Tour Code
ML1

ADVENTURESABROAD

MALTA

the Heart of the Mediterranean

6 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Malta

Welcome to Malta!

Malta has a greater density of historic sights than any other country. Starting with its unique prehistoric temples, some of the oldest stone buildings in the world, it also has Roman catacombs, medieval towns, and the extraordinary architectural and artistic legacy of the Knights of St John (the Knights of Malta). The British left behind red letter boxes and phone booths, as well as the language, in spite of which Malta (independent since 1964) remains thoroughly Maltese. The country has thankfully shaken off the British culinary legacy and is home to some excellent restaurants specialising in Mediterranean food.

Overnight in Malta.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Valletta: Walking Tour

This morning we set out on foot to explore Valletta, Europe's smallest capital, built by the Knights of St. John as a fortress city following their victory in the Great Siege of 1565.

We begin at the Upper Barakka Gardens, terraced gardens laid out along the bastion walls with sweeping views across the Grand Harbour to the Three Cities beyond, where the Saluting Battery below still fires its noon-day gun. From here we walk to the National Museum of Archaeology, housed in the Knights' Auberge de Provence, where the "Sleeping Lady" and other Neolithic treasures trace Malta's temple-building culture back some 5,000 years.

St. John's Co-Cathedral, the Knights' conventual church, hides a gilded Baroque interior and inlaid marble tombs behind a deceptively plain facade. Its museum holds Caravaggio's largest known painting, The Beheading of St. John the Baptist, completed during the artist's turbulent stay on the island. Nearby, the Grand Master's Palace served as the Order's seat of government for over two centuries; we tour its state rooms, hung with Gobelin tapestries, and the Palace Armoury, its halls lined with knights' swords, breastplates, and ceremonial suits of armour.

We close the day at the Sacra Infermeria, the Knights' 16th-century hospital, for "The Malta Experience," an audiovisual journey through seven millennia of island history, from the temple builders to independence.

Overnight in Valletta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Valletta Harbour Cruise & Prehistoric Temples

From Valletta we transfer to Sliema, departure point for a cruise around the Grand Harbour and Marsamxett Harbour, the twin anchorages that made Malta indispensable to every power from the Phoenicians to the British navy.

The boat traces a fortified shoreline built by the Knights after their victory in the 1565 Great Siege, when Ottoman forces besieged the island for over three months and were ultimately repelled. We pass beneath bastion walls raised in the siege's aftermath and the historic dockyards of the Three Cities, still active with naval and merchant traffic today.

From Sliema we continue to Marsaxlokk, a fishing village where painted luzzu boats crowd the quay, their bows marked with protective eyes in a tradition tracing back to Phoenician times. Stalls along the harbour sell the morning's catch alongside local lace and produce, and on Sundays the village hosts Malta's largest open-air fish market.

Our final stop is Hagar Qim and Mnajdra, twin temple complexes standing on limestone cliffs above the islet of Filfla. Built between 3600 and

3200 BCE, these are among the oldest free-standing structures on Earth, predating Stonehenge and the pyramids of Giza by well over a thousand years. Hagar Qim's megalithic slabs, some weighing over 20 tonnes, were shaped and raised without metal tools, while Mnajdra's entrance aligns precisely with the sunrise on the solstices and equinoxes.

Overnight in Valletta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Day Trip to Gozo

The brief ferry crossing to Gozo transports us to an island that feels like Malta's rural cousin. Gozo maintains a distinct cultural identity and dialect, with landscapes and traditions that modern Malta has largely abandoned. The prehistoric temples of Ggantija rank among humanity's oldest religious monuments, dating back to 3600-3200 BCE. Local folklore attributes their construction to giants, and the megaliths' sheer size is awe-inspiring. Victoria, Gozo's capital, clusters around the fortified citadel of Il-Kastell, which has been continuously fortified for over 4,000 years.

Within the citadel, the Cathedral of the Assumption showcases trompe-l'oeil ceiling paintings that create illusory domes. At Dwejra, we witness geological forces at their most dramatic. Two enormous limestone caverns collapsed to create today's Inland Sea, a lagoon connected to the Mediterranean through a 100-metre tunnel. Local fishermen guide us through this natural wonder, past the Blue Hole and Fungus Rock, where Knights of St. John once harvested rare medicinal plants. The cynomorium coccineus growing on Fungus Rock was highly valued for its medicinal properties, reminding us how biological diversity creates economic value across cultures.

Overnight on Malta

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Mosta, Mdina, Rabat & Dingli Cliffs

This morning we leave Valletta for Mosta, home to the Rotunda, a parish church whose dome ranks as Europe's third-largest unsupported dome at 37 m/122 ft across. In April 1942, a German bomb pierced the roof during Mass and failed to detonate, an escape residents still call the Miracle of Mosta.

From Mosta we continue to Mdina, Malta's fortified hilltop capital for close to a thousand years before the Knights moved the seat of power to Valletta. Its cathedral, quiet lanes, and honey-coloured bastions earned it the nickname "Silent City," a title that still suits its near-empty streets once the day-trip crowds depart; only residents' vehicles are permitted within the walls, and a handful of aristocratic Maltese families still occupy its palazzi.

Just outside the walls, Rabat holds the remains of Roman Melite. We tour the Domus Romana, a 1st-century townhouse whose mosaic floors were uncovered beneath later buildings, then descend into the Catacombs of St. Paul and St. Agatha, extensive underground burial complexes used by Malta's early Christian and Jewish communities from the 3rd century onward.

On the return route, we stop at the Dingli Cliffs, where limestone bluffs drop some 250 m/820 ft to the sea and, on clear days, the uninhabited islet of Filfla is visible offshore.

Overnight in Valletta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Departure

Our Mediterranean odyssey concludes as we prepare for departure from Malta's international airport.

NOTE: If you are considering our 6-day Malta only tour (ML1), it may be possible to extend your journey to include time in Tunisia (code TM1) and/or Sicily & Southern Italy (code ML2). Please refer to our website for full details.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

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