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Tourist arrivals record set in '15, better results expected in 2016

Valletta

■ It's official, 2015 was a record breaking year with 1,791,422 tourist arrivals – 5.67% more visitors than in 2014, the NSO reports.

▶ If one includes cruise passengers who overnights on the islands, then the cumulative number of visitors last year was 1,807,268 (see *Aggregate tourist arrivals 2015 on page 8*).

Arrivals league 2015

Rank	Country	Totals	% Share
1	UK	526,089	29.37
2	Italy	289,019	16.13
3	Germany	142,010	7.93
4	France	128,014	7.15
5	Nordic region*	117,449	6.56
6	Spain	45,373	2.53
7	Netherlands	43,806	2.45
8	Switzerland	34,425	1.92
9	Belgium	34,304	1.91
10	Ireland	33,789	1.89
11	Austria	29,094	1.62
12	US	25,350	1.42
13	Russia	20,142	1.12
14	Libya	5,316	0.30
	Others	317,242	17.71
Totals		1,791,422	100.00

* Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden

Libya - once a major player in Malta's arrivals league – dropped to 14th place with just more than 5,000 arrivals.

▶ And if proof is needed to illustrate the value of air routes, the 2,518kms Dublin-Malta sector operated by Ryanair generated 33,789 arrivals from Ireland in 2015, up from 30,722 the previous year.

▶ The historical links between the UK and Malta continue to assure the former retains its position as the market leader with more than 0.5mn tourists, representing 29.4% of all arrivals (see *Tourist arrivals 2015 on page 8*).

▶ With capacity slashed from Germany, the one-time second place-holder has dropped to third, with 142,010 arrivals or just 8% of the total.

▶ Italy retained its second placing with 16% of arrivals – 289,019 (see *Arrivals league 2015*).

▶ Not surprisingly,

▶ Income from tourism also broke records at €1.64bn, 7.5% more than the previous year, whilst per capita expenditure increased to €918.

▶ The number of nights spent here rose 5.1 points to 14,217,158 from 13,522,112 in 2014.

▶ Interestingly, 1.3mn visitors chose to stay in collective accommodations last year; just 1.9%, or 23,633, more than the previous year. However, 77,979 tourists stayed in private accommodations, up 18.2% over 2014 – 506,284 over 2014's 428,305.

▶ This rapid increase in the popularity of private accommodations is a major concern of the MHRA, who feel that there are just too many (unlicensed) operators who use the likes of Airbnb to market their properties. (Airbnb sells more 'nights' than any of the global hotel chains).



Smiles all-round: Zammit Lewis salutes MTA staffers

▶ MHRA president Tony Zahra says he has "no problem" with the private accommodations sector as long as its operators are licensed. "We must have an even playing field", he insists.

▶ Echoing this sentiment is tourism minister Edward Zammit Lewis. Talking at a MTA-sponsored business breakfast in early February he says his "objective for 2016 is to curb unlicensed accommodations to further ensure better quality standards".

▶ Meantime, tourist arrivals projections for 2016 are also rosy.

▶ MTA CEO Paul Bugeja tells *Island Travel Trader* that he expects an increase of between four and five per cent this year. This, he explains, will be achieved mostly in the winter months.

▶ A four-point increase in arrivals would mean an additional 71,650 more tourists in 2016.

▶ And this is possible. In the past 30 years Malta –

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Bigger slice of the pie

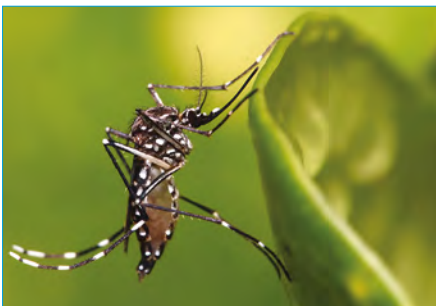
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apart from effective marketing – has also benefited from the ills of other Mediterranean destinations; it may be politically incorrect to mention it, but it is a fact. And there is no reason why the islands should not take advantage of the situation, everyone else will.

▶ TUI and Thomas Cook have cancelled all flights and holidays to Tunisia until 1 November, at the earliest. Tourist traffic to Egypt's Red Sea resorts has slumped since the downing of a Russian passenger jet last October, killing 224, and the rest of the country is still perceived as unstable and unsafe.

▶ There is also some nervousness about travel to Turkey. In January, for instance, two cruise lines cancelled calls there. And indications are that Americans are shying away from booking Mediterranean cruises this year.

▶ On the other hand, interest in Spain and Portugal is at an all-time high. Bookings to these destinations are already 30% higher than last year.

▶ If Malta wants a bigger slice of the pie this year, aggressive marketing highlighting the safety of the islands is paramount.



