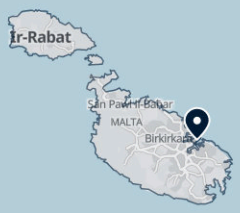


Valletta

Malta

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Valletta is Malta's capital, built on a narrow peninsula between two natural harbours. The Knights of St John founded the city in 1566, right after surviving the Great Siege of 1565, and packed it with churches, palaces and fortifications in barely 55 hectares. The whole city is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and it shows: almost every street holds a Baroque facade or a limestone monument.

Valletta suits a traveler who wants history and architecture close together and easy to reach on foot. Most sights sit within a 20-minute walk of each other, so a single full day covers the highlights, though the city rewards a second, slower visit. The Knights' Grand Master *Jean de Valette*, who led the defence during the siege and gave the city his name, is buried in the crypt of St. John's Co-Cathedral.

When to visit

Spring (April–May) and autumn (September–October) are mild and the most comfortable for walking the city's steep streets. Summer is hot and dry with little rain, and winter is mild but brings occasional storms.

Plan around **Notte Bianca**, Malta's largest annual arts festival, held on a single Saturday night each October. Valletta's palaces, museums and squares stay open until late with free music, dance and street performances, and the whole city turns into an open-air stage.

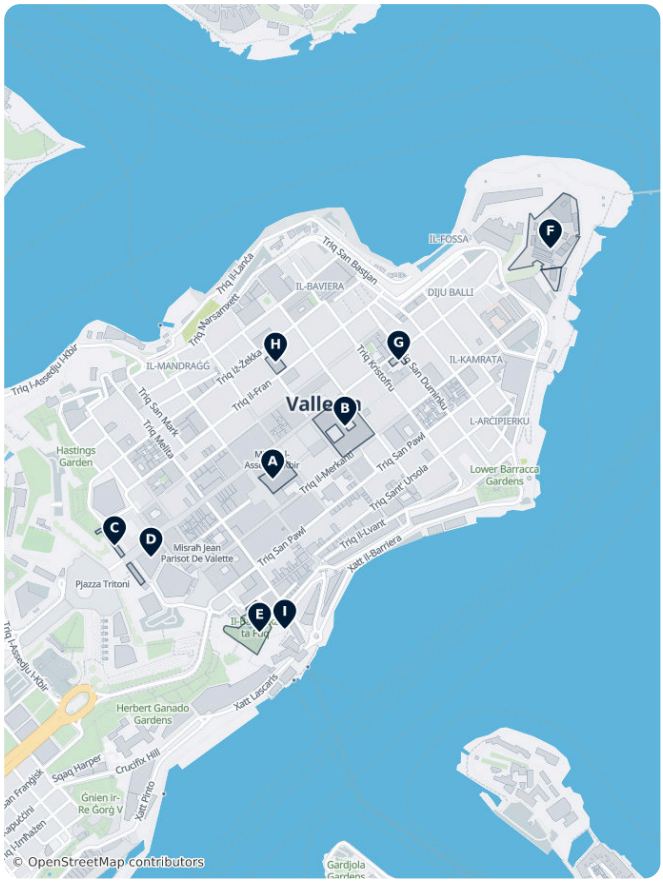
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 17° Feels like 9°	12° / 9°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	14° / 17° Feels like 9°	12° / 8°	Dry air
March	Good Good for sightseeing	16° / 18° Feels like 11°	13° / 10°	Dry air
April	Great Great for sightseeing	17° / 20° Feels like 13°	14° / 12°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	20° / 23°	17° / 15°	23 sunny days
June	Great Great for sightseeing	24° / 28°	21° / 18°	25 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · UV 9 (Very high)
July	Great Great for sightseeing	27° / 30°	24° / 21°	30 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for sightseeing	28° / 30°	25° / 23°	28 sunny days · Oppressive humidity · UV 8 (Very high)
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 29°	23° / 20°	20 sunny days · Muggy, humid air
October	Great Great for sightseeing	23° / 26°	20° / 17°	Humid air
November	Good Good for sightseeing	20° / 23° Feels like 16°	17° / 13°	
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	16° / 19° Feels like 11°	14° / 10°	Dry air

Best months: April, May, June, July, August, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

July and August bring the heat and the crowds; the shoulder months keep the same sunshine with a more comfortable pace for sightseeing.

