

### Malta: Maltese Rambles

#### Spring and Autumn Hikes and Delights on Malta & Gozo

Tour code: JMA

Revised: October 08

*Friendly little Malta and her smaller sister Gozo, offer a particularly pleasant blend of walking and sightseeing. This may at first seem surprising as this tiny country is only about the size of the Isle of Wight in the U.K. yet it has over ten times the population! Despite this there are some very attractive island walking opportunities, and landscapes with some of the most stunning views in the Mediterranean: with dramatic cliffs plunging into waves, rocky scrublands full of flowers in spring, limestone pavements on hilltops and even hidden little valleys. On some of the walks you'll come across mysterious, prehistoric sites, cave chapels and the secluded palaces of the Maltese Knights.*

*We offer a range of walks from the three bases that we use on the islands: Valletta (Malta), Xlendi (Gozo) and Buggiba (Malta). These include coastal cliffs, inland historical sites and there is even a walk around the historical city of Valletta. The distances between the three centers are not great and you can cheaply take the local buses or if you are quite burdened with baggage, local taxis, which can be easily set up by the hotels for when you want to leave. Baggage transfers are thus not included on this tour. There are some recommended walks in the route notes, but there are plenty of others to choose from using the extra route book provided; so you can walk to suit your mood or the weather. Some walks you can start directly from the hotels, on most however, you will need to take either the public buses or maybe a taxi. Nearly all walks are on bus routes around the islands and it is reassuring that there are fairly low levels of traffic in the countryside in general.*

*Having arrived in Valletta, you will have time to walk round this historical city, perhaps you would like to take a ferry across the harbour to view the impressive fortifications. Next you catch the ferry to Gozo where you spend two nights at beautiful Xlendi Bay: often the location of amazing sunsets. Walks from here take you out to bays across golden limestone plateaus and you could tramp around the citadel at Victoria (Rabat). Back on the mainland, you will stay in Bugibba in St. Paul's Bay, the place where the great man was shipwrecked (for the second time). Walks around here trace ancient paths past watch towers to more delightful coastal bays.*

*Malta is a busy place for tourism throughout the year and we do not claim that your hotels are in the quietest corners of the island; the idea is that you will be at the heart of the place, but will still be able to make the most of convenient bus routes as well as have access to a range of restaurants and the sea.*

#### Travel Information

**Flights:** The full package price of the holiday is based upon flights London Gatwick to Malta (Luqa Airport ) with British Airways. If you book Land Only, there are daily flights with Air Malta from London and weekly or twice weekly flights from various regional airports (Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Newcastle, Glasgow) but these may not be necessary throughout the year. Bookings can be made on [www.airmalta.com](http://www.airmalta.com), and special offers are sometimes available.

Otherwise there will be charter flights during the main holiday period or take the Ryan Air service from London Luton. [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) note that flights may not be daily. EasyJet fly also to Malta.

**Arrival:** It is about 20 mins and 15 E in a taxi from Luqa Airport to the first hotel in Valletta. You can arrive anytime on the first day, but note that your room may not be

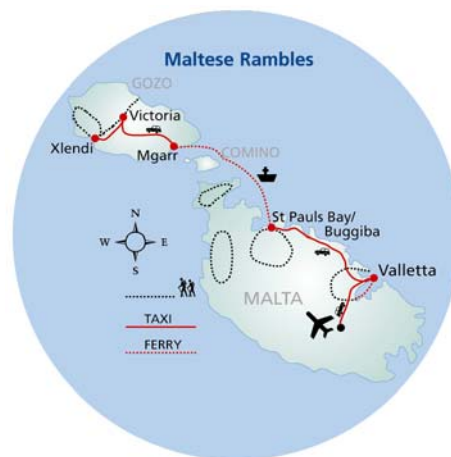
available until the afternoon. In this case the reception will look after your bags so that you can have a look around and maybe have a spot of lunch.

**End of Tour:** The tour ends after breakfast on day 8 in Buggiba. You will need to take a taxi or bus back to the airport from St. Paul's Bay, around 25 E. This journey takes 30 - 40 mins, depending on traffic levels.

**Transport:** Buses, taxis and ferries are not included on this tour, but are reasonably priced on Malta.

**Season:** Throughout the year except July & August

**See the climate chart at bottom of dossier!** Obviously the summer months are too hot, but October, November, and February to May, are all nice months to travel with perfect walking temperatures and low levels of rainfall. December / January can be quite wet and cold, especially with sea winds. Of course it can rain anytime throughout the Spring



and you should be prepared for this! In terms of natural beauty, flowers and green hues, February-May are definitely the prettiest months. Towards the end of May, the landscape starts to go brown and then is scorched over summer. Autumn walking is nice, the scenery has more golden-brown hues and flavours.

