

EXPLORE!



Malta and Gozo Discovery + Classical Sicily
15 days

Malta - Trip code MLAS

Malta and Gozo Discovery + Classical Sicily

Join us to explore some of the most impressive and best preserved ancient sites in the Mediterranean. On the islands of Malta we discover the temple ruins of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra and the medieval city of Mdina. We explore the capital Valletta and admire impressive fortifications, bastion walls and imposing churches. We also discover the island of Gozo on some easy and rewarding walks. We then travel to Sicily to visit the Greek theatre at Taormina and the Temple of Zeus. We enjoy spectacular views of Mount Etna, experience the relaxed island lifestyle and sample delicious Italian food and wine.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Gozo** - Two full days of varied sightseeing and short walks on Malta's unspoilt sister island
- ★ **Megalithic Temples** - Visit the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Ggantija, Hagar Qim and Mnajdra
- ★ **Grand Harbour Cruise and the Three Cities** - Tour by boat of the spectacular Grand Harbour in Valletta and visits to the ancient cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa and Cospicua
- ★ **Agrigento** - Visit the Valley of the Temples
- ★ **Palermo** - Sicily's capital, visit the majestic Norman cathedral at Monreale
- ★ **Food and Wine** - Sample some of Sicily's delicious food and wine
- ★ **Mdina** - Visit this beautifully preserved Medieval city

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:

Moderate

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:

12 - 18

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip at Malta airport and take the ferry to Gozo

The trip starts at Malta International airport from where we drive to Cirkewwa and catch the ferry across to the island of Gozo. Gozo is fertile and picturesque and has retained much of its traditional character. Only 15 kms in length and 7 kms wide, all parts of the island are easily accessible, and for its size the variety of scenery is incredible.



Accommodation: Downtown Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Walking tour of Victoria and the Ggantija temples at Xaghra

We start our exploration in Xlendi, on the south coast, for a short photo stop and walk along the promenade before heading to the island's capital, Victoria; a tiny city named after Queen Victoria in 1887 but locally known as Rabat. After climbing up to the imposing Citadel we'll have a fantastic view of the whole island. We'll explore the old prison where the Knights of Saint John would send their rowdier members to cool off within. The graffitied walls give a fascinating insight into the lives of those who were incarcerated here. Descending to the graceful central square, It Tokk, we have time to wander the cobweb of narrow streets and take some time for lunch. Heading to the town of Xaghra, we reach Ggantija, a megalithic temple complex dating back to 3600 BC and thus named as it was believed only giants could have moved the stones. Some of the colossal stones are over 5 meters long and weigh over 20 tons and the temple still reaches a height of over 7 metres. Predating the Pyramids, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is believed to be the world's oldest free-standing structure. We continue to Calypso's Cave, alleged to be the cave referred to by Homer in The Odyssey. In the afternoon we'll get the chance to stretch our legs on a walk from the area of Calypso's Cave to Ramla Bay where we can enjoy a refreshing dip at the beautiful red sandy beach, if the weather is permits, before heading back to the hotel.



Accommodation: Downtown Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Visit Dwejra and take a scenic walk to Xwejni Bay; ferry to Malta

Dwejra is perhaps Gozo's most spectacular natural landmark. Here, geology, time and sea have worked together to produce some of the most remarkable scenery on the island. We'll see Fungus Rock, notable as the habitat of a rare fungus which was highly prized by the Knights of Saint John for its medicinal properties. You will then have the option to take a boat ride along the coast from the Inland Sea (weather permitting) - a shallow inland lagoon linked to the sea via a 30-metre tunnel. From Dwejra we continue to the Ta Pinu Basilica, renowned for the miraculous cures reported by its supplicants. We drive past neat, well-tended fields with their dry-stone walls and enjoy glorious views on our way to Zebbug; perched on a hilltop above the patchwork of green fields below. As with all these fortified hilltop villages, the far reaching views across the island and beyond are spectacular on a clear day. From Zebbug, we'll take a walk to nearby Xwejni Bay. The coastal scenery along the way is varied - at times we pass limestone outcrops eroded by the wind and sea into unusual shapes, where traditional salt pans dominate the view. This section of the coast is one of the most remote and rugged on the island but our walk is relatively steep downhill. There may be a chance to swim (weather permitting) before we visit to the seaside resort of Malfarsorn, our chosen location for lunch. We head back to Mgarr, via Nadur for a brief photo stop of Comino and the Blue Lagoon, to catch the ferry to Malta where we transfer to our hotel in Sliema near the capital. The capital stretches east from Valletta along scenic bays with busy marinas. A seafront promenade skirts around the coast of this busy town and is great for people watching. Our hotel is in Sliema where many restaurants and bars can be found.



