Islands are renowned as a climber's paradise.

Find out more on the **Malta Rock Climbing Club website**



Events

Festivals & Events

Malta has plenty of festivals and special events taking place all year round. Here is a selection of some of the islands' main events.

Festivals & Events

Malta International Fireworks Festival

An annual event taking place at the end of April around the Grand Harbour in Valletta.

The festival includes several fireworks displays designed by international companies, as well as some of the best of local fireworks factories.

More information **here**

Ghanafest

A three-day manifestation of Maltese folk singing, known as Għana in Maltese, which takes place every year in Floriana.

This is a family event, complemented by traditional Maltese food and the marvellous surroundings of the Argotti Botanical Gardens in Floriana.

Information on the festival website **here**

Malta International Jazz Festival

Annual festival taking place in July in Valletta's Grand Harbour. A line-up of top international and Maltese artists present an eclectic mix of jazz styles from the current musical scene.

Previous editions counted with international jazz superstars such as Chick Corea, Al di Meola or John Scofield.

Information on the festival website **here**

The Malta Arts Festival

The Malta Arts Festival is an annual festival comprising of a wide variety of art forms, such as theatre, dance, music and art. Usually taking place in mid July in Valletta.

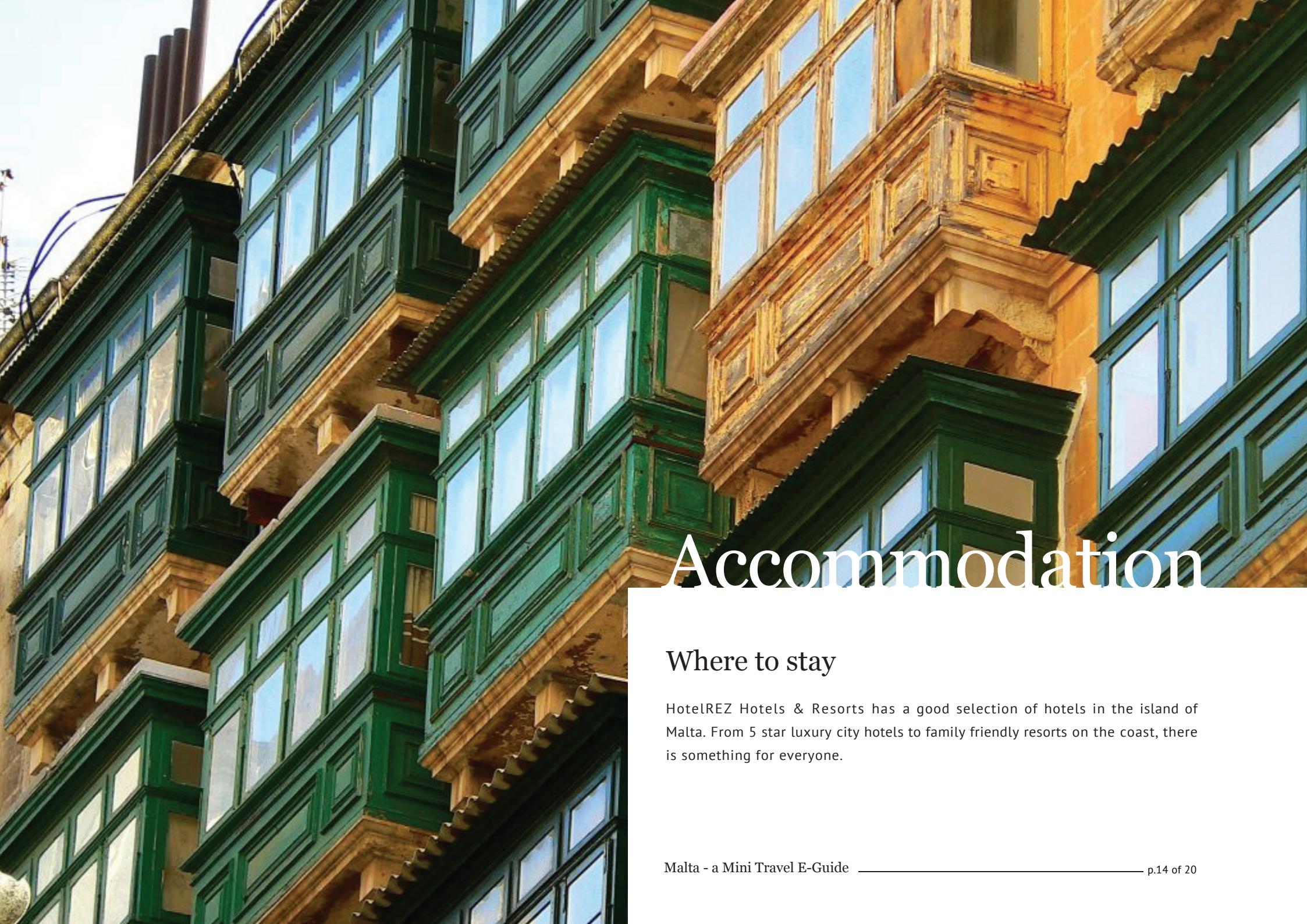
Information on the festival website **here**

