

Travelling in Malta

a short guide – a consumer's perspective

Malta is a small island and thus certain forms of transport such as trains do not exist because of the short distances. The people usually talk Maltese amongst themselves but the vast majority can speak English. Italian is usually understood though the number who speak the language is much lower.

Temperatures in Malta are usually high and, with the humidity that is usually present, it is felt much more severely. UV index during the summer months is usually very high. It is thus advisable that tourists should take the precautions.

Arriving at the Airport

Once you have cleared your luggage, white taxis are available to take you anywhere on the Island. Their rates are the following:

Lm 4	Gudja Safi Sta Lucia	Lm 5	Corradino Fgura Ghajn Dwieli Tarxien	Lm 6	Albert Town Birzebbugia Floriana Ghaxaq Gwardamangia Qormi Qrendi Sta Venera Valletta Zejtun Zurrieq
Lm 7	Cospicua Dingli Ghar Lapsi Rabat/Mtarfa Senglea Siggiewi Ta' Qali Vittoriosa Xghajra Zabbar Zebbug	Lm 8	Attard Balzan Birkirkara San Gwann Sliema St Andrew St Julian's Swieqi Ta' I-lbragg Ta' Xbiex	Lm 9	Bahar ic-Caghaq Gharghur St Paul's Bay
Lm 10	Bahrija Bidnija Bugibba Burmarrad Ghajn Tuffieha Golden Bay Qawra Wardija Xemxija Zebbiegh	Lm 13	Armier Cirkewwa		

All taxi rates quoted above are inclusive of:

Up to 4 persons and up to four normal sized luggage
All week any time including Sunday and public holidays.

Malta International Airport adopts a system whereby passengers are to pay before boarding a taxi. An appropriate Taxi Booth is situated inside the Arrivals Hall and passengers pay a fixed rate according to the area, and are presented with a voucher to be forwarded to the taxi driver.

Public Bus Service

Route bus No 8 operates a regular service between Malta International Airport and Valletta. The bus stop is located outside the Check-in hall.

Other Taxis

Taxis in Malta are expensive. One is always advised to see that the driver is using the taximeter to establish the rate. Otherwise, one must negotiate the fare to be paid beforehand.

If you have any complaints, you may report the matter to the Malta Transport Authority either through their website or telephone.

Buses

Buses are the most widely used system of travel as they are still relatively cheap to travel with and because the system practically takes you everywhere on the Island. There is a variety of buses on the system, some very old while others are more modern, though few if any, attain the recently published EU specifications which are to be enforced in a few years.

They are fun to travel with as they provide you with a taste of Maltese life style. Yet they are rather unreliable to travel for a fixed appointment as the time take depends on the temperament of the driver rather than distance.

It is advisable that you have the correct change as some of the bus drivers are highly temperamental as our weather. However, new bus ticketing machines have been introduced lately.

The main bus terminus is in Valletta which is the capital city. However, in most of the other towns or villages, one would usually find a bus terminus. This is usually located in the main village square. One can ask for information either at the hotel or at the bus terminus in Valletta.

Buses to and from a place usually leave every ten minutes, though the frequency of certain bus routes is longer. One particular aspect of the bus system that it is very rare that you need to change bus to arrive at you

destination. All bus routes leave Valletta directly to each locality. However, some localities are served through other routes.

You may get information of the bus route to be taken and the fare from your hotel or from the bus terminus.

Gozo

Gozo is a smaller sister island. One can travel there, either by boat or by helicopter. The helicopter port is at the Malta Airport. The ferry boat is much more popular. Ferryboats are run by Gozo Channel which is a state monopoly. One needs to go to Cirkewwa which is one of the furthest points north in Malta as the ferryboat crosses from Cirkewwa to Mgarr, Gozo.

One can either travel by bus from Valletta to Cirkewwa or by using one's own transport. If one is travelling from Valletta by bus, one needs to catch the No 45 bus. There are direct services to Cirkewwa from Sliema (bus No 645) and from Bugibba (bus No 48).

One can get information on the ferryboat schedule either from the hotel or by phoning Gozo Channel offices on 21243964 /5.

Public transport in Gozo is in shambles and one should not consider this option.

Travelling in Gozo is done best with self drive cars. In fact, this is the best option especially in Gozo. International driving licences are acceptable. Tourists should be careful as in Malta we drive on the left.

There are three main problems with self drive cars. First is the state of the roads. In certain areas they are filled with pot holes. The second problem is the way the Maltese drive. We are not the most observant of rules and regulations and tend to reduce a two carriage road to one since we tend to drive in the middle of the road. The third problem is parking or rather lack of it especially in towns.

Other than this, self drive cars are the best option to get round the Island. Gozo is much better to drive than in Malta as there is less traffic, the roads are in much better shape and directional signs are everywhere. However, one hot spot for parking is Victoria, especially in weekends and in summer or holiday periods.

Hotels

There is a wide variety of hotels though most are located in the northern part of the Island. They are classified periodically by the Malta Tourist Authority. The classification is shown at the entrance of the hotel.

One may consult <http://www.maltahotel.net> website to find out the facilities offered at the hotels.

All hotels are required to offer safety deposit facilities depending on the star classification. The higher ones need to have a safety deposit box in each room. The others need to offer this facility at the reception.

Restaurants

One would find restaurants everywhere. At present restaurants are classified though no one knows this classification. Soon they are to be reclassified and would have to exhibit this together with their menu and prices at the entrance.

Standards vary considerably from one restaurant to another. Tipping also varies according to the locality. The Maltese tend to tip according to the service provided but it is unusual to tip more than 5%.