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Malta Air/Hotel, From \$1,199

Experience the vibrant culture and pulsing nightlife of this island nation at the crossroads of Europe and northern Africa.

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The Real Deal Round-trip airfare, five nights' accommodations, transfers, and breakfast daily, from \$1,199 per person—plus taxes of about \$165.

When Depart Feb. 1-28, 2008; add \$100 for Nov. 1-Dec. 14, 2007, Jan. 5-31, 2008 and Mar. 1-31; \$200 for Dec. 27, 2007-Jan. 4, 2008; \$400 for Dec. 15-26, 2007.

Gateways Boston, D.C., New York City; add \$50 for Chicago, L.A., Miami, San Francisco.

The Fine Print Airport-hotel transfers, hotel taxes, fuel surcharges, and breakfast daily are included. Airport taxes and fees are about \$165 additional per person. Based on double occupancy; single supplement is \$229. Read these [guidelines](#) before you book any Real Deal.

Book By No deadline; based on availability.

Contact FIT Tours, 800/248-3487, fittours.com.

Why It's a Deal The lowest round-trip fares we found for travel to Malta in early February were \$674 from D.C. (British Airways), \$697 from New York (multiple airlines), \$724 from Boston (British Airways), \$751 from Chicago (British Airways), \$806 from San Francisco (British Airways), \$822 from L.A. (British Airways), and \$868 from Miami (British Airways), according to a recent search on Kayak.

For about \$500 more, this package covers the cost of your round-trip airfare, plus the five-night stay, with breakfast and transfers.

Trip Details The [Malta 7 Day Ala Carte package](#) includes round-trip airfare: You'll fly either Virgin or British Airways from the U.S. to London's Heathrow Airport, and then catch a three-hour flight on Malta Air.

Upon arrival at the airport, you will be met by FIT representatives who will escort you to the [Victoria Hotel](#) in Sliema, a popular coastal resort area near the capital city of Valletta, where you'll find many lively cafés, restaurants, and shops. The hotel offers a restaurant, a lounge, and a rooftop pool, and each of its 120 guest rooms comes equipped with satellite television and high-speed Internet access.

You can extend your stay by adding extra nights at the Victoria Hotel for \$109 per person per night (double occupancy) or \$155 per person per night (single occupancy).

Situated midway between the coasts of Sicily and North Africa, the Maltese archipelago is made up of Malta and the nearby smaller islands of Comino and Gozo. The islands have been inhabited since Neolithic times, and the stone temples that still stand at places like Tarxien, Hagar Qim, Mnajdra, and Gozo are some of the world's oldest freestanding monuments.

Malta's character owes much to the diverse cultures that have left traces here at various points throughout its history. Highly coveted because of their central location at the crossroads of many Mediterranean trade routes, the islands have seen periods of Roman, Arab, French, and British rule, as well as a golden age under the Knights of St. John, who built many of Valletta's stunning baroque-style buildings and cathedrals. Malta is now an independent republic and a member of the European Union; you'll find that English (as well as Italian) is commonly spoken.

You can choose to explore the island on your own or to take advantage of FIT's many guided offerings. For example, you can take a tour of Mdina, Malta's old capital city, and enjoy the panoramic views from its historic bastions. Spend half a day aboard a harbor cruise discovering the natural ports of Marsamxett and Grand harbors, or take a 45-minute ferry ride to

the island of Gozo, where you'll visit medieval fortified towns and encounter the impressive natural scenery of the rocky cliffs at Xlendi Bay. Half-day tours are approximately \$59 per person, and full-day tours are about \$109 per person.

For more information on what to see and do, visit [Malta's official tourism board website](#).

Malta has a typical Mediterranean climate: hot, dry summers and a short, mild winter season. Winter temperatures generally fall between 60 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit, with occasionally blustery winds and thunderstorms. Before you go, check the [weather forecast](#), the [local time](#), and the [exchange rate](#) on [BudgetTravel.com](#).

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