Religious festivities and Village Festas

The festa season in Malta is made up of a series of extended weekends, starting from the end of May well into September.

During this period, there is hardly any weekend when a town or a village is not celebrating the feast of its patron saint.

For more information on what's on, check **Visit Malta website**



Accommodation

Where to stay

HotelREZ Hotels & Resorts has a good selection of hotels in the island of Malta. From 5 star luxury city hotels to family friendly resorts on the coast, there is something for everyone.

★★★★★

Hotel Phoenicia Malta

An iconic hotel in Valletta, Hotel Phoenicia Malta combines an ambiance of rich history with unsurpassed luxury and comfort.

Highlight

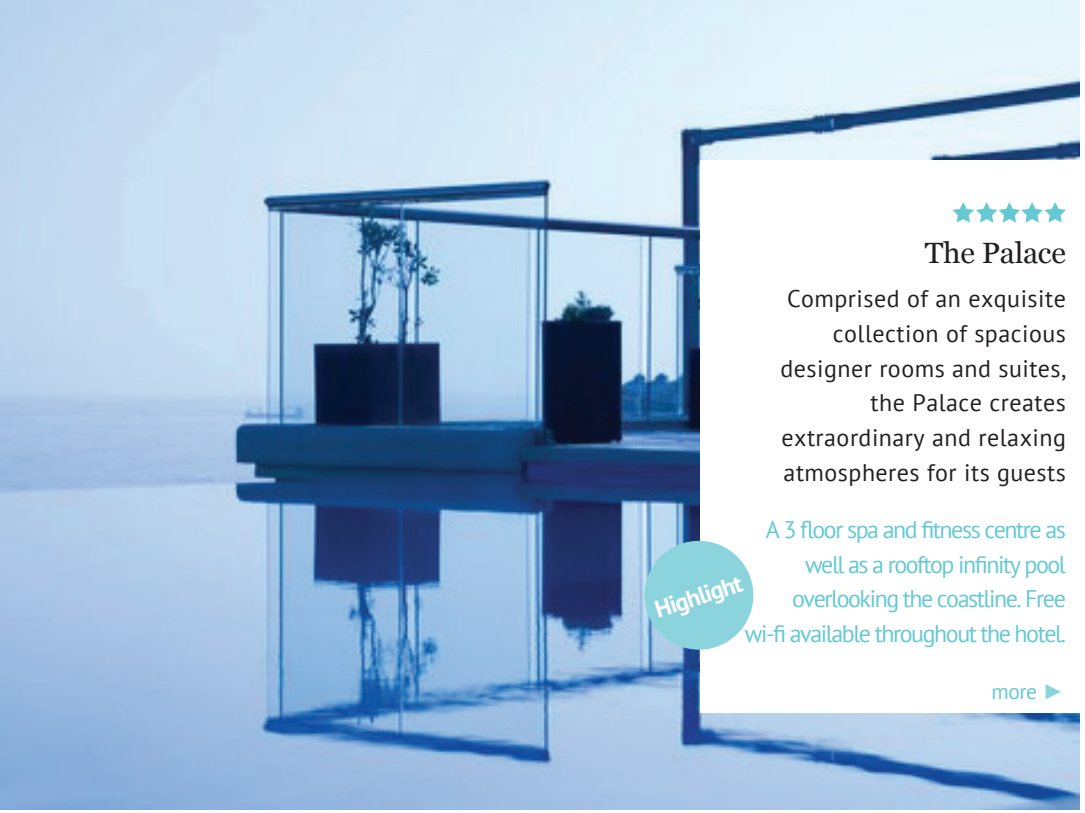
The hotel's Great Gatsby 1920s style, and the breath-taking views of Valletta's Grand Harbour

