

# Malta's qualities

Although Malta may be best known for its sunny weather, beaches and nightlife, it is also home to many cultural treasures as well as good quality English language schools. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

What makes Malta particularly attractive to the English language learner is its unique blend of sunshine and history set in an English-speaking environment,' asserts Linda Pace, Director of Studies at Easy School of Languages in Valetta. 'Malta's beaches, miles of coastline and clear blue sea are an irresistible attraction for sun-lovers and water sports enthusiasts.'

Corinne Xuereb, Principal of IH Malta-Gozo (formerly Academy BLC), adds that Malta is particularly attractive to Europeans because it is only a short flight away. Keith Zammit, Director of ESE in St Julian's, mentions a further attraction of Malta for language travellers. 'Students are linking our destination with quality in [the English language teaching] service provided,' he states.

A popular Mediterranean holiday destination for Europeans, the country is made up of three islands: Comino, famous for its exquisite Blue Lagoon;

Gozo, which offers quiet villages and beaches; and Malta, the largest and liveliest of the three. Malta boasts a number of colourful seaside resorts where bars, cafés and discos attract holiday-makers and students around the clock.

There are also several language schools situated in the tourist hotspots, particularly in or around St

Julian's and Paceville. '[Magister Academy] is situated in St Julian's, which is the main tourist area in Malta, just 200 metres from the sea,' says Ian Fenech, Administration Manager at the school.

According to Zammit at ESE, most students based in St Julian's make the most of the location by practising water sports and relaxing in the sun or at beachside cafés in their free time.

'This tends to be their ideal way of 'chilling out' in the heart of the Mediterranean,' he explains.

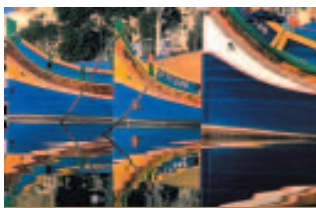


Although Malta certainly appeals to those looking for fun in the sun, it is also

an ideal location for business language travellers.

A number of schools offer courses for executive learners, and Gateway International School of English, which is located in San Gwann, close to Spinola Bay and Paceville, boasts an executive accommodation complex.

Pace at Easy School of Languages believes that Malta's credentials as an executive destination remain relatively unknown worldwide. 'Many students are fully aware of Malta as a Mediterranean holiday destination with its beaches, water sports and nightlife but may not be aware that Malta has much more to offer in terms of culture and history, and its busy business and professional community,' she says.



**Traditional Maltese luzzus (fishing boats)**  
Brightly painted luzzus, with mythical eyes painted on their prows, can be seen in the harbours of many of the old fishing villages around Malta

## Agent viewpoint



'[Malta] is an exceptional place just two-and-a-half hours by air from Prague, which offers a great combination of sun, sea and history [to be] discovered. Czech and Slovak clients realise the importance of learning English in a very intensive way but they also like [combining] it with fun and travelling around the place. Malta is a small island so we work with two partner schools, both of which are situated in or very close to the St Julian's area where there is always something to do. We [send] clients of all ages [to]

Malta - from juniors to seniors. The clients tend to take more intensive courses, especially when staying for a shorter time (two-to-three weeks). Therefore, one-to-one lessons or mini-classes are a popular choice. The Maltese school, ESE, which we have been working with, has always offered high quality tuition. Our partner school keeps looking at what else it can offer students, which is very important for the business. They [get] feedback from the clients and improve all the time. **Jarmila Dratnalova, Student Agency, Czech Republic**



'[Our clients choose Malta] because it is close to Italy, convenient [and] good value for money. [There is also a] good range of accommodation as an alternative to the host family, which makes Malta very attractive, especially for professionals and clients who prefer their own privacy and independence. St Julian's and Paceville are the most popular [locations]. Teenagers [enjoy learning] English in the sunshine and safety of the island, while adults enjoy relaxing and learning English as well as the opportunity to spend the



