

A welcoming island story unfolds as Malta opens new pathways and broadens its charm

Emirates and Qatar Airways now link the Gulf and Malta, a tranquil island nation with rich history, natural beauty and genuine culture that attracts tourists from across the world

Located at the heart of the azure-blue Mediterranean Sea and spanning just 316 square kilometres, the extraordinary Maltese archipelago will delight any traveller, no matter what their interests are.

“We like to call Malta a zip file: small and compact on the map, but packed with layers of history, culture, natural beauty and surprises,” explains Carlo Micallef, CEO of Malta Tourism Authority (MTA). “Malta offers a unique blend of Mediterranean environment; European structure; a rich history shaped by the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs, France’s Knights of St. John and the British; and strong Arab and Italian influences in our language, cuisine and lifestyle. This layered identity makes Malta a truly distinctive destination.”

The country has been inhabited for at least 7,000 years and there are thousands of physical reminders on its three islands — Malta, Gozo and tiny Comino — of the various civilisations that have made the country their home over the millennia. These range from some of the world’s oldest megalithic temples to a subterranean complex that was the Allied forces Mediterranean headquarters during World War II.

This wealth of preserved treasures has been awarded three UNESCO World Heritage Site listings, one of which covers the whole of Malta’s fortified seafort capital Valletta, which was built in the 1500s. “Walking through the historic streets of our villages, towns and cities is like stepping into living museums full of stories and character,” says Micallef.

Malta’s diverse heritage has generated an array of vibrant cultural traditions and a cosmopolitan contemporary culture scene, which come to life at the countless



Malta’s fortified capital is a UNESCO World Heritage Site

“15 years ago, travellers came to the Mediterranean for sun and sea. Today, they’re seeking immersive experiences — and that’s exactly what Malta offers.”

CARLO MICALLEF, CEO, MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY

festivals and events celebrated across the islands every year. The nation’s heritage is also evident in its distinct gastronomy that makes the most of its wonderful home-grown produce, including vegetables, fruit, herbs, olive oils, honey and cheeses, as well as the abundant fish in its seas. Among the many excellent places serving both traditional and creative Mal-

tese cuisine are 43 Michelin-recommended restaurants, six of which have one star, while one has been awarded two.

The archipelago’s natural environments are equally enticing and, as Malta boasts a mild sunny climate, they can be explored throughout the year. Its seas are calm, crystal clear and among the cleanest in Europe, making it a re-

nowned destination for all water sports. This January, for instance, it was named 2025’s best global destination for diving at Germany’s boot Düsseldorf, the world’s largest water-sport trade fair.

On land, Malta has copious pristine sandy beaches, as well as rolling hills and rugged cliffs that support numerous outdoor activities, sports and adventures.

A rising tourism hotspot

In 2024, Malta welcomed a record-breaking 3.56 million tourists, 19.5 per cent more than it did in 2023 and outperforming most other countries in its region. “15 years ago, travellers came to the



Mediterranean for sun and sea. Today, they’re seeking immersive experiences — and that’s exactly what Malta offers,” explains Micallef. “We’ve seen a significant increase in tourism, including from the Middle East. More importantly, Malta is positioning itself as a true year-round Mediterranean destination. Tourism is growing during the shoulder months, with slower growth during summer, which is exactly what we are aiming for to ensure the sector’s sustainability.”

MTA has worked hard to drive that shift and to guarantee the country provides the highest levels of hospitality. For instance, it has invested in expanding the country’s calendar of international cultural and sporting events, workforce training and promoting the depth of Malta’s offering in niche areas such as luxury, gastronomic, military, business, wellness and sustainable tourism.

The authority has also fostered close relationships with global airlines and regular direct flights from more than 120 international destinations now land at Malta International Airport, which is just 20 minutes away from Valletta’s centre. One of MTA’s most important partners is Emirates, which has been operating routes into the archipelago since 1988. The airline currently offers daily flights from Dubai to Malta and

signed a memorandum of understanding with MTA this year that will see the two entities collaborate on marketing projects that will boost the country’s status as a premium-quality destination.