Top sights



A St. John's Co-Cathedral looks plain from the street, but its interior is one of the richest Baroque spaces in Europe, covered floor to ceiling in carved and gilded stone. It also holds two paintings by *Caravaggio*, including his only signed work.

B Grandmaster's Palace was the Grand Master's residence and is now the office of Malta's President. Part of it is open as a museum, with State Rooms and an armoury of Knights-era weapons and armor.

Valletta's entrance is a lesson in three centuries of design at once: the current C City Gate and the D Parliament Building beside it, both completed in 2014–2015 to designs by *Renzo Piano*, sit next to the ruins of the old opera house and centuries-old bastion walls.

E Upper Barrakka Gardens sits on the bastions above the Grand Harbour, with sweeping views across the water to the Three Cities. A saluting battery here still fires a cannon at noon and at 4 pm every day.

F Fort St. Elmo guards the tip of the peninsula and was the site of the fiercest fighting in the 1565 siege. It now houses the National War Museum, covering Malta's military history through both World Wars.

G Casa Rocca Piccola is a lived-in 16th-century noble house, still home to a Maltese family, with a costume collection and a set of air-raid shelters cut into the rock below.

H Manoel Theatre is one of Europe's oldest working theatres, built in 1731 in an oval auditorium of gilded wood. It still hosts opera and concerts today.

I Lascaris War Rooms is a tunnel complex carved beneath the bastions that served as Britain's secret Second World War command

centre for the defence of Malta. Guided tours walk through the original map rooms.

Valletta – Plan Your Trip

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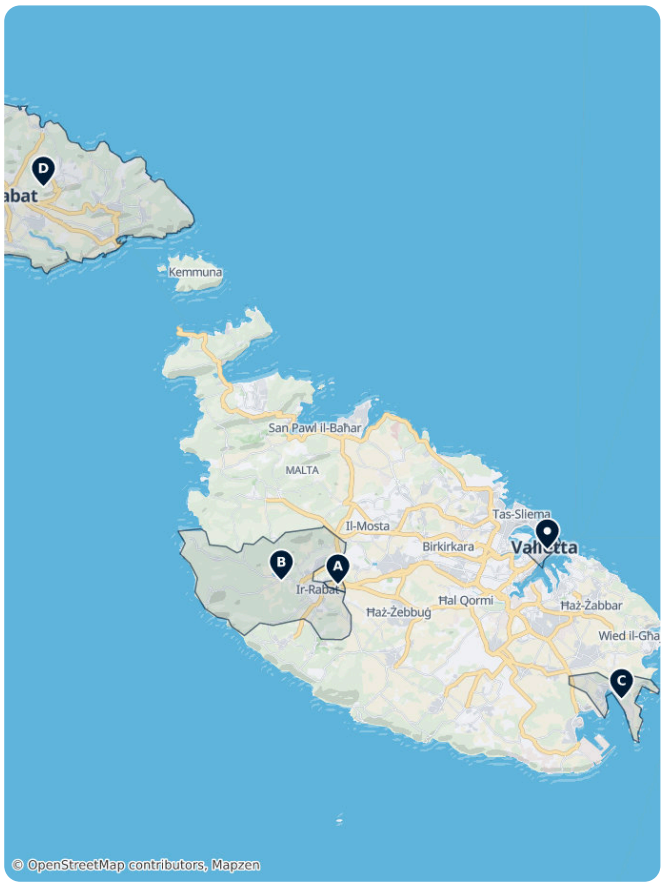
What to experience

- Watch the noon gun fire from the historic Saluting Battery below Upper Barrakka Gardens, a tradition that has marked midday in the harbour for over a century; it fires again at 4 pm.
- Take the short ferry across the Grand Harbour to the Three Cities at sunset, when the fortifications and Valletta's skyline turn gold from the water.
- Join **Notte Bianca** in October, when Valletta's palaces and streets stay open through the night for free music, theatre and art.
- Catch a performance at Manoel Theatre, still an active opera and concert venue nearly 300 years after it opened.

Day trips

Malta is small enough that most of the island is a realistic day trip from Valletta.