Aedes aegypti mosquito: nasty biter

Low Zika virus risk in Malta

Msida

■ On 1 February the director general of the WHO, Dr Margaret Chan, declared the spread of the Zika virus in the Americas as a “public health emergency of international concern”.

▶ Malta responded to the situation before this declaration, despite the fact that the risk for the islands is considered to be low, according to

Protect your clients

Travel professionals should tell clients planning to travel to affected areas:

- To take protective measures to prevent mosquito bites.
- To see their doctor if they have immune disorders or severe chronic illnesses before travelling.
- Pregnant women and women who are trying to become pregnant, and who plan to travel to infected areas, should discuss their travel plans with their doctors and consider postponing their travel.
- Individual protective measures to prevent mosquito bites should be applied all day long, especially during mid-morning and late afternoon to dusk, which are the periods of highest mosquito activity.
- Travellers showing symptoms compatible with dengue, chikungunya or Zika virus within three weeks after returning from an affected area should contact their healthcare provider.
- Pregnant women who have travelled to areas with Zika virus should mention this during antenatal visits in order to be monitored appropriately.
- Personal protection measures to avoid mosquito bites should include:
 - Using mosquito repellents. DEET based repellent use is not recommended in children under three months.
 - Wearing long-sleeved shirts and trousers, especially during the hours of highest mosquito activity.
 - Using mosquito nets, whether they are impregnated or not, is essential if accommodation is not adequately screened or air-conditioned.

the local health authorities.

▶ Actions taken include the ongoing monitoring of the international situation, advising people who plan to travel to affected areas and for those returning, information for the general public, information to health professionals and availability of diagnostic facilities at the Mater Dei Hospital laboratories.

▶ A working group is being set up between the health authorities and the university of Malta to advise on vector-control measures.

▶ The Zika virus is an infection transmitted primarily by *aedes aegypti* mosquitoes but also *aedes albopictus* mosquitoes. *Aedes aegypti* is not established in western Europe however the *aedes albopictus* species is found in many parts of the continent, principally around the Mediterranean.

▶ At press time three cases have been reported in the EU – in Denmark, Malta and Spain – in persons who travelled to affected countries, but there has been no indigenous Zika virus transmission reported in the EU and the risk of spread in the community, including Malta, is low.

▶ Spread of the virus through sexual contact has been reported, however Zika virus is transmitted to people primarily through the bite of an infected *aedes* species mosquito.

▶ Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on a person already infected with the virus.

▶ The health authorities in Malta are in constant touch with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Solna, Sweden, and the EU's Health Security of the Commission to follow the situation.

Three new carriers to operate Malta frequencies

Luqa

■ Three new airlines will be operating to Malta this summer – Czech Airlines, Iberia Express and Volotea.

▶ Flag carrier Czech Airlines plans to launch twice weekly services to Malta in summer. Using Airbus A320s, the frequency will operate on Tues-

days and Saturdays from July until September.

▶ This is the first time OK will be operating to Malta.
▶ Two Spanish airlines, meanwhile, also plan to introduce regular services to the island.
▶ Iberia Express will launch its



CSA: OK for MLA check-in

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The Spaniards are coming

Continued from page 2

three-a-week service from Madrid on 18 June. Its flights, operated with 117-seater Airbus A320s, will be on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays until 17 September. Ticket prices will start at €38pp per sector in June, escalating to €83ppps in August.

▶ Low cost, Barcelona-headquartered, Volotea, meanwhile, will be operating 125-seat Boeing B-717s between Catania and Malta from 24 March to 28 October.

▶ Flights will be on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays with fares dropping to €25.99pp in September.

▶ Volotea was founded in 2012 by Carlos Muñoz and Lázaro Ros; CEO and managing director, respectively, whose first venture together was Vueling Airlines.

Maxima Tours markets exclusive Malta packages

Hamilton, Canada

■ Brothers Jason and Damon Allan are respectively managing director and operations manager of Hamilton-based Maxima Tours, the company their Maltese-born mother, Gemma, founded in 1989.

▶ In 2009 Maxima became exclusively a family business under the direction of Gemma and her two sons, focusing on the retiree market.

▶ “Since our mother was born in Malta and we are both nationals, it made perfect sense for us to introduce ‘our Malta’ to North Americans” – the company is headquartered in Canada but also has an office in Clarence, New York.

▶ Maxima claims to have “the best Malta itinerary for the cultural enthusiast and for those who like travelling in small groups with a personal, non-tourist feel”.

▶ The *Exclusively Malta* product was born in 2013 out of a desire to deliver the “best possible experiences for intrigued travellers to the archipelago of Malta”.

▶ For this year the company has two ‘travel experiences’ – read tour packages – to the islands.

▶ The first is a 12-day *Malta – Jewel of the Mediterranean* programme for a maximum of 17 people in June, it’s all-inclusive and price tagged at \$C3,699pp (€2,400) if travelling as a couple but excluding flights.