When the MoU was announced, Emirates’ deputy president and chief commercial officer said: “Malta has been a key destination in our European network for over two decades and we’ve witnessed its growing popularity as a sought-after leisure gateway over the years. This agreement reaffirms our commitment to supporting Malta’s tourism industry.”

Qatar Airways, another key long-term partner, stopped its flights to the archipelago as a result of the pandemic but resumed its operations this summer with four weekly services from Hamad International Airport — making it even easier for tourists from the Middle East region to visit the Mediterranean paradise.

“With strong Emirates and Qatar Airways flight connections, Malta is a hidden gem waiting to be discovered,” states Micallef. “Malta has been under the radar for many Middle Eastern travellers, who have often chosen to visit large European cities like London, Paris, Rome or Berlin in the past. It’s time to look deeper. We invite travellers to explore our unique experiences and be pleasantly surprised.”

What makes Malta unique? A character shaped by heritage and strong connections

Malta’s government and tourism leaders work closely with global partners, enabling the nation to showcase its distinctive identity, while expanding its influence on the international stage

According to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg, “Malta’s geostrategic location at the heart of the Mediterranean has always been a unique characteristic of our country, having heavily contributed to our multicultural heritage and the formation of our national identity. “However, geography alone means nothing without purpose. Malta is an active multilateralist that has long served as a meeting

point between regions, ideas and ambitions. We believe that in a world defined by complexity and crisis, multilateralism is not a luxury but a necessity.”

For this reason, the country readily takes up leadership roles in international bodies: in the last two years alone, it has chaired the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, been a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and it is currently president of the

Council of Europe. “Malta uses every platform to keep multilateral dialogue open, relevant and impactful,” states Borg.

At the European Union level, the country is an influential advocate for — among other issues — deeper engagement with the Middle East. “Malta enjoys a unique position of integrity and credibility in both Europe and the Arab world, often acting as a key to unlock and promote cooperation,” he explains. “By lever-



Ian Borg
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism

aging our EU membership and long-standing relationships in the Gulf region, we’re driving cooperation in sectors from trade, energy and climate action to education, innovation and connectivity.”

The Maltese government is nurturing its strong bilateral relationships that span the world. “Our message is simple: Malta is ready to partner for progress. We’re focused on promoting peace, economic opportunities in a wide range of sectors and long-term



Carlo Micallef
CEO
Malta Tourism Authority

partnerships,” he says. “When it comes to cultural diplomacy, Malta draws strength from its heritage but looks firmly ahead. Whether through education, language or the arts, we invest in people-to-people ties and fostering mutual understanding, such as through the cultural commonalities Malta shares with the Arab world.”

Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) has also built robust collaborative alliances with many

global partners. For example, it signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Emirates in March that aims to raise the country’s profile as a tourist destination across the airline’s global flight network.

“The MoU has sparked renewed interest in Malta from Emirates’ partners, especially in the Middle East and Asia. We’ve received numerous requests from travel companies eager to learn more about Malta’s unique tourism segments, which align with current travel motivations,” says MTA CEO Carlo Micallef.

“The partnership includes co-branding opportunities and we’re now planning joint campaigns, including ones for Japan, Korea, Australia and the Middle East. Emirates is our longest-standing Middle Eastern airline partner, our relationship has grown steadily over the years, and this new collaboration has already delivered great value and visibility. We look forward to expanding it further,” he enthuses.

Malta-UAE bonds deepen in key sectors

With the launch of a joint commission, Malta and the UAE strengthen ties across trade, innovation and culture — building a forward-looking relationship based on shared priorities

Malta and the UAE celebrated 50 years of friendly diplomatic relations in 2023. Over those decades, the nations’ governments have signed nearly 20 bilateral agreements, which have catalysed collaboration in a wide range of economic, societal and cultural areas.

For example, a double taxation treaty has helped make the countries increasingly important trade partners: according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity, Maltese exports to the UAE expanded by an annualised rate of 23 per cent between 2018 and 2023 to reach \$52 million, while the value of goods going in the other direction rose 4 per cent a year on average and exceeded \$75 million in 2023.

