

Mdina: Malta's silent city extends a warm welcomes to visitors

Malta is a charming island with countless historical sites, magical towns and villages, numerous churches and delightful restaurants serving local and international cuisine. There are many long narrow twisting streets which is it a joy to explore.



Mdina aerial view

The island was settled in 5200 BCE – almost seven thousand years ago – by the Phoenicians. It is strewn with the ruins of ancient Megalithic temples (built around 3000 BCE) and boasts a still-

functional walled medieval village crowning the "mountain" at the center of the island.

It is called Mdina, the silent city because only a limited number of resident and emergency vehicles, wedding cars and hearses are allowed within its walls. Most of Mdina's palaces serve as private homes and some are up for sale. The impressive Cathedral of the St Paul is fronted by a large square.

Mdina used to be Malta's capital and dates back to 700 BCE. It's still home to approximately three hundred – likely very wealthy – individuals.

The city looms impressively from below but it's actually quite small. Most of the streets are wide enough for a horse-drawn carriage to slip through, but just barely! Decorated with brightly colored plants, iron light fixtures, and

Mdina the old capital of Malta



At Paul's cathedral in Mdina





Roman villa and museum

cheerfully painted doors, it is Malta in microcosm.

Walking silently through the street and trailing your fingers along the stucco wall, you can't help but imagine what it would have been like to live here thousands of years ago.

The town is still confined within its walls, and has a population of just

over three hundred, but it is contiguous with the village of Rabat, which takes its name from the Arabic word for suburb, and has a population of over 11,000.

Mdina was inhabited and possibly first fortified by the Phoenicians around 700 BC. They called it Maleth. The region benefits from its strategic location on one of the island's highest points at maximum distance from the sea. Under the

Roman Empire Malta became a Municipium and the Roman Governor built his palace in Mdina. Tradition holds that St Paul resided in the city after his historical shipwreck on the islands.

The name and the layout of the city reflect the Fatimid Period which began in 870 AD and lasted until Norman conquest of Malta in

1091 AD. The earliest surviving buildings date from the Norman period. The Normans surrounded the city with thick defensive fortifications and widened the moat. The city was also separated from its nearest town Rabat.

Malta passed to the Knights Hospitaller in 1530 AD. Mdina hosted the public ceremony in which each Grand Master swore

House in Mdina



Interior of St Paul's Cathedral Mdina



an oath to protect the islands and the rights of his subjects. A strong earthquake led to the introduction of Baroque design within the cityscape. The Knights of Malta rebuilt the cathedral, to the designs of Maltese architect Lornezo Gafa. They also completed other restoration projects. The monumental gateway was designed by the French architect

and military engineer Charles Francois de Mondion in 1724. The entrance of today is not the original one - the original south gate is about 100 meters to the left. From Mdina it is possible to see a lot of Malta: its farms, cities, and the sea with its boats, yachts and ships in the magnificent, unique harbor, wonderfully lit up at night, sometimes with firework displays.