more ►

Valletta

Why Visit

- The Upper and Lower Barrakka gardens where you can take in the views of the Grand Harbour
- Fort St Elmo, a 16th-century fort on the tip of the Valletta peninsula
- St. John's Co-Cathedral with its Baroque frescoes by Mattia Preti and Caravaggio's famous painting of the Beheading of St. John
- The beautiful Maltese wooden balconies stretching along the city's old streets



★★★★★

The Palace

Comprised of an exquisite collection of spacious designer rooms and suites, the Palace creates extraordinary and relaxing atmospheres for its guests

Highlight

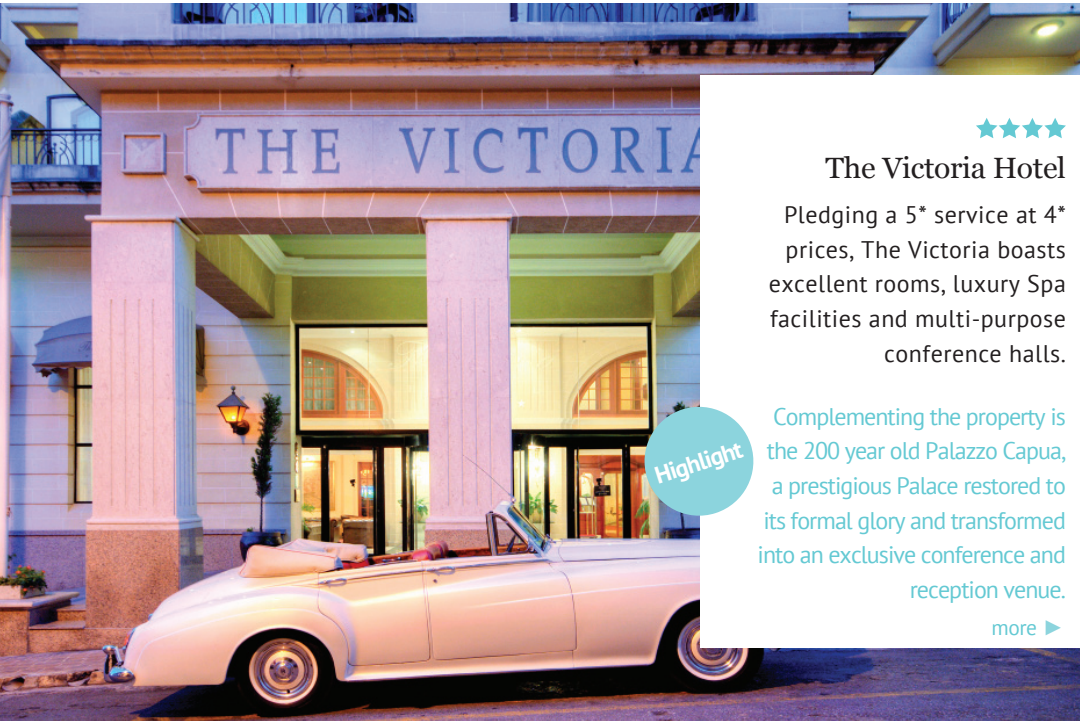
A 3 floor spa and fitness centre as well as a rooftop infinity pool overlooking the coastline. Free wi-fi available throughout the hotel.