Cooperation levels took a major step forward this April, when the inaugural meeting of the new Malta-UAE Joint Commission was held in Abu Dhabi, which was co-chaired by Minister of State Ahmed bin Ali Al Sayegh and

Malta’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg.

“The commission is testimony to the excellent relationship that continues to be fostered between Malta and the UAE,” says Borg. “The event was instrumental in bringing together interested parties to advance a host of issues, including healthcare, innovation, renewable energy, climate action, e-governance, cultural collaboration, cooperation in agriculture and fisheries, cybersecurity, trade, investment, the digital economy, tourism, maritime transport, education and judicial matters.”

Talking at a press conference during the session, Borg said that the commission “affirms a clear political will on both sides to consolidate bilateral cooperation through structured and strategic engagement. We are here this week to translate shared aspirations into concrete and measurable outcomes.”

The minutes signed by Al

Sayegh and Borg at the end of the event reflect the breadth and depth of that political will. “To mention just a few examples, initiatives agreed for healthcare include mutual capacity building in health innovation and professional development via an exchange of expertise and training,” explains Borg. “On fostering innovation, both sides agreed to take cooperation forward, including in cybersecurity research and development, as well as by encouraging Maltese startups to participate in UAE’s CyberE71 programme.”

The minister also highlights progress made to promote sustainability. “Both sides have committed to enhance cooperation and exchange of best practises to tackle climate action, including on mitigating the impact of desertification and water availability, as well as on protecting coastal areas,” he says. “These illustrations demonstrate the level of engagement that both sides have undertaken to commit to.”



The inaugural session of the Malta–United Arab Emirates Joint Commission took place in Abu Dhabi in April

The minutes detail a two-year implementation programme for measures approved at the event. The governments will then meet to review progress and discuss more advanced collaborations, leading up to a second session of the commission, which is planned for 2027 and will be hosted by

Malta.

During his visit to the Gulf country, Borg also opened a new Maltese consulate in Dubai, which he described as a “significant milestone” in the ongoing efforts to deepen political, economic and cultural ties. “Through collaboration and mutual respect,

Malta and the UAE will continue to achieve great things together,” he said at the building’s inauguration. “Let this consulate be a beacon of partnership — not only for state actors and institutions — but for citizens, entrepreneurs, artists, academics and future generations.”



Cruise ships visiting Malta arrive at Valletta's stunning Grand Harbour port



Malta's brightly painted luzzu fishing boats were introduced by the Phoenicians

Malta Tourism Authority: Unlocking the island's true potential

Carlo Micallef, CEO of Malta Tourism Authority, explains how promoting the country's authentic experiences is supporting the sector's resilience and sustainability

Malta Tourism Authority (MTA) is responsible for regulating, promoting, strengthening and sustainably advancing the Mediterranean nation's tourism sector. In the following interview, its CEO, Carlo Micallef, discusses some of authority's current priorities.

The archipelago is evolving into a hotspot for luxury tourism, with affluent travellers drawn to its high-end experiences and hospitality. What specific initiatives is MTA undertaking to promote the islands to wealthy visitors?

High-value travellers seek different experiences — some prefer luxury brands, others crave authenticity. While we're working to attract more high-end hotels and services, Malta's true strength lies in its authenticity. Our hotels are woven into local life, offering real immersion, and Malta is a hospitable, multicultural society where making connections is easy — locals are open, friendly and eager to share their culture. This blend of luxury, authenticity, heritage and warmth gives Malta a unique edge — offering something many other destinations simply can't.

Furthermore, while tourism and sustainability were once seen as conflicting goals, now they are

increasingly interdependent. Sustainable practices enhance the tourism experience, and tourism helps protect and celebrate what makes a destination unique — its nature, heritage, food and traditions. In Malta, we have embraced this symbiosis. By showcasing our authentic culture — be it a historic monument, a traditional dish or a local farming practice — we give visitors a meaningful, hands-on experience.