## Level of Difficulty

**Grade:** Easy to Moderate. There are some hills, some fairly steep but short ascents & descents and some paths with rough gravel, stony and occasionally rocky surfaces.

**Fitness:** High standards of fitness are not necessary but clients should be able to walk comfortably for up to 6 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

**Waymarking:** Negligible It is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps.

## General information

**Rooms:** The type of room depends upon availability when you book. Rooms are however, all ensuite. In Valletta we try to book sea view rooms. In Gozo and at Buggiba, our rooms are based upon non sea facing Balcony bedrooms. We can request sea view balcony rooms but there is in this case a price supplement of the sterling equivalent of around 11 E per room, per day.

**Baths:** it is not normal for your room to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house where a bath is available to guests, but in the main it is showers.

**Breakfasts:** in Malta usually consist of tea/ coffee, juices and breads; bread rolls, cereals, ham and cheese - a 'heavy' continental! If you want more for breakfast then we would suggest you purchase some food the night before. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms. On some of our trips it is possible to reduce the cost of the single supplement if you happen to be a 3rd person travelling, or have chosen a date when other clients are booked.

**Language:** Most people in Malta speak good English, but Maltese is also a language in its own right and it would be polite to learn a few words or phrases.

**Luggage:** There are no baggage transfers involved in this tour. Please make sure that you are not overburdened by your bags as you will be making movements on buses, taxis and ferries. At each hotel there are lifts, but if you need some help to take it up to your room please politely ask at reception.

## Accommodation & Meals

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 2,3 and 4 star hotels. Note that the actual grading may depend upon the availability of the hotels at the time of booking. Below we describe our normal hotels.

**Nights 1 & 2:** These are spent in the capital city of Valletta, in a quiet and comfortable 2 star town hotel in the heart of the city. This has been a family run place since 1930, and is one of the oldest hotels in Malta. It has a superb location, having some of the best views of the island, overlooking

the magnificent Grand harbour. The hotel is situated 5 mins walk from the main bus terminus, banks, museums, shops etc. The restaurant has a terrace also overlooking the harbour. Nevertheless, the hotel is in a very quiet location. There are comfortably furnished guest bedrooms, each room has an ensuite bathroom or shower. When it is warm enough, you can bask in quiet comfort on the roof-top sundeck, where you can enjoy a snack or a tall, cool drink as you tan; for the evening take it easy in the lounge bar and restaurant where they boast a delightful choice of Maltese food accompanied by the finest wines.

**Night 3 & 4:** On Gozo two nights are spent in a 4\* hotel situated right on the sea front of picturesque Xlendi Bay, just three metres away from the clear blue Mediterranean Sea. It is in a convenient position close to restaurants, bars and shops. Most of the bedrooms have balconies with scenic views. All bedrooms are fully airconditioned and are en suite. There is also a rooftop spa and sun deck with full waiter service..

**Night 5, 6 & 7:** You then spend three nights in the heart of Bugibba, in St. Paul's Bay, one of the most popular holiday resorts in Malta, our hotel is just about one hundred metres away from the sea. It is within easy reach of Bugibba's shopping centre, beach, cinema, restaurants and bars and is especially conveniently close to the scheduled service bus stop, to get to and from the walks.

## Outline Itinerary

**Day 1:** Arrive Malta Luqa Airport, transfer to first hotel. The hotel is within the citadel and if you have time, explore the ancient fortifications. Good restaurants abound in the harbour area, or you may prefer to use the hotel with its roof top panorama.

**Day 2:** Depending upon your mood you could do several walks today: the 5 km **Valletta Heritage Trail** is more than the sum of its distance, as there is so much to see on this walk when you journey around the city walls and visit the main streets. Founded in 1566 by the Knights of St. John, Valletta was mainly constructed in only 3 years and today there is an impressive legacy of battlements, complex fortifications and ornate city buildings. After lunch you could continue out the suburbs and go to the Rinella Fort where you can see the 100 ton Armstrong Gun...claimed to be the largest cannon in the World! A longer walk is to take the bus to **Marsascala and walk to Birzebbuga (17 km/10.5 miles)**. This is a walk of successive headlands and bays with constantly changing scenery, passing promontories, old forts and chapels and batteries. Perhaps the main attraction is the pretty harbour at Marsaxlokk with its little bobbing fishing boats called 'Luzzu'. Another idea is to get the bus to **Siggiewi and walk to Dingli, (10km / 6 miles)** taking in the highest cliffs of Malta (253metres), beautiful seascapes and old chapels.