- A Mdina and B Rabat — Malta's former capital, a walled hilltop town nicknamed the "Silent City" for its quiet, car-free streets. About 30–40 minutes by bus or car.
- C Marsaxlokk — a working fishing village known for its harbour full of colorful traditional boats and a lively Sunday fish market. About 30–40 minutes by bus or car.
- Blue Grotto — a set of sea caves on the south coast, best seen on a short morning boat trip when the light turns the water bright blue. About 20–25 minutes by car, or up to 45 minutes by bus.
- D Gozo — Malta's quieter sister island, with the citadel of Victoria and the prehistoric Ġgantija temples. Reachable by a 25-minute ferry from Ċirkewwa, roughly 1.5–2 hours total each way including the transfer across Malta — worth the full day.



Where to explore

Several historic neighbours sit within a short walk or a quick ferry ride of Valletta and are easy to combine with a visit.

Right outside the bastions, Floriana is a planned garrison town with wide gardens and parade grounds built to defend Valletta's landward approach.

Across the Grand Harbour, a short ferry crossing away, are the **Three Cities**: Birgu, the Knights' original fortified base before Valletta existed, with the waterfront Fort Saint Angelo; Isla, a narrow fortified spur with sweeping harbour views; and Bormla, with its own dockside promenade.

Further around the harbour, Kalkara is a quieter waterside town, and Paola is home to the Ħal Saflieni Hypogeum, an underground Neolithic burial complex (book tickets well ahead — daily visitor numbers are strictly limited).

Getting there

- **By air**: Malta International Airport (MLA) in Luqa is the island's only commercial airport, about 8 km from Valletta. Bus X4 runs directly to Valletta's bus terminus in around 25–30 minutes for a €2 ticket; a taxi takes about 20 minutes.
- **By ferry**: international fast ferries connect Valletta directly to Sicily (Pozzallo and Catania); Grand Harbour's Pinto Wharf also serves as Malta's main cruise terminal, putting cruise passengers within walking distance of the city gate.
- **By bus**: there is no railway in Malta. Valletta's bus terminus, just outside City Gate, is the hub of the entire island's bus network, with direct routes from every major town.

Getting around

- **Public transit**: Valletta's bus terminus outside City Gate is the starting point for buses across Malta. Buy a tallinja card or, on busy routes, tap a contactless bank card or phone directly when boarding — Malta Public Transport.
- **Ferry**: passenger ferries cross Marsamxett Harbour to Sliema and the Grand Harbour to Birgu (Vittoriosa), a scenic and often faster alternative to the bus for short hops.
- **On foot**: the historic core is compact and largely pedestrianized, but very hilly, with long staircase streets running down to both harbours. The Barrakka Lift connects the waterfront to Upper Barrakka Gardens in seconds and saves a steep climb.
- **Cycling**: not practical — the steep terrain, stairs and narrow streets rule out cycling within the city.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The historic core is flat along its main spine but flanked by steep side streets and long staircases down to both harbours, so comfortable shoes matter more than distance.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Steep terrain, stairs and narrow streets make cycling impractical within the city.

Driving

- **Is a car worth it?**: not inside Valletta. The city is small, largely pedestrianized and hard to navigate by car; rent one only if you plan to explore the rest of Malta beyond a single day trip.
- **Parking**: park outside the bastions — Floriana's Park and Ride or the MCC car park are the easiest options — and walk in through City Gate.
- **Restrictions**: Valletta enforces a camera-based Controlled Vehicular Access charge for cars entering the peninsula on weekdays from 08:00 to 14:00; it applies to hire cars as well as local ones, so factor it in if you are driving a rental into the city during those hours.

Food & drink

Valletta's dining leans toward small, family-run spots serving Maltese staples like *fenkata* (rabbit) and *pastizzi*, alongside a growing number of upscale restaurants in restored palazzos.

For a single stop that covers a wide range of options, head to Valletta Food Market, a restored 19th-century iron market hall now packed with food stalls and small kitchens. Otherwise, the streets around Strait Street — once the city's rowdy sailors' quarter — now cluster bars and casual restaurants, and are a good area to wander for dinner.

What to eat & drink

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Pastizzi
Flaky pastry parcels filled with ricotta or mushy peas, sold at small bakeries all day.