The mindset has shifted. What was once hidden is now proudly shared. Today's travellers want to connect with a place, see cheese made from fresh milk, bake bread with local tomatoes and share a simple meal at a farm, for instance. That is the kind of experience that resonates.

How is MTA balancing tourism growth with environmental sustainability?

Operators in our industry understand their responsibility to adopt climate-friendly practices, and MTA actively promotes environment-conscious certification from Green Key, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and other global bodies.

Our strategy is clear: focus on what Malta does best. We're not trying to offer experiences we can't deliver — we're not going to invest

in skiing, for example. Instead, we are investing in Malta's unique stories, culture and strengths. In all our investments, we emphasize preserving traditions, history and heritage that truly define the nation.

We're also encouraging smarter development: limiting expansion outside designated zones and promoting refurbishment over constructing new facilities. Our biggest influence on sustainable tourism development is the demand we create through our marketing — the type of tourists we attract shapes the projects investors choose to develop.

Some European nations are facing a backlash from citizens who feel displaced by overtourism. Is this an issue in Malta?

Malta faces it less — partly because most families benefit from tourism directly or indirectly. Malta is small, with a diverse and buoyant economy. Tourism doesn't exist in isolation and investments in tourism benefit visitors and residents, supporting amenities and experiences that wouldn't exist without our sector.

For instance, we have 43 Michelin-starred restaurants in a country of only 500,000 people — tourism creates the critical mass that allows this variety to thrive.

It lifts everything: from caring for our beaches and restoring Valletta's fortified walls to preserving prehistoric heritage and valuing local agriculture and fishing. By targeting specific markets that want to experience authentic Malta, MTA brings benefits for the entire nation.

One example is that the country's building designs are shifting towards incorporating more local materials and traditional architectural features like inner courtyards for natural ventilation, which respects our heritage and climate. A great illustration is the refurbished VIP terminal at Malta International Airport, where Maltese stone, art and decoration welcome visitors with a genuine taste of the country.

In addition, tourism allows MTA to attract numerous international artists, cultural events and activities that wouldn't come here if we didn't receive 3.6 million visitors a year. It also drives Malta's impressive flight connectivity — this tiny nation has over 120 direct routes to Europe and beyond — more than Heathrow!

Malta's natural environments, UNESCO-listed sites and Mediterranean lifestyle, as well as its Arab-influenced culture, gastronomy and language, make it an ideal destination for Middle Eastern travellers. How is the MTA working to draw in more visitors from this region?

We have been active in promoting Malta in the Middle East, raising awareness of the many experiences it offers. We also have a

very active representative office in Dubai — managed by Aviareps — that works closely with Emirates and other airlines.

A current challenge is the limited presence of hotel brands familiar to Middle Eastern travellers. While we have strong international brands, such as Marriott and Hilton, others are still missing. That is changing. Brands like Four Seasons are entering Malta, drawn by our success in tourism. Meanwhile, Maltese-owned hotels deliver excellent quality, service and experiences.

We're working on both fronts: attracting top hotel brands and demonstrating to Middle Eastern travellers that Maltese hospitality stands on par, even if the logos aren't familiar.

MTA's promotional brand Visit Malta has a reputation for creative and effective tourism campaigns. What role does digital media play in your current advertising programmes?

Today, around 80 per cent of our budget goes to digital media, which is supported by television, radio and advertising placements in high-traffic areas like malls and airports. Our campaigns are tailored by geography and segment, such as business travellers, weekend visitors, and people interested in gastronomy or culture.

Each message is linked to an airline for a clear call to action, and we work closely with those airlines to track results and adjust in real time, shifting budgets or refining messages based on performance. Digital tools now allow

us to measure everything, giving us the agility to optimize campaigns quickly and effectively.

What is MTA's vision for Malta's tourism industry?

The Maltese tourism sector is resilient — it was one of the first worldwide to recover from the pandemic. Our main aim is to keep tourism as a strong pillar of our economy by building an even more resilient industry that delivers year-round value and long-term careers.