Another popular activity is to take the ferry across Marsamxett harbour to appreciate the sheer scale of the Valletta fortifications.

**Day 3:** Take a taxi or bus with your baggage to Buggiba for the ferry to the sleepy island of Gozo. (ferry price 5E approx). There is a ferry every half, to three quarters of an hour during the day depending upon the season. Then short taxi or longer bus service to your hotel in Xlendi Bay. You could, if you wish spend the morning in Valletta and then take the (seasonal) ferry from Floriana (below Valletta) to Mgarr (Gozo) - This is usually a daily service - and then take the taxi as above.

If you travel over in the morning, you should have enough time for a good walk on Gozo.

The classic walk is perhaps the cliff walk from **Sannat - San Lawrenz (15.5km / 9.5 miles)**, but as this passes through Xlendi Bay enroute, walkers might like to save 4.5km by starting direct from the hotel and perhaps walk to Sannat along the coast later on. The walk to San Lawrenz follows terraced paths, minor roads and some times on rock, and some care needs to be taken. It goes to the beautiful Dwejra Bay, Fungus Rock, The Azure Window and the so called, 'Inland Sea.' One can imagine that this will be a picturesque stroll.

**Day 4:** Examples of walks today include: **Gharb – Marsalforn (13 km / 8 miles)**. An interesting route inland to the sea along farm tracks and country roads, with paths up to little Corraline Limestone capped hills; including the pilgrimage site of Ta'Pinu, the Victorian Lighthouse on Gordon's Hill, and the pretty harbour at Marsalforn. On the return bus ride, have a look round the attractive Capital of Gozo: Victoria (also called Rabat).

**Walk Around Comino: (8km / 5 Miles)** If the weather is reasonable and thus the ferries to this island are running from Mgarr, this is a good walk, but note some of the cliff walking is quite rugged and needs care! You start and finish at the beautiful Blue Lagoon which does get packed with visitors so an early start is advisable!

**Day 5:** Spend some more time doing another walk on Gozo. Or catch bus / take taxi back in the morning to Mgarr (Gozo) and across the sea to St. Paul's Bay. This is where the great man of biblical fame was ship wrecked for the second time. Then check in or leave luggage at your hotel for walks **Walk from Mgarr (Malta) to Ghadira (16 km / 10 miles)**. This is claimed to be one of the most scenic and dramatic walks on the islands, taking in some great limestone cliffs. Views of the walk stretch along the coast to the southern cliffs of Gozo. This is the walk where you will have the opportunity to visit 'Sweethaven' the little artificial village created wholly for the 1980 'Popeye' movie. There is also the beautiful circular cove called 'Ic - Cumnija' that you pass towards the end of the day.

**Day 6:** The **Marfa Ridge Circuit (14km / 8.75 miles)** is a classic walk undertaken from Ghadira, about 10km away from Buggiba. The walk is a circuit right around a broad limestone ridge and you get great views in places over to the islands of Gozo and Comino. This is pleasant stroll involving tracks, minor roads and cliff paths, taking in the serene 'Paradise Bay.' If it is a weekend, you can finish by visiting the Ghadira Nature Reserve, run by 'Bird Life Malta.'

**Day 7: Rabat – Dingli – Rabat (12km / 7.5 miles)** Had enough of coastal routes? Then try this one around the ancient city of Rabat (Malta), a name that reflects the time when the Moors occupied the Islands. There is an attractive circuitous route from Rabat to Dingli, on quiet country roads, tracks and paths., giving you a good perspective of the domed St. Paul's Church from many angles. After you have returned from Rabat, you can do another couple of miles on the '**Rabat Medina Heritage Trail.**' The medina is the walled heart of this town which used to be the Maltese capital as it was easily defended and a long way inland.

**Day8:** Tour finishes in Bugidda after breakfast take bus or taxi to the airport. It takes about 40 mins to get to the airport, approx.25E by taxi, depending upon traffic levels for departure. If you have an evening flight, you could of course do another walk!

### **Extra nights.**

Recommended anywhere on this tour! There are many more walks that you can do! Details and prices on request.

**On Self Guided Tour we provide you with . . .Route notes, walking book and maps.**

### **Included in the tour price**

Flights from UK (if booked full package), 7 nights accommodation with breakfast; maps, route notes, guide book.

**Not included:** Lunches and evening meals, baggage transfers, taxis, buses and ferries.