Ftira
A dense, chewy flatbread stuffed with tuna, capers, tomatoes, and olives.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Imqaret
Deep-fried date-filled pastries, sold as street food.

DRINKS

Kinnie
A bitter-orange soft drink unique to Malta.

Cisk
Malta's home-brewed lager, a common choice at bars and restaurants.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Fenkata
Rabbit stewed or fried with garlic and wine, traditionally eaten on Sundays and at village feasts.

Bragioli · beef olives
Thin beef slices rolled around a savory filling of egg, bacon, and breadcrumbs, braised in a wine sauce.

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Safety & health

Valletta is a safe city for tourists day and night, with petty theft and pickpocketing in busy tourist spots the main thing to watch for, as in any capital city. Keep bags closed and phones out of back pockets around Republic Street and the bus terminus.

Tap water is heavily desalinated and carries a strong taste, so most residents and visitors drink bottled or filtered water instead.

History

The Knights of the Order of St John built Valletta after their narrow victory over an Ottoman invasion fleet in the Great Siege of 1565, in which Fort St. Elmo bore the brunt of the fighting and fell after weeks of bombardment. Grand Master *Jean de Valette*, who led the defence, laid the city's first stone in 1566 and gave it his name; architect *Francesco Laparelli* designed its strict grid of streets, unusually modern for the time.

The Knights ruled from Valletta for over two centuries until Napoleon's forces took Malta in 1798. The British followed in 1800 and stayed until independence in 1964, using the Grand Harbour as a major naval base. That role made Valletta a target again during the Second World War: the underground Lascaris War Rooms directed the island's defence against sustained bombing, and the Siege Bell War Memorial today commemorates those who died in the siege that earned the whole country the George Cross.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Malta at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY



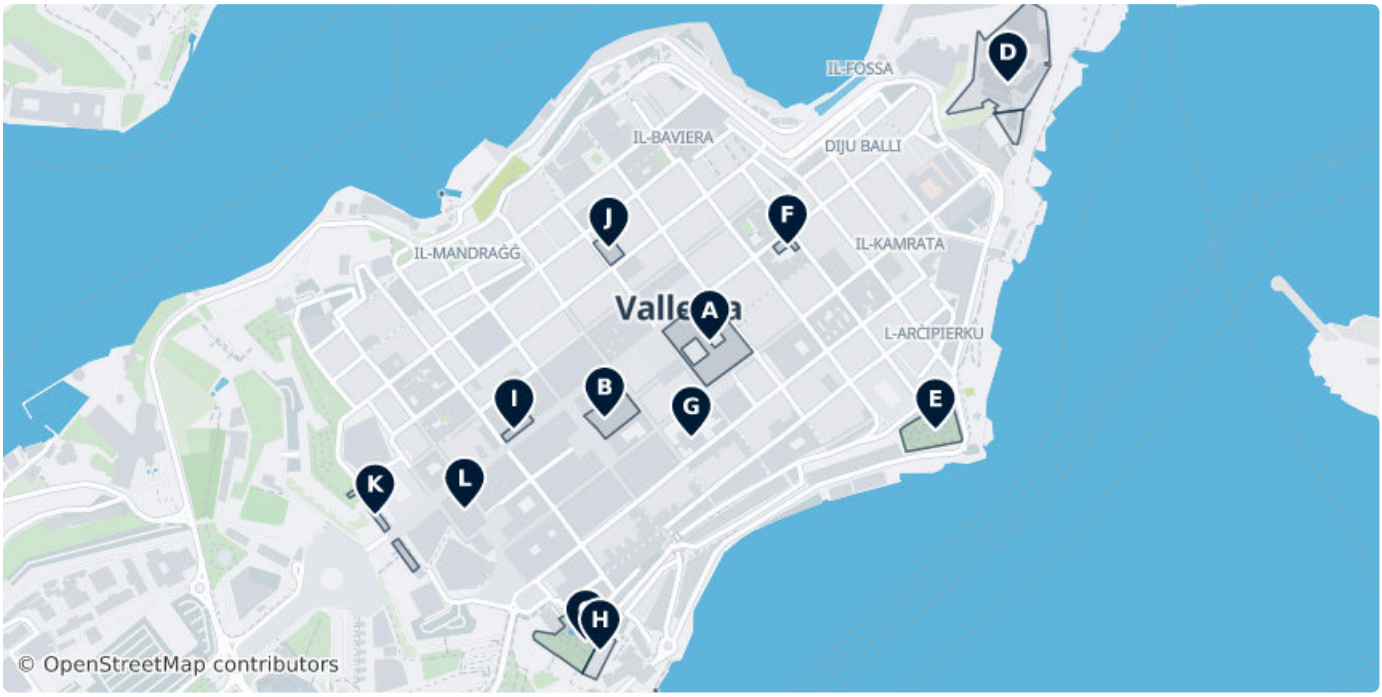
Type G
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
English, Maltese