One way we are achieving this is by investing heavily in training — even up to master's level — for both current professionals and newcomers. Like many countries, Malta is welcoming international workers into its tourism industry. To support prospective foreign employees, we've launched an initiative to help them improve their English, learn about Malta's customs and history, and prepare them for their roles. Once employed, we encourage and support those who show potential to move up the career ladder.

We're also working to balance our tourism mix. While Europe remains our core market for visitors, we're expanding our long-haul reach, targeting higher-spending visitors who stay longer and seek deeper cultural experiences.

We aim to grow markets in North and Latin America, as well as the Middle East, Asia, Australia and New Zealand — with Emirates as a key partner for both tourism and broader investment opportunities in Malta.

Five must-see sites and events

The diversity, quality and quantity of the Maltese archipelago's natural, historical and cultural attractions make it an essential destination for any tourist. In this section, we shine a light on just a few of the islands unique treasures and annual festivities that should be included in travel itineraries

Malta Carnival, Valletta

Of all the islands' annual festivities, carnival is probably the most eagerly anticipated. It has been held over five days at the end of winter since the 1500s and will be celebrated in February 2026. Visitors can expect vibrant costumes, parades of elaborate floats, marching bands, humorous street performances, dance competitions, traditional foods such as almond sweets and — in common with all Maltese celebrations — fireworks.

International Arts Festival, Valletta

What makes a number of Malta's cultural events stand out is that they are staged in heritage sites rather than conventional performance venues. International Arts Festival is one of those events. Over two weeks in June, dancers, actors, musicians, visual artists and other creators showcase their talent in locations as diverse as baroque palaces, an underground cistern and boats on Grand Harbour.

The Cittadella, Gozo

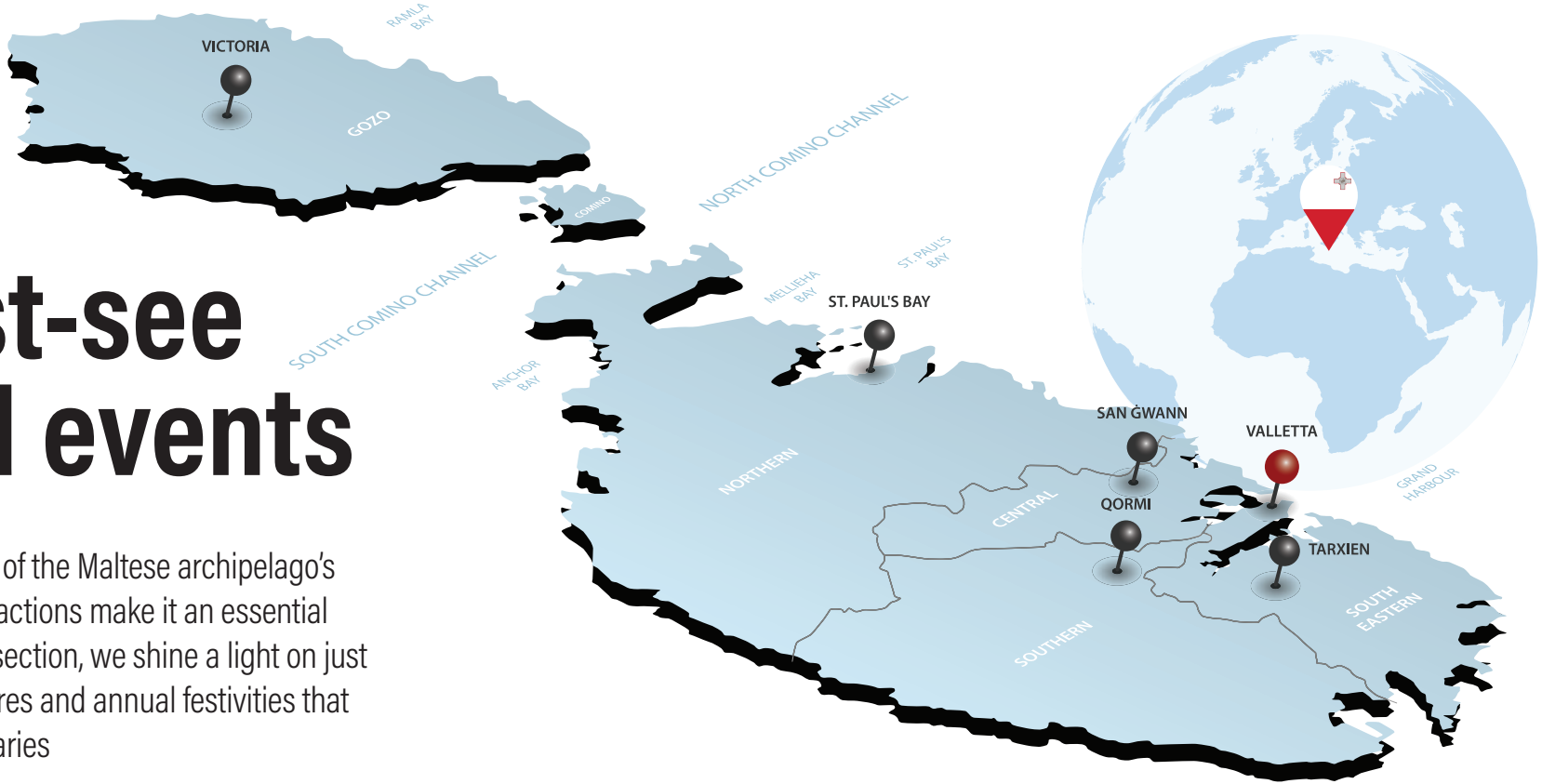
Towering above Gozo's capital Victoria stands the magnificent hilltop Cittadella, a site that has been inhabited since the Bronze Age and was the island's urban heart for the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and Knights of St. John. Inside its fortified walls are narrow streets lined with medieval and baroque buildings, which have been stunningly restored in a project that received the European Union's highest award for conservation and regeneration in 2022.