**Ramla Bay, Gozo**  
The golden sands of Ramla Bay are a popular spot for sun worshippers and water sports enthusiasts. The bay is situated beneath Calypso Cave and is reached via a steep pathway

*View of the Maritime Museum from a dghajsa - one of Malta's traditional boats*

From the *gantija*, Neolithic temples, to baroque churches, the islands wear their 7,000-year history on their sleeve. There are rock-cut grottos and chapels carved out of caves, medieval churches, beautiful untouched villages with golden stone buildings and winding streets, and exquisite examples of Baroque architecture, most notably in the country's capital city, Valletta, which has been designated a World Heritage City. 'Valletta is home to most of Malta's museums, theatres, art galleries, a recently opened cultural centre, cinemas and shops,' says Pace. 'The city also offers an increasingly lively nightlife that many see as an alternative to the more crowded and commercialised centres.'

To really get away from it all, Gozo offers the perfect retreat. 'Gozo is not a

nightlife disco scene,' asserts Xuereb. 'It is a relaxing chilling-out environment, a paradise for walkers and cyclists, sailors and divers.' Gozo's population includes a colourful mix of artisans attracted by the calm of the island, and according to Rebecca Brincat of the Business English Language School (Bels) in Gozo, lyric opera, theatre performances and poetry evenings are held through the year. The local tavernas are popular meeting places, where local food and wine are served. 'In most places, the fish menu depends on the catch of the day,' says Xuereb.

Regardless of where students are based, they will inevitably get to know all the is-

*'One afternoon, we all set off to the studio of an artist from Germany. After we had entered the gardens, I heard our German student and the artist speaking German in loud voices. In the hall I found our host and our student hugging and dancing and crying. They were old friends who hadn't seen each other since they were at school!'*

Corinne Xuereb, IH Malta-Gozo, Gharb

reports Fenech.

The schools are also keen to integrate students into the Maltese way of life. 'This takes place through teacher involvement with students in 'real life' situations as well as through a variety of activities offered through ESE that enable students to feel part of the community, for example, treasure hunts, dialogue sessions, etc,' says Zammit.

Easy School of Languages uses its excursions by integrating them into the classroom learning experience. 'In addition to the normal classroom-based course timetable, students are also offered the

opportunity to participate in afternoon visits to locations in the city, which are followed up by teacher-led talks, videos and discus-

sions, trips to the many English language theatrical productions and the opportunity to participate in other aspects of the social and cultural life of the islands,' says Pace.

By all accounts, it is easy to get to know the Maltese. 'Students tend to find the Maltese rather

laid back in their [way of life],' says Zammit. 'They tend to feel comfortable with the locals as they feel very welcome and can always rely on assistance and true hospitality.' Xuereb adds that locals often 'drink wine on the piazzas with you and invite you into their traditional homes'. □

holidays with their family on a different type of programme. We have noticed an increased interest in intensive and mini-group courses, to obtain the maximum [learning potential] from their stay.'  
**Luciana Spelgatti, International Know How, Italy**

'Generally our clients choose to study in Malta because it is less expensive than [for example] the UK; because of the warm and friendly climate; and because it's safe. We send clients mainly to St Julian's because this district has a very good



infrastructure regarding restaurants, shops, cinemas, diving schools, hotels, etc. Furthermore, you have easy access to other areas of the island like Valletta or Sliema. Executives we like to send to Gozo because it's not that overcrowded with tourists and, within a quieter atmosphere, executives can concentrate on their tuition and enjoy the beautiful landscape of this island after the course. A further advantage is the good choice of hotels in all categories at reasonable prices. There are a few schools in Malta that concentrate more and more

on executives and [keen] learners like IH-Malta [in] Gozo, for example. For juniors and clients who are interested in general English courses, there are some schools that offer a good service. The wide range of social activities is probably the biggest advantage in comparison to schools elsewhere. Some schools have quite modern and new premises with bright and new classrooms and new infrastructure like computer rooms, cafeteria, library, etc.'  
**Torsten Pankok, Carpe Diem Sprachreisen, Germany**