TAP WATER
Use caution

Valletta Must-Sees

Valletta's UNESCO-listed grid contains a high concentration of Baroque and Mannerist architecture. This collection spans from the Renzo Piano-designed City Gate to the tip of Fort St. Elmo, covering key sites like St. John's Co-Cathedral, which houses Caravaggio's masterpieces. The Grandmaster's Palace and Casa Rocca Piccola offer insights into noble and administrative life, while the National Museum of Archaeology displays artifacts from Malta's prehistoric temples. For panoramic views of the Grand Harbour, visit the Upper and Lower Barracca Gardens, or witness the daily noon gun at the Saluting Battery.





A Grandmaster's Palace

Historic palace featuring mannerist and baroque architecture, originally the residence and government office of the Grandmasters of the Knights of Malta. It currently functions as a museum and official state residence.

Palace Square, Valletta, Malta (35.89859, 14.51414)

Mo–Su	09:00–17:00

heritagemalta.org, +35621249349



B St. John's Co-Cathedral

Historic baroque cathedral known for its richly decorated interior and significant artworks, including pieces by Caravaggio. Designed by Girolamo Cassar, it serves as an important religious and cultural site.

Triq San Ġwann, VLT 10 Il-Belt Valletta, MT (35.89763, 14.51251)

Mo–Fr	09:30–16:30
Sa	09:30–12:30
Su	Closed

stjohnscocathedral.com, +356 2122 0536



C Upper Barrakka Gardens

Historic public garden and scenic viewpoint featuring panoramic views of the city, Grand Harbour, and surrounding fortifications. The site includes monuments, memorials, and a historic saluting battery, and is wheelchair accessible.

Triq Sant' Orsla, Il-Belt Valletta, Malta (35.89483, 14.51221)

Mo–Su 07:00–22:00

+356 2123 7747



D Fort St. Elmo

Fort Saint Elmo is a star fort in Valletta, Malta. It stands on the seaward shore of the Sciberras Peninsula that divides Marsamxett Harbour...

St. Elmo Pl., Valletta, VLT 1741, Malta (35.90184, 14.51877)

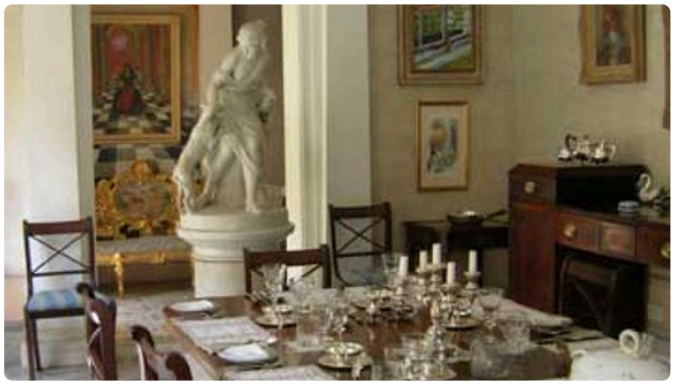
+356 21 233088



E Lower Barrakka Gardens

Scenic public park and monument area featuring panoramic views over the Grand Harbour and a neoclassical monument to Sir Alexander Ball.

Quarry Wharf, Valletta, Malta (35.89748, 14.51765)



F Casa Rocca Piccola

Casa Rocca Piccola is a 16th-century palace in Malta, and home of the noble Maltese family de Piro.