more ►

Sliema

Why Visit

- The Beach Lidos, such as MedAsia Playa a beach club including a restaurant, lounge and relaxation areas and a pool lido
- The excellent restaurants in and around Howard Street
- The Point Malta, a recent shopping complex in Sliema and one of the largest shopping centres in all of Malta



★★★★

The Victoria Hotel

Pledging a 5* service at 4* prices, The Victoria boasts excellent rooms, luxury Spa facilities and multi-purpose conference halls.

Highlight

Complementing the property is the 200 year old Palazzo Capua, a prestigious Palace restored to its formal glory and transformed into an exclusive conference and reception venue.

more ►

★★★

Hotel Plevna

A charming and traditional hotel situated in a quiet residential area, yet only a short 5 minute walk away from the city centre with its shops, restaurants and cafes.

Highlight

A mere 200 metre stroll brings you to the seafront where a 3 km promenade leads all the way to St Julian's which is the island's nightlife centre.

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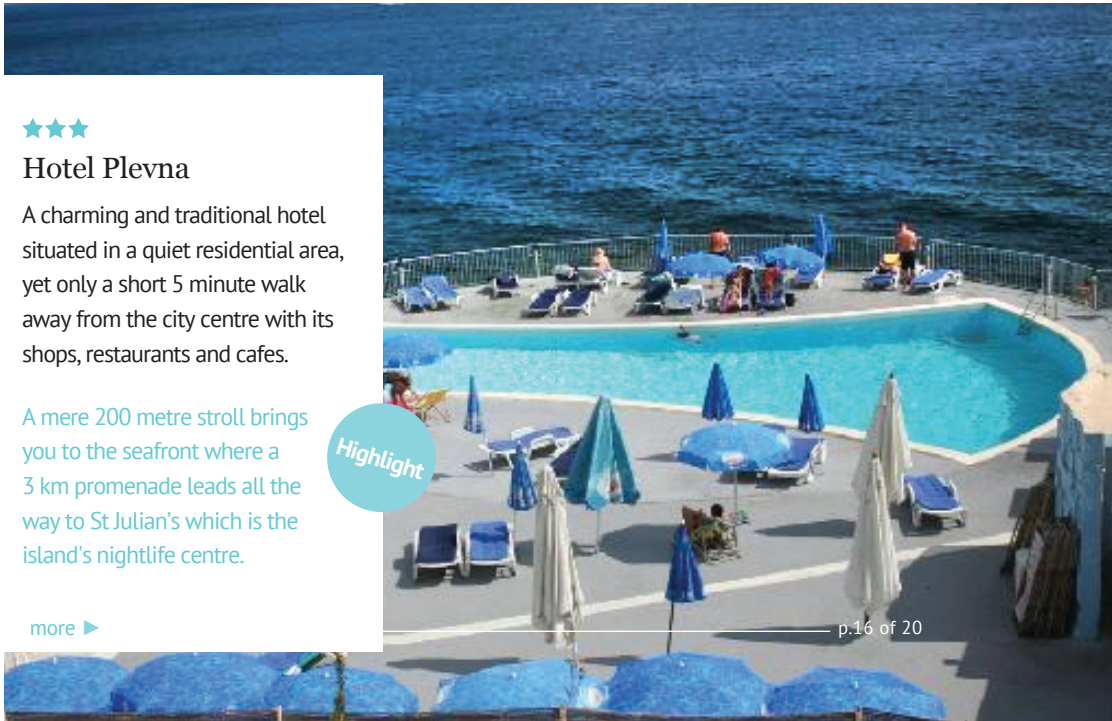
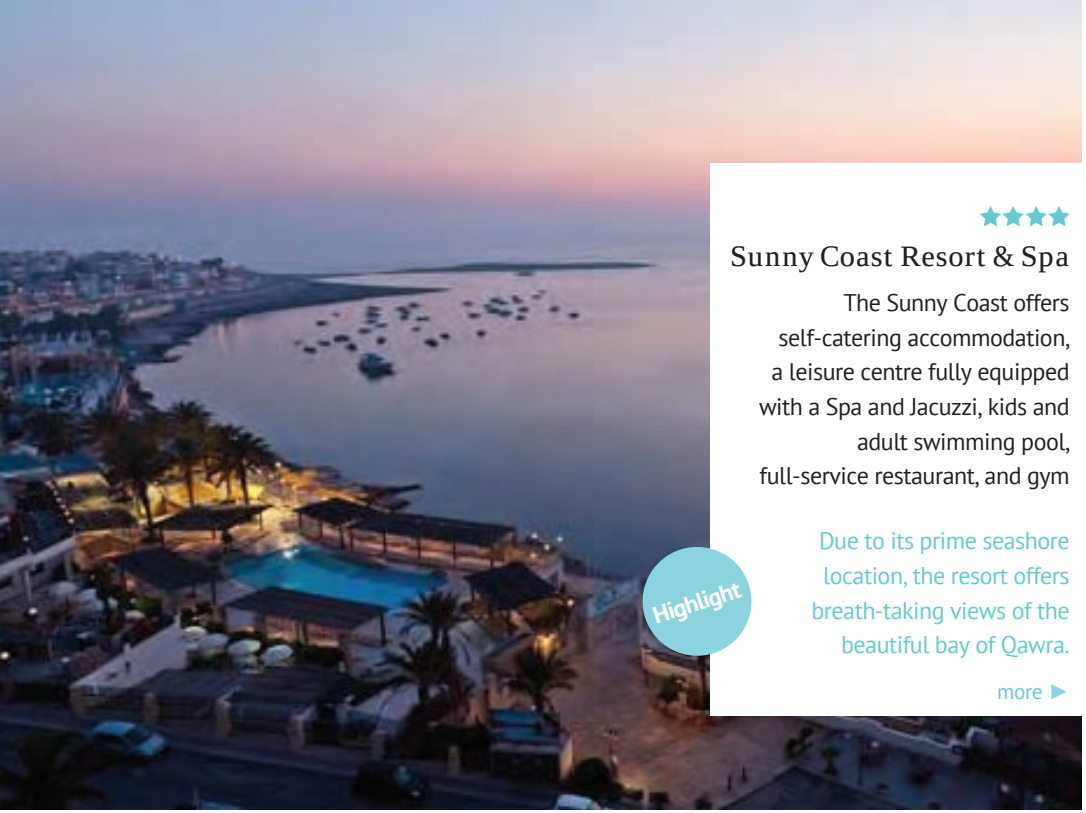




★★★★

Sunny Coast Resort & Spa

The Sunny Coast offers self-catering accommodation, a leisure centre fully equipped with a Spa and Jacuzzi, kids and adult swimming pool, full-service restaurant, and gym