Accommodation: Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Tour of Valletta Old City and visit Saint John's Co-Cathedral

This morning we plan to drive from the hotel for a walking tour around the impressive and heavily fortified Old City. Originally built by the Knights of the Order of Saint John in the 16th Century, Valletta, UNESCO World Heritage Site, is built on the steep slopes of the Sceberras Peninsula and surrounded by two huge natural harbours which have helped to make it such an important strategic port at the crossroads of the Mediterranean. Fort Saint Elmo guards the entrance to the harbours. Walking down Triq ir Repubblika - the main thoroughfare in the centre of the city, we visit the elaborately decorated Saint John's Co-Cathedral and the grandiose Grandmaster's Palace with its fine collection of artworks. We'll also admire the classic views across the Grand Harbour from the Upper Barrakka Gardens. Your afternoon is free for your own personal exploration.



Accommodation: Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Walking tour of the Three Cities and Grand Harbour cruise

This morning we head to the historic Three Cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa and Cospicua, considered to be 'the cradle of Maltese history' as settlers and rulers from the Phoenicians to the British all made use of the defences here. The Knights of the Order of Saint John settled in Vittoriosa in 1530 and used the city as their headquarters. The Three Cities have retained much of their romantic medieval charm and we'll see the Inquisitor's Palace in Vittoriosa and admire the views from the Gardjola Gardens - a look-out post to guard the harbour entrance - in Senglea. Driving on to Marsaxlokk, we will take some free time for lunch and exploration. This charming town is Malta's largest fishing port with its colourful boats and excellent fish restaurants. After lunch we will transfer to Sliema for a harbour cruise because the best way to explore the creeks and dockyards is by boat. Only by travelling across the water does one appreciate the sheer magnitude of the ramparts and forts that protect the city.



Accommodation: Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Explore Hagar Qim Temples and enjoy a local food and wine tasting

A short drive brings us to Hagar Qim and Mnajdra; another incredible Megalithic temple complex and UNESCO World Heritage Site. For three millennia, from around 3600 - 3200 BC, the Maltese archipelago was home to a unique, temple-building civilisation. The discovery of many fat lady statuettes in the vicinity of Hagar Qim has shown it to have been built to worship the Venus of Malta, the sleeping goddess of fertility. Mnajdra is probably the most atmospheric of all of Malta's temples, occupying an isolated position overlooking the rocky coastline. We walk between the two temple groups along a short well laid path before continuing a short distance along a rough country path to the Tal Hamrija coastal 17th century tower to enjoy breathtaking scenery as the cliffs rise out of the blue Mediterranean Sea. We return to our bus where we drive down to the Blue Grotto where we have the option of taking a boat trip (weather permitting) to see a series of natural caverns which glow with brilliant corals and sea sponges. We'll then spend the afternoon sampling a range of local food specialities. We'll learn how sun dried tomatoes and the local wine is produced and then get to sample these along with a selection of other vegetables farmed in the region as well as maltese bread and olive oil.



Accommodation: Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Visit to Mdina, San Anton Botanical Gardens and the Mosta Dome

This morning we'll take a short transfer to Malta's Medieval old capital, Mdina, for a tour on foot around this beautifully preserved city. Its warren of winding, narrow alleys (mostly too narrow for cars) and fortified walls contain a number of impressive buildings such as the Palazzo Falson and cathedral dedicated to the Conversion of Saint Paul. We'll also take time to see Domus Romana (a townhouse usually belonging to Roman dignitaries) and Saint Paul's eerie catacombs (underground). After our visit to Mdina, we'll drive to Mosta Dome and San Anton Botanical Gardens; the private residence of the President of Malta.