Triq ir-Repubblika 74, VLT 1117 Il-Belt Valletta, MT (35.89980, 14.51535)

Mo–Sa 10:00–16:00

casaroccapiccola.com, +356 2122 1499



G St. Paul's Shipwreck

The Collegiate Parish Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, also known as simply the Church of St Paul's Shipwreck, is a Roman Catholic parish...

St.Paul's Street, La Valletta, Malta (35.89738, 14.51386)

+356 2122 3348



H Saluting Battery

Lascaris Battery, also known as Fort Lascaris or Lascaris Bastion, is an artillery battery located on the east side of Valletta, Malta.

Battery Street, Valletta VLT 1220, Malta (35.89471, 14.51244)

Mo–Sa 10:00–17:00

salutingbattery.com, +356 21 80 09 92



I National Museum of Archaeology

The National Museum of Archaeology is a Maltese museum in Valletta, with artefacts from prehistory, Phoenician times and a notable...

Republic Street, La Valletta VLT 1112, Malta (35.89748, 14.51110)

heritagemalta.org, +356 2122 1623



J Manoel Theatre

Teatru Manoel is a theatre and important performing arts venue in Malta.

Old Theatre Street 115, VLT 1426 Il-Belt Valletta, MT (35.89977, 14.51257)

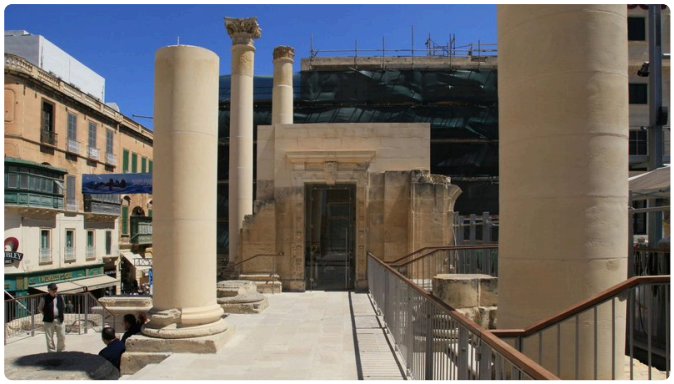
teatrumanoel.com.mt, +356 2124 6389



K City Gate

City Gate is a gate located at the entrance of Valletta, Malta. The present gate, which is the fifth one to have stood on the site, was...

Triq ir-Repubblika, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89641, 14.50895)