Highlight

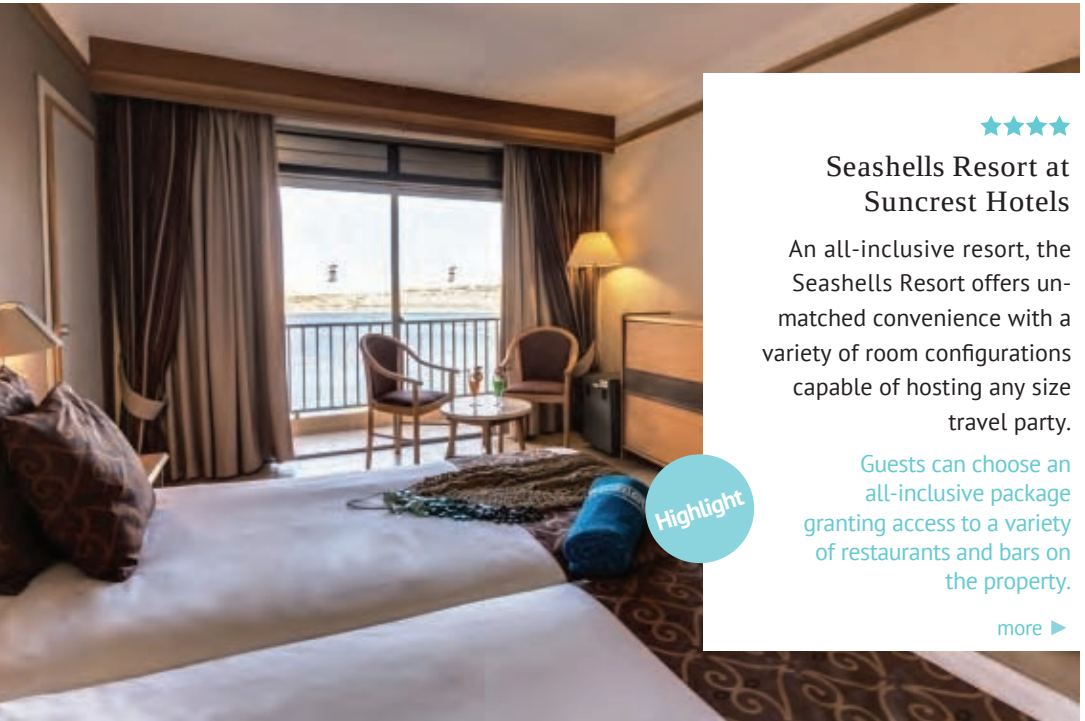
Due to its prime seashore location, the resort offers breath-taking views of the beautiful bay of Qawra.

more ▶

Qawra

Why Visit

- The Qawra Tower, built by the Knights in 1659 and now a restaurant and swimming pool offers views of both St Paul's and Salinas Bays
- The nightlife in the Promenade, with its many bars and restaurants
- The rocky beaches in Qawra offering clear, warm waters, ideal for snorkelling and swimming



★★★★

Seashells Resort at Suncrest Hotels

An all-inclusive resort, the Seashells Resort offers un-matched convenience with a variety of room configurations capable of hosting any size travel party.

Highlight

Guests can choose an all-inclusive package granting access to a variety of restaurants and bars on the property.

more ▶

★★★★

Paradise Bay Resort

Beautifully situated in a peninsula overlooking the picturesque sister islands of Gozo and Comino, the Paradise Bay offers spacious rooms all boasting sea views.