Blue Lagoon, Comino

The archipelago boasts over 120 diverse dive sites and many other places for snorkelling and swimming. The most iconic is Comino's Blue Lagoon, a breathtaking expanse of clear turquoise water full of marine life that is surrounded by sandy beaches and caves. A free online booking system for visits to the lagoon has recently been introduced to prevent overcrowding and ensure its unique ecosystems continue to flourish.

Hal Saflieni Hypogeum, Paola

One of Malta's three UNESCO World Heritage Sites, this incredible subterranean temple and burial complex can be found on a hill near Valletta. The vast three-level structure containing decorated halls, chambers and labyrinthine passageways was carved out of the rock by hand more than 4,000 years ago. According to UNESCO, it is among the best preserved and most extensive Neolithic sites in the world.





The archipelago is a great destination for outdoor activities such as horseriding, cycling and hiking

Honouring Arab heritage in Malta’s daily life and traditions

Centuries of Arab presence echo in Malta’s architecture, customs, food and speech — enriching the islands’ cultural experiences

While various civilizations have settled in Malta over the past few millennia, the Arabs had one of the deepest impacts and their legacy remains central to the nation’s identity today.

The 221-year rule of the islands by successive Arabic dynasties began in 870, when the North African Aghlabids forced out the Byzantines that had occupied Malta for three centuries. Unlike some of the archipelago’s previous and later conquerors, the local population welcomed the Muslims, as they ushered in a new era of tolerance and prosperity.

Malta’s strategic location offered the Arabs the chance to control the Mediterranean’s vital maritime routes and protect them from pirates. During the centuries that they led the country, they transformed it into a wealthy

trade and shipping hub and integrated into society, developing urban centres and a political assembly made up of both Muslims and Christians.

The Arabs were ousted by the Normans from France in 1090 and Malta’s substantial Muslim population had diminished by the 13th century, but many of the customs and practices they introduced continue to be embedded in the country.

The most obvious of these for Arabic speakers is language: Maltese is the European Union’s only Semitic language, and much of its grammar and about half of all its words have Arabic origins, with the rest mainly stemming from French, Italian and English.

Words that will sound familiar to people from the Middle East include days of the week, numbers, foods, place names, surnames and

geographical features. Other fascinating examples are Alla, meaning God; randan, which is Malta’s annual period of fasting; and habib that translates to friend.