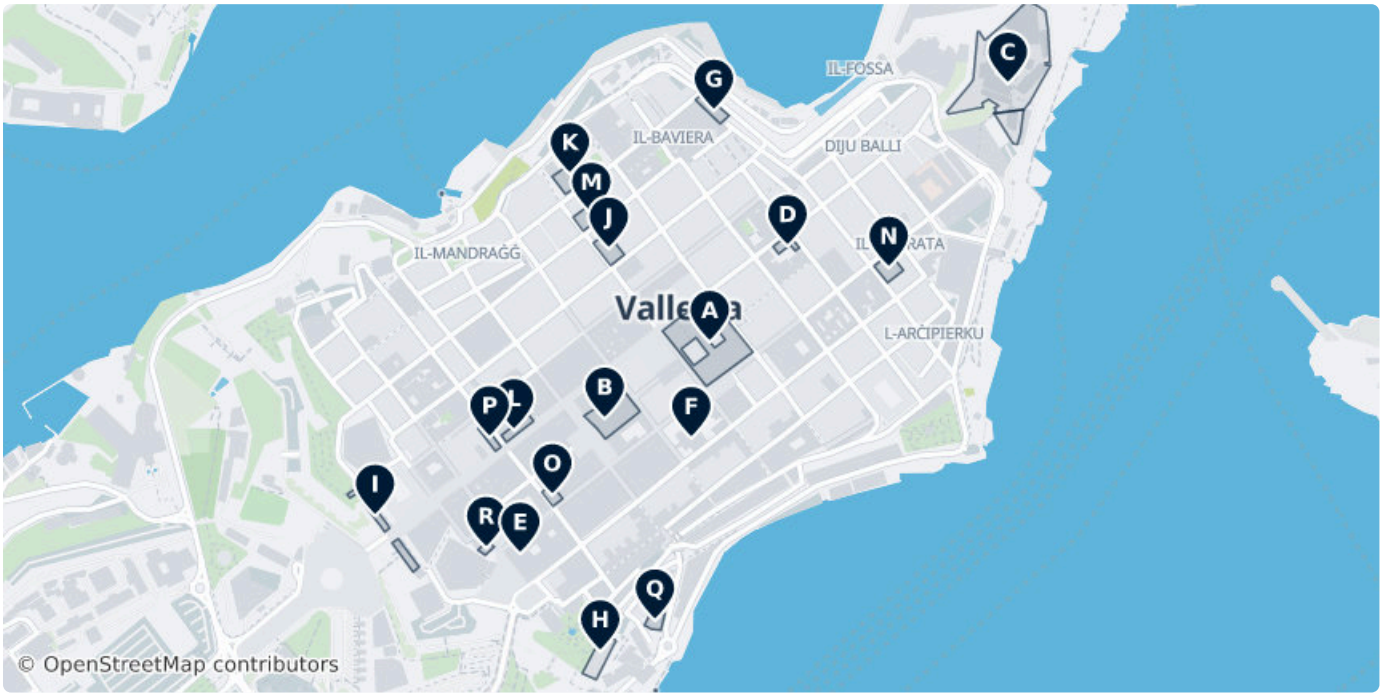
L Royal Opera House

The Royal Opera House, also known as the Royal Theatre, was an opera house and performing arts venue in Valletta, Malta.

Triq Nofs in-Nhar, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89648, 14.51034)

Historic landmarks

Valletta, a UNESCO World Heritage city, is defined by its concentrated collection of military and religious architecture commissioned by the Order of St. John. This list features 16th-century landmarks including the Grandmaster's Palace and its historic armory, the opulent St. John's Co-Cathedral housing Caravaggio masterpieces, and the star-shaped Fort St. Elmo. Visitors can explore noble residences like Casa Rocca Piccola, the baroque Auberge de Castille, and the 18th-century Manoel Theatre. These sites, ranging from the Saluting Battery to numerous historic churches, document Malta's strategic role in Mediterranean history.





A Grandmaster's Palace

Mannerist palace from the 16th century that serves as the official office of the President. It was originally the residence of the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller and contains a public museum featuring state rooms and an armoury.

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heritagemalta.org, +35621249349



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Mo–Fr	09:30–16:30
Sa	09:30–12:30
Su	Closed

stjohnscocathedral.com, +356 2122 0536



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St. Elmo Pl., Valletta, VLT 1741, Malta (35.90184, 14.51877)

+356 21 233088



D Casa Rocca Piccola

Casa Rocca Piccola is a 16th-century palace in Malta, and home of the noble Maltese family de Piro.

Triq ir-Repubblika 74, VLT 1117 Il-Belt Valletta, MT (35.89980, 14.51535)

Mo–Sa 10:00–16:00

casaroccapiccola.com, +356 2122 1499



E Auberge de Castille

The Auberge de Castille is an auberge in Valletta, Malta. The auberge is located at Castile Place, close to Saint James Cavalier, the Malta...

Castille Square, La Valletta, Malta (35.89593, 14.51120)

cityofvalletta.org/content.aspx



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St.Paul's Street, La Valletta, Malta (35.89738, 14.51386)

+356 2122 3348



G Auberge de Bavière

The Auberge de Bavière is a palace in Valletta, Malta. It was built as Palazzo Carneiro in 1696, and was the residence of Grand Master Marc...

Triq San Bastjan, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.90150, 14.51421)



H Saluting Battery

Lascaris Battery, also known as Fort Lascaris or Lascaris Bastion, is an artillery battery located on the east side of Valletta, Malta.

Battery Street, Valletta VLT 1220, Malta (35.89471, 14.51244)

Mo–Sa 10:00–17:00

salutingbattery.com, +356 21 80 09 92



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teatrumanoel.com.mt, +356 2124 6389



K St. Paul

St Paul's Pro-Cathedral, officially The Pro-Cathedral and Collegiate Church of Saint Paul, is an Anglican pro-cathedral of the Diocese in...