Highlight

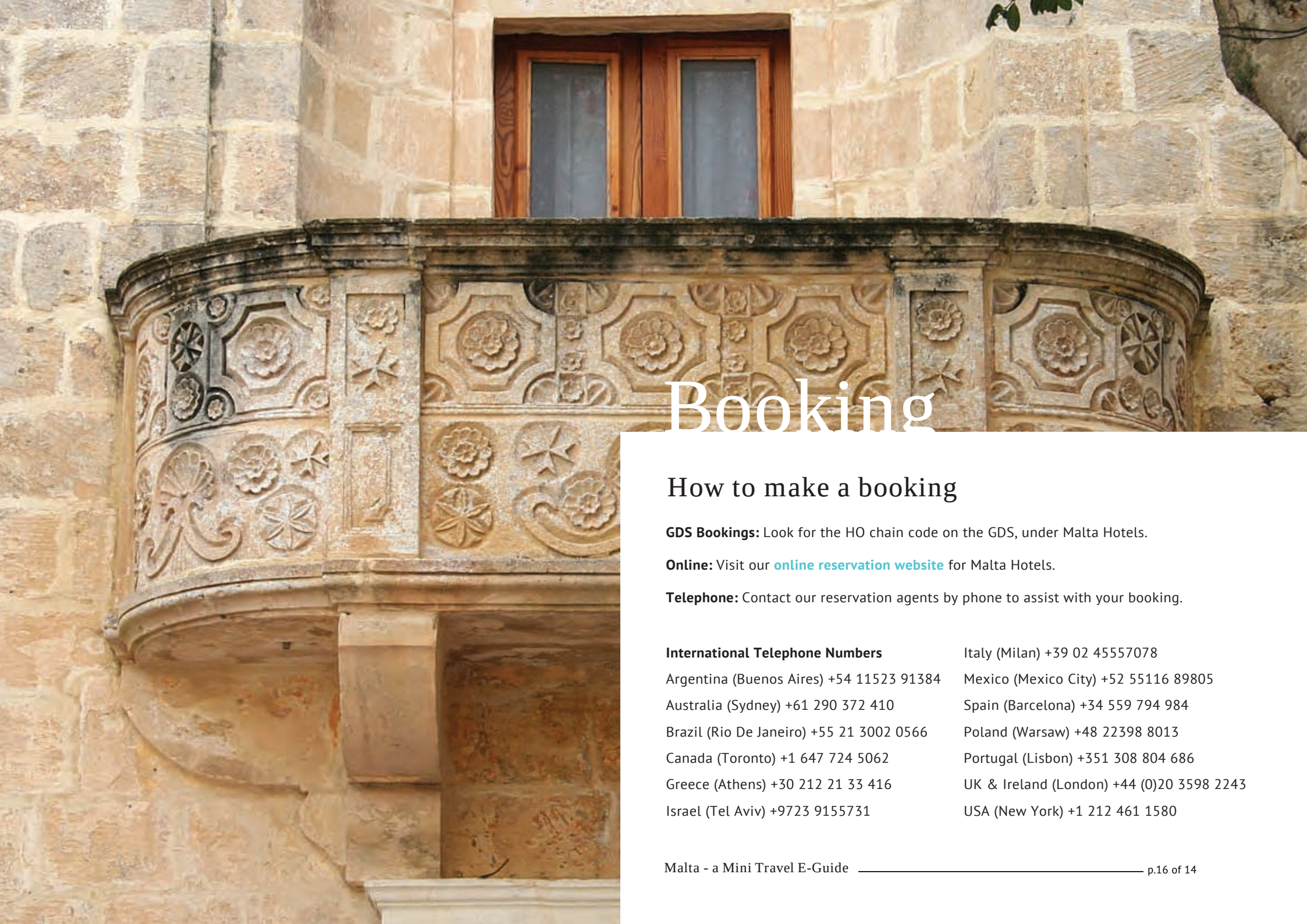
The resorts' own beach with water sports during the summer months and a Gold Palm Diving School operating all year with PADI qualified diving instructors.

more ▶

Cirkewwa

Why Visit

- The island of Gozo, easily reached by a short ferry ride from Cirkewwa
- Diving highlights including underwater cliffs, caves, tunnels or the wreck of the MV Rozi, an old tugboat sunk intentionally as an attraction for tourists



Booking

How to make a booking

GDS Bookings: Look for the HO chain code on the GDS, under Malta Hotels.

Online: Visit our **online reservation website** for Malta Hotels.

Telephone: Contact our reservation agents by phone to assist with your booking.

International Telephone Numbers

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Brazil (Rio De Janeiro) +55 21 3002 0566
Canada (Toronto) +1 647 724 5062
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USA (New York) +1 212 461 1580

Sources

Visit Malta – http://www.visitmalta.org
A Maltese Gastronomic Portal – http://Ilovefood.com.mt

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Religious festivities and Village Festas via www.visitmalta.com/

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