Accommodation: Plaza Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 8 - Fly from Malta to Sicily

We transfer to the airport this evening for the flight to Catania in Sicily. On arrival we drive to Syracuse where we will join those members of the group just travelling on the Sicily part of the tour. Ancient Syracuse was a colony of Corinth which once rivalled Athens as the most important and beautiful city in the Greek world. Its fascinating history is associated with such famous names as Alcibiades, Aeschylus, Pindar, Demosthenes and Archimedes.



Accommodation: Jolly Aretusa Palace Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - See Syracuse's historic Neapolis and Ortygia Island

This morning we will visit the city's Neapolis Archaeological Park, with its famous Greek theatre hewn out of the hillside and the fine Roman amphitheatre where gladiators once fought. We then continue to Ortygia Island - a small island in the centre of the city which is home to many more historical landmarks. Leaving Syracuse, we drive for a couple of hours inland to Piazza Amerina, a charming market town set amid rolling countryside, which will be our base for the night.



Accommodation: Park Hotel Paradiso (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Villa Romana and Agrigento's Valley of the Temples

Just a short hop from our hotel, we will start our day by visiting the Villa Romana del Casale with a local guide. It's the ruins of a magnificent country mansion containing some incredibly well-preserved and beautiful Roman mosaics. Continuing to the west coast, we reach Agrigento - once one of the most prosperous cities in Sicily. The ancient acropolis, now the modern city, overlooks a southern ridge, misleadingly named the 'Valley of the Temples'. Visiting these temples, we walk around the ruins of the largest Doric temple ever constructed - the Temple of Zeus. We will also explore the perfectly-proportioned Doric columns of the Temple of Concord, as well as the oldest temple in the complex, honouring Hercules. Later this afternoon, a two-hour drive takes us north along the spectacular coastline to tonight's hotel in Marsala.



Accommodation: Hotel President (or similar)



Standard Hotel

Swimming pool available





Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Visit Erice and the Greek ruins of Segesta en route to Palermo

This morning we drive to Erice, where we can enjoy the ambiance of this beautiful walled Medieval town. At 750 metres above sea level, we hope to have impressive views of the valley and sea below. It is also worth noting that Erice is home to Sicily's most famous cake shop - Maria Grammatic. Early afternoon will see us travelling on to Segesta - one of the best-preserved ancient Greek sites in existence. Here, the Doric temple and the amphitheatre sit on the slopes of Mount Barbar in a stunning natural setting. No modern day structures mar our appreciation of the site. On leaving magnificent Segesta, we drive an hour along the north coast to our hotel in Sicily's capital, Palermo.



Accommodation: Hotel Politeama (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 12 - Palatine Chapel and Monreale Cathedral; free time in Palermo

Before departing Palermo this morning, we will visit the Palatine Chapel - the royal chapel of the Norman kings of Sicily, packed with spectacular Byzantine mosaics. Driving into the hills just a short distance out of the capital, we go on to visit the majestic Norman Cathedral of Monreale. Founded in 1174 by William the Good, the cathedral is also famous for its extensive mosaics, as well as its beautiful cloisters showing both Romanesque and Islamic influences. Returning to Sicily's capital, our afternoon is free to enjoy Palermo at our own pace. The city stands at the foot of Monte Pellegrino, with the fertile valley of Concha d'Oro behind. It was one of the richest cities in Europe from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD when Islamic culture, Byzantine magnificence and the vigorous world of medieval Europe were merging into a fascinating civilisation. Today, the city maintains a sense of cultural diversity and is famous for its art, music and food.



Accommodation: Hotel Politeama (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 13 - Cefalu and coastal scenery en route to Giardini Naxos

Leaving Palermo, we drive along the spectacular northern coastline to the picturesque fishing village of Cefalu. Here we stop to visit the Norman Cathedral, with its stupendous mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. We take a scenic drive along the coast via Messina, stopping briefly for an optional visit to the Museum. Our base for the next two nights is the small beach resort of Giardini Naxos, just outside Taormina on the north east coast. Please note, on our 08 September 2018 departure we will be staying in Taormina instead of Giardini Naxos on days 6 and 7 of your holiday. The towns are only a short distance apart along the coast. The itinerary inclusions will remain the same and you'll still have the opportunity to visit Mount Etna, the only difference is that you won't be visiting Giardini Naxos and your free time on day 7 will be spent in Taormina instead. If you still want to visit Giardini Naxos then it's easily accessible on the hop-on public bus from Taormina.