Triq il-Punent, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.90070, 14.51197)



L National Museum of Archaeology

The National Museum of Archaeology is a Maltese museum in Valletta, with artefacts from prehistory, Phoenician times and a notable...

Republic Street, La Valletta VLT 1112, Malta (35.89748, 14.51110)

heritagemalta.org, +356 2122 1623



M Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

The Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a Carmelite Roman Catholic minor basilica dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, located in...

Triq Żekka, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.90020, 14.51230)



N Church of Saint Nicholas

The Church of Saint Nicholas, also known as the Church of All Souls, is a Greek Catholic church in Valletta, Malta, dedicated to Saint...

Triq San Nikola, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89952, 14.51692)



O Church of Saint James

The Church of St James is a Roman Catholic church in Valletta, Malta. A previous Mannerist church was built on site in the early 17th...

Triq Melita, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89667, 14.51170)



P Church of Saint Francis

St Francis of Assisi Church, dedicated to St Francis of Assisi, in Valletta, was built in 1598 and was completed by 1607.

Triq Melita, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89740, 14.51072)



Q Church of the Madonna of Liesse

The Church of Our Lady of Liesse is a church in Valletta, Malta. The church was built in 1740 on the site of a 17th-century church.

Telgħet Liesse, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89509, 14.51329)



R Our Lady of Victory Church

The Our Lady of Victory Church, formerly known as the Saint Anthony the Abbot Church, was the first church and building completed in...

Misraħ Kastilja, Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89600, 14.51067)

Museums & Galleries

Explore the historical depth of Valletta through its diverse museums and galleries. The Grandmaster's Palace features 16th-century Mannerist architecture and state rooms, while the National Museum of Archaeology houses prehistoric Maltese treasures. Military heritage is prominent at the star-shaped Fort St. Elmo, the underground Lascaris War Rooms, and the Saluting Battery. Cultural highlights include MUŻA, the national art museum located in the historic Auberge d'Italie, and Casa Rocca Piccola, a preserved noble residence. These sites collectively trace Malta's timeline from antiquity through the rule of the Knights to World War II.





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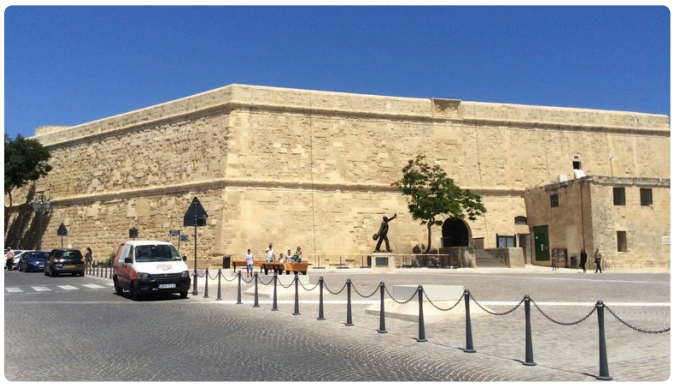

F Saint James Cavalier

Saint James Cavalier is a 16th-century cavalier in Valletta, Malta, which was built by the Order of St John.

Pjazza Kastilja, VLT 1060 Il-Belt Valletta, MT
(35.89574, 14.51032)

Tu–Su 09:00–21:00

stjamescavalier.com, +356 2122 3200



G Lascaris War Rooms

The Lascaris War Rooms are an underground complex of tunnels and chambers in Valletta, Malta that housed the War Headquarters from where...

(Unnamed Road), Valletta VLT, Malta (35.89488, 14.51278)

lascariswarrooms.com, +356 21 23 47 17



H National Museum of Fine Arts

MUŻA is an art museum located at Auberge d'Italie in Valletta, Malta. It was formerly located at Admiralty House between 1974 and 2016, when...

South Street, La Valletta VLT 1101, Malta (35.89833, 14.50917)

heritagemalta.org, +356 21 22 57 69



I National War Museum

The National War Museum is a museum in Fort Saint Elmo in the city of Valletta, Malta. It is one of the most popular museums in Malta.

Lower Fort St Elmo, Spur Street, La Valletta VLT 1741, Malta (35.90197, 14.51874)

Mo–Su 10:00–18:00

heritagemalta.mt/explore/fort-st-elmo-n... , +356 21 222430

DATA SOURCES

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