The Arabs also instilled an enduring love of poetry and lyricism in the Maltese population. A great way to experience this ongoing tradition is by attending one of the year-round performances of the country’s ghana, narrative folksongs that are recognised on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity List. Malta’s folk music contains Arabic influences too, particularly in its use of stringed instruments, scales and rhythms.

Winding lanes evoke the past

Archaeological remains from the archipelago’s Arabic past — such as ceramics and tombstones — can be discovered at a number



The foundations of Fort St. Angelo in Birgu are over 1,000 years old

of Maltese institutions. The most outstanding example is Gozo Museum of Archaeology’s Maimunah Stone, which was exhibited at the Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization for a few months in 2022 as part of the first exchange of cultural artefacts between Malta and the UAE. Dating to 1174, this intricately carved tombstone marks the death of a young Muslim woman with a heartfelt lament in Kufic script.

However, the full influence of the Arabs on Malta’s architecture and design is best explored by wandering through the streets of any village, town or city. One unmissable option is located about 30 minutes inland from the current capital Valletta: Mdina, the Aghlabids’ capital.

When the Arabs arrived, they fortified and developed this hill-top city, creating a magical maze of narrow lanes that are characteristic of Malta’s historic urban centres. Most of the buildings on these quiet cobbled streets today were constructed in the later medieval and baroque periods, but their designers retained principles inherited from the Arabs, with many arabesque flourishes on show and enticing inner courtyards that maximise shade.

Just 5 kilometres away is Rabat, a suburb of Mdina in the 10th century that is equally captivating. There you can find another example of typical Arab-inspired de-

sign that is widespread across the archipelago: muxrabija wooden and stone balconies with screened windows, which allow cool air to flow through buildings while protecting the privacy of residents. Between Mdina and Rabat lies the site of an 11th-century cemetery built on top of an earlier Roman house, where over 200 Muslim tombstones have been uncovered.

Gastronomic acclaim

Beyond the built environment, the Arabs revolutionised Maltese agriculture, introducing the terraced fields that stand out in the country’s rolling hills, as well as innovative farming methods, such as irrigation systems with water-

and tastiness of the fish around its shores and by those who collect honey.”

Food quality is still one of the prime motivations for people choosing to travel to the archipelago and many of the country’s most emblematic recipes are founded in Arabic cuisine. They include pastizzi, an incredibly popular filo-like snack filled with sweet or savoury delights such as ricotta cheese or spicy peas, bigilla dip made from mashed legumes, flatbreads like ftira, deep-fried sweet imqaret pastries packed with dates, almond kwarezimal biscuits and qaghaq tal-ghasel dough rings made with honey and spices.

“Our rich heritage connects with the Arab world and many people from the Middle East have roots here. Malta offers them more than just a holiday.”

CARLO MICALLEF, CEO, MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY

wheels that are still used today. They also brought new crops to the islands, including citrus fruits, figs, almonds and spices that all became major export goods.

They were not the only Maltese products to gain international acclaim at the time. According to the medieval chronicler Al-Himyari, Malta was visited by “fishermen because of the abundance

Visitors to the islands will soon discover many more intriguing examples of Arabic influences on the nation’s gastronomy, traditions and lifestyle. CEO of Malta Tourism Authority, Carlo Micallef, says: “Our rich heritage connects with the Arab world and many people from the Middle East have roots here. Malta offers them more than just a holiday.”

Malta as a year-round destination

A mild climate and unhurried pace create an inviting atmosphere, whether wandering villages in winter or coastal paths in summer

There is never a wrong time for UAE travellers to visit Malta, an archipelago that basks in over 3,000 hours of warm sunshine each year.

Even in August — its hottest and busiest month — the maximum average temperature is only about 32°C and it is not overcrowded, while in January you can expect to enjoy temperatures of around 16°C during the day and 10°C at night.

That said, some of the country’s diverse outdoor experiences are perhaps better appreciated in autumn and winter, when you can explore historic sites and villages that will be relatively free of other tourists, or immerse yourself in its fabulous open countryside without worrying about finding shade.

