TOUR CODE

ML1

ADVENTURESABROAD

MALTA

the Heart of the Mediterranean

6 days

Updated 06/03/2013

Day 1 ***Arrive in Malta***

Arrive in Malta. Transfer to our Sliema hotel.

Overnight in Sliema. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***Valletta: Harbour Cruise & Walking Tour***

Today we will witness Malta's gallant past and sail the routes of the Knights of St John and the great Ottoman fleets of Suleyman the Magnificent. We will depart from Sliema and take a guided cruise of the two natural harbours surrounding the city of Valletta. During the cruise, Malta's rich history will unfold, from the occupation of the Knights of St John to World War II. The "Three Cities" and the Marsamxett and Grand Harbour once witnessed the two Great Sieges of 1565 and 1942. The fortifications and bastions, Fort St Elmo, and monuments surrounding the creeks are only fully appreciated from the sea.

We will then walk through Valletta, the capital of Malta, and visit the Barracca Gardens. This colonnaded public garden on top of St Peter's and St. Paul's was once a covered play area for the boisterous Italian knights. The gardens offer a magnificent view of the harbour. From the gardens we will visit the St. John's Co-Cathedral, built by the Knights of Malta between 1573 and 1578. The severe exterior of the Cathedral, built immediately after the ending of the Great Siege of 1565, is reminiscent of a military fort.

Overnight in Sliema. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Valletta - Marsaxlokk - Ghar Dalam - Hagar Qim***

We will return to Valletta to view its most important historical monuments. The Grand Master's Palace is a magnificent building and houses Malta's House of Representatives, the office of the president, several state rooms, and the Gobelins Tapestry. We will also visit the National Museum of Archaeology, one of the finest and most comprehensive museums in Malta.

We then head to the southern part of the island to witness some of the prehistory of Malta. Our first stop is Marsaxlokk, perhaps the most picturesque fishing village in all of Malta. The decoration and form of the bright multi-coloured fishing boats which fill the harbour can be traced back to the age of the Phoenicians.

We also visit the underground cave of Ghar Dalam ("The Cave of Darkness") which served as the abode of the first neolithic settlers of these islands about 6,000 years ago. Excavations carried out between 1933 and 1937 yielded an enormous quantity of animal bone deposits from the lower strata of the cave's subsoil which confirmed that the Maltese Islands at one time formed part of the European mainland.

Our last stop is the Neolithic temples of Hagar Qim, from 300 BC, and some of the oldest human-made structures in the

world. Reminiscent of England's Stonehenge, the temples are built of limestone rock, some towering six metres (20 ft) high and weighing several tonnes. The complex is an impressive maze of corridors, chambers, niches and altars, all carved out of stone using flint.

Overnight in Sliema. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Gozo*

Today we travel by ferry to Gozo, the second largest island of the Maltese archipelago, separated from Malta by a 8km (5 mi) wide channel. Gozo is an island of green hills surrounded by blue sea, where tranquil villages are set onto the sides of the fertile and flat-topped hills.

We visit the citadel where we can enjoy a wonderful panorama of Gozo. This citadel dates back to the second century AD, when the Romans once occupied this area. We will visit the capital, Victoria, and its grand Cathedral. In 1897 the capital of Gozo had its name changed from Rabat to Victoria to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. While on Gozo we will visit Xaghra, meaning "a large open space", with the most enchanting village square on Gozo. We will also see the temple at Ggantija, the most impressive of all Maltese Copper Age monuments. According to legend, the huge monolithic stones of the temple were carried great distances on the head of a female giantess. We return via ferry to Malta.

Overnight in Sliema. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Mosta - Mdina - Rabat - Dingli Cliffs - Blue Grotto*

Our journey today takes us to the 19th century parish church of St Mary's in Mosta. The church boasts the third largest unsupported dome, rivaled only by the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and St Peter's in Rome. Among some of the marvelous interior decorations are the murals painted by Guiseppe Cali. During WWII, a bomb fell through the dome but did not explode; this bomb (defused, of course) is preserved and displayed as a sign of this miraculous occurrence. We will also see some of the finest examples of silver workmanship which testify to the fame of Maltese gold and silversmiths.

We will visit one of the smallest and most compact of historic cities, Mdina, (from the Arabic word for "walled city"). Mdina's zenith was during the darker medieval times of the Normans and Spanish. It is truly a Maltese city with the knights' influence restricted to a few fine buildings. Today Mdina has the smallest population in Malta with 420 people. We will visit the Cathedral and Roman Villa, in which a number of beautiful floor mosaics were discovered. Walking through the winding streets we come to the city of Rabat, just outside the walls and separated by a moat from Mdina. We will explore the early Christian Catacombs dating as far back as the 8th century. These Catacombs emerged because of a Roman law that prohibited the burial of the dead within the city limits; for Christians cremation was not acceptable.

We continue on to the Dingli Cliffs and Dingli village, the highest on the island on cliffs 260m (858 feet) above the sea.

Our journey continues to the Blue Grotto. Legend has it that the Blue Grotto was home to the sirens, the sea nymphs, who serenaded sailors to their destination with soft verse.

Later we return to our Sliema hotel.

Overnight in Sliema. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Departure from Malta*

Departure from Malta.

IL-VJAGG IT-TAJJEB! Meal plan: Breakfast.