Accommodation: Hotel la Riva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 14 - Chance to travel to Mount Etna; afternoon in Taormina

This morning, you have the opportunity to join a tour to explore the lunar landscape, craters and lava fields of Mount Etna - one of the most active volcanoes in Europe. Alternatively, you might prefer to enjoy a more sedate morning enjoying the coastal location of Giardini Naxos. This afternoon, we travel the short distance to Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort. Once a favourite haven for the likes of D. H Lawrence and Oscar Wilde, Taormina is still today a tourist honeypot. After a walk around this chic and beautiful town, with its pretty medieval churches and charming streets, it's easy to understand why. We'll visit the Greek Theatre in Taormina. Here, snow-capped Mount Etna acts as a spectacular backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage. It's easy to see why this is possibly the most famous view in Sicily, it makes for a superb photograph.



Accommodation: Hotel la Riva (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 15 - Trip ends in Giardini Naxos

Our trip ends at our hotel in Giardini Naxos.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This cultural tour of Malta and Gozo will have you cover the majority of these two fascinating islands. Travelling by ferry between the two you will get to experience two days on Malta's sister island taking in wonderful coastal scenery and experience the many ancient sites that Malta has to offer.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 14
Lunch: 1



Transport

Bus
Boat
Ferry



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

14 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Malta Holidays & Tours

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

3 Pin Flat

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Maltese and English

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Blue Grotto - Boat trip €8.00 Xwejni - Boat Trip €3.50 Palermo - Puppet Theatre approximately €15.00 Giardini Naxos - Mount Etna tour - Bus to 1,900 meters €32; Bus to 1,900 metres and cable car to 2,500 metres €64.00; Bus to 1,900 metres, cable car and then four-wheel drive coach up to 2,900 metres to view the craters €96.00 Due to the volcanic dust and sulphur fumes on Mount Etna, we ask asthma sufferers or customers with heart conditions of any kind to take these factors into consideration when deciding if this optional excursion is right for you. Regional Museum at Messina - €8.00

Clothing

Women should avoid bare arms and shoulders in churches (scarf or stole recommended). Dress for hot conditions although light rainwear and warm fleece/jacket for nights when temperatures can drop (especially in March and Oct/Nov). Anyone intending to visit Mount Etna should bring warm clothing as snow is a common occurrence (even in June). Wind and waterproof garments are strongly recommended for those wishing to visit the volcano.

Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Sunhat and sunscreen are recommended. You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, torch, as well as insect repellent and a swimming costume.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £40.00. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Malta Holidays & Tours

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£24.00 - 28.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Since there is relatively little opportunity to change money on this trip, it is advisable to arrive with a supply of Euros to avoid inconvenience.

Where To Exchange

Money can be exchanged in the hotels in Gozo and Malta, Catania Airport, Agrigento, Palermo and Taormina in Sicily.

ATM Availability

ATM's are widely available in Gozo, Malta and Sicily

Credit Card Acceptance

Large shops and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Are not recommended due to the high rate of commission and limited opening times of banks. Changing them can be very time consuming.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Ferry

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

In Sliema the hotel we use is in a great location on the main promenade and just across the road from the nearest public beach. The hotel has two swimming pools, a restaurant, pizzeria, two bars and a cafe. The bedrooms have simple decor and they vary in size and layout. All are equipped with air conditioning, TV, telephone, hairdryer, safe (additional charge payable locally) and have an ensuite bathroom. Some rooms also have a balcony and the view from the rooms varies - some are internal facing or have a street or partial or full sea view. Rooms are allocated on a run of house basis. The hotel does have single rooms, which are smaller than the twin rooms and may be allocated to you if you book our Single Room Option.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Non refundable permits

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Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Special Note: Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.