

# 48 HOURS IN... Malta

Two days of meetings, history and agritourism in the Mediterranean By Mark Williams



**Street scenes** Valletta is awash with stunning architecture

NONGLAK BUNKOET / EYEEM / GETTY IMAGES

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## DAY ONE

**10am** Get an early flight with Air Malta to Malta International Airport and you'll have a short transfer of around 15 minutes to the Westin Dragonara Resort, your hotel for the next two days. You'll find most of the transfers in Malta are pretty quick, as the main island is just 17 miles wide and covers a total of 122 square miles.

The Westin Dragonara has a beautiful seafront location on a private peninsula, with views over the Mediterranean. It has a vast array of room types, from Deluxe Sea View through to the Luxury Bay, which is a two-bedroom suite.

**11.30am** For your transfer to The Phoenicia Hotel, where you can hold a conference or series of workshops, travel by vintage bus booked through Supreme Travel. It's a stylish way to arrive that will certainly turn heads as you pootle your way through the streets of Malta.

Once at The Phoenicia, you can use its refined meeting facilities which include a Grand Ballroom for up to 300 people or several Green Lounges that can be combined to hold up to 160 delegates.

**3pm** Time for some fresh air and a stroll around historic Valletta, with plenty of stops for photo opportunities next to incredible limestone buildings.

CHRISTOPHE FAUGERE/GETTY IMAGES



**Picture perfect** The view of Valletta from The Palace hotel in nearby Sliema

LUTZ VORDERWUELBECKE/MARIOTT



**Paradise** The tranquil pool deck at the Westin Dragonara



**Refined facilities** The Grand Ballroom meeting room at The Phoenicia Hotel

The city was established by the Knights of St John in the 16th century as a refuge to care for soldiers that had been injured during the Crusades. If your delegates want to dig deeper into the history of the city, take them to Casa Rocca Piccola, a beautiful palazzo almost as old as the city itself.

**7pm** Over the past ten years, Malta has been transformed from a holiday destination into a cosmopolitan country with plenty of options for MICE events. One of the grander options you could choose is Palazzo Parisio, for an evening drinks reception, dinner and tour of the historic palace.

Alternatively, throughout Malta there is a feast in honour of a saint almost every week throughout the year. The Feast of St Joseph in Rabat, for example, sees the town covered in brightly coloured banners,

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lights and fireworks, with food and drink a-plenty as you wander among the crowds of revellers and worshippers.

## DAY TWO

**8.30am** If the weather allows (and it probably will because Malta has 300 days of sunshine a year), take the ferry over to Gozo and head to Ta' Mena Estate for some informal meetings in the sunny courtyard. Agritourism is really taking off on Gozo and perfectly differentiates it from the busier and more densely populated Malta.

**12pm** Just round the corner from Ta' Mena Estate is Ta' Rikardu Farm, where owner Rikardu can offer you a demonstration of how he makes goats' cheese (you might even get the chance to try milking a goat yourself). Have a delicious lunch of homemade pasta filled with goats' cheese, washed down with wine made from the grapes grown among the many miles of vineyards surrounding you.

**2pm** The Ggantija Temples are a UNESCO World Heritage site and date back to around 3600BC. However, historians estimate they fell into disuse around 2500BC and were not rediscovered again until the 1800s by a German excavation. Some of the enormous stones used to construct the temples weigh 50 tonnes and are more than five metres long, which is why local legends used to say the temples were built by giants.

**5pm** After you've had your fill of the temples, head back to the main island of Malta for networking drinks at The Maritime Museum. Being an island nation in the middle of the Mediterranean, global seafaring has had a big impact on the Maltese

**World heritage** Only a giant could lift the 50 tonne neolithic stones which make up Gozo's Ggantija Temples

**Opulent** Villa restaurant at the Corinthia Palace

population over the years.

St Angelo Hall within the museum can hold 150 seated or 250 standing and has access to a terrace with views over Birgu Marina below.

**7pm** Your guests won't forget their final night in Malta if you take them for dinner at the Corinthia Palace's opulent Villa Corinthia restaurant. The fine dining restaurant first opened in the 1960s and its success led to the hotel being built. The restaurant has a main hall, with four side-rooms and two private dining rooms, which can all be booked for events of various sizes. The chefs use only local, sustainable ingredients in their seasonal menus.



BRIAN GRECH