Two very different villages to head for on the island of Malta are Marsaxlokk in the south and Mgarr in the north. The first is built around a fishing harbour that has been used for at least

two millennia, and the best time to visit is during its Sunday fish market, when the harbour is full of colourful traditional boats.

Mgarr, on the other hand, is a picturesque farming village known for its great food, most of which comes from the fields surrounding it, as well as its neolithic Ta’ Hagra temples that are part of one of Malta’s three UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Gozo is home to fascinating places too, including ancient Gharb, a countryside village with a craft centre where you can watch expert lacemakers, glassblowers, jewellers, carpenters and other artisans work. Travellers who want to dive even deeper into the nation’s authentic rural life can visit some of its many farms that welcome guests.

The country’s rural areas also offer excellent opportunities for hiking, cycling and horse riding, while their dramatic cliffs are ideal destinations for rock climbing, abseiling and ziplining.

In addition, the archipelago hosts many sporting events that are open to amateurs and professionals, many of which are held in the cooler months. Two illustrations that take place every year are La Valette Marathon, which attracted over 4,000 runners from 65 countries in March 2025, and October’s Rolex Middle Sea Race, one of the most prestigious competitions in the global yachting calendar.

The islands’ oceans are always calm, clear and warm, making not just sailing, but also diving, snorkelling, kayaking, paragliding and numerous other water sports year-round possibilities. And if all you want to do on a holiday is unwind, it never gets too hot to relax on one of Malta’s award-winning sandy beaches or stroll along its sun-drenched seafronts — the archipelago’s blend of mild climate, rich heritage and wealth of outdoor attractions means it delivers incredible experiences every month of the year.



Malta hosts many large-scale events that span all performing arts and attract both local and international artists

Celebrate life in a nation of festivals

From village feasts and fireworks to international performing and visual art festivals, Malta’s cultural calendar is packed with immersive events that highlight the islands’ spirit

Every week throughout the year, visitors to Malta can attend and participate in diverse events that celebrate the islanders’ heritage and passions. These run the gamut from gastronomic galas like April’s Strawberry Festival in Mgarr village and July’s International Food Festival in Valletta, to sporting competitions like rowing regattas in Grand Harbour and a plethora of traditional and contemporary cultural extravaganzas.

In spring and summer, for example, each village holds a week-long ‘festa’, during which the local community parades in colourful processions with marching bands, shares its unique customs and foods with visitors, and lets off a lot of fireworks.

Pyrotechnics are a core element in Maltese festivities: the country has been making fireworks since the 16th century and its expert practitioners have won international awards for their creative

displays. One event that demonstrates the extent of their genius is April’s International Fireworks Festival, when dozens of teams put on dazzling displays across the country that fill the skies for two weeks.

Equally magical is Birgu Fest, which sees a fortified coastal town illuminated only by candles for a weekend in October. Those exploring its narrow lanes and squares will find stalls showcasing traditional foods and crafts, musical performances and re-enactments of episodes from the history of Birgu, which was a key base for the Arabs in medieval times.

Notte Bianca — White Night — is another essential occasion that month, as all Valletta’s museums and galleries stay open all night, while numerous free concerts take place in the city’s streets.

The capital is also a hub for Malta’s myriad visual and performing arts festivals that feature national and leading international

artists. For example, it hosts annual events for classical, rock, folk, opera, electronic and other music genres that attract global audiences, as well as festivals for lovers of dance, theatre, film and art. A recent addition to its bulging calendar is Malta Biennale, which was launched in 2024 and featured over 100 contemporary artists from 35 nations whose work was displayed in 21 historic venues. The next edition will take place in spring 2026 and is expected to be even larger.

As well as Maltese events, more and more international visitors are staging celebrations on the islands, particularly weddings. Malta offers a wide variety of stunning outdoor and indoor locations, including mosques, for marriages, the paperwork required is not onerous and wedding planners are on hand that are experienced in Islamic traditions, making it easy for couples to create their perfect experience.



The Maltese islands enjoy warm sunny weather throughout the year



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