▶ A similar tour slated for September is already sold out. There’s also a 10-night package for Easter 2017 available, but is as yet unpriced.

Incorvaja is Le Méridien’s new general manager

St Julian’s

■ Alex Incorvaja (*right*) has been named general manager of Le Méridien St Julian’s Hotel & Spa. He takes over from Ursula Schoeffer.



▶ Incorvaja has more than 20 years of international hospitality and tourism industry experience, gained through working for hotel chains in Malta and Italy. Before joining Le Méridien he spent six years heading the Malta Tourism Authority’s office in London.

Britannia scoops KM awards

Mdina

■ Britannia Services is Air Malta’s top travel agent for 2014/2015. The agency, which scooped this award for the third consecutive year, also won the best year on year sales achiever award.

▶ The awards were presented by Air Malta CEO Philip Micallef at a reception held at Palazzo De Piro in Mdina; it was also “an opportunity for the travel trade and airline representatives to exchange views and discuss initiatives for 2016.”

▶ “Travel agents remain a key part of Air Malta’s distribution channels. Your personalised travel service is key for thousands of people who seek professional advice to plan their holidays. The airline is excited to continue working with you and continue enhancing these services”, said Micallef before presenting the awards.

▶ The winners of Air Malta’s Travel Agents Awards 2015 are:

- Britannia Services Ltd – Top Travel Agent.
- FCM Travel Solutions – Runner up Top Travel Agent.
- Kirton Travel – Top Corporate Seller.
- A&V von Brockdorff – Runner up Top Corporate Seller.
- Britannia Service - Best Year on Year Sales Achiever
- Europa Tours – Runner up Best Year on Year Sales Achiever.

ETC calls for visa reform

Brussels

■ In view of the ongoing debate in the European parliament regarding the Schengen visa code, the European Travel Commission has called for a reform of the way visas are granted to leisure and business travellers, the *ETC Bulletin* reports.

▶ The aim would be to attract an extra €114bn in export revenue and create 615,000 new jobs in Europe by 2020.

▶ In early 2015, ETC commissioned Tourism Economics to undertake an analysis of the impact for continental Europe of different degrees of liberalisation (benchmarked against no reform) for 10 priority source markets which together account for more than half (53%) of the visa-constrained visits to European destinations.

▶ According to the study, adopting ‘best practice’ policies for the 10 profiled markets would generate 3.4 million additional arrivals to European destinations each year by 2020.

▶ This would involve a cumulative total of €18.3bn in associated tourism spending over the period to 2020 and 95,000 new jobs.

▶ Offering new visa types, such as an eVisa or visa on arrival, would further reduce the burden on travellers and would help fuel stronger economic growth in subsequent years.

▶ The impact would be 8.5mn more annual visitor arrivals, a cumulative total of €45bn in additional spending and more than 200,000 additional jobs over the period. The

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Visa facilitation creates jobs

Continued from page 3

largest benefits would flow from a complete visa waiver for these markets, in which case 21.8mn additional arrivals per year would be expected.

▶ Over the period to 2020, this would generate €114bn in new export revenue and 615,000 additional jobs, including direct, indirect and induced employment.

▶ At a recent press conference, Mark Henry, vice-president and coordinator of ETC's visa advocacy work, presented a range of practical initiatives to deliver improved openness in ways that avoid compromising security or immigration control.

▶ A few days later, ETC's recommendations for action were also presented to members of the European parliament at a roundtable discussion.

▶ The World Travel & Tourism Council joined with ETC to encourage governments to proactively embrace visa facilitation.

▶ Helen Marano, WTTC's vice-president government and industry affairs, said: "Visa facilitation is central to stimulating economic growth and job creation through tourism in Europe and worldwide".

Air Malta plans to carry 1mn pax in summer

Luqa

■ Air Malta is planning "an enhanced" flight schedule this summer that will see improved timings to Manchester, Catania, Vienna, Lyon and Marseille and increased frequency to Berlin.

▶ Malta's flag carrier will "continue being the largest operator to London and the UK by offering a selection of 30 weekly flights to seven airports".

▶ With this schedule, running from 27 March to 29 October, KM "aims to carry over one million passengers".

▶ A number of changes to last year's summer schedule have been made to maximise opportunities, increase efficiency and make flights



Maltese Cross: doing more with less and planning a million passengers

more attractive, both for travellers from Malta as well as for the tourists visiting the islands this summer.

▶ "This summer, our goal is to achieve targets by doing more with less and dedicating all our resources on Malta.

▶ "We are following a channel-rich distribution strategy that includes tour operators, travel agents, group travel and direct selling through

our website.

▶ "We remain the strongest carrier on Malta, operating a selection of 135 weekly flights with the best flight timings, best airport selection and competitive pricing", says chief commercial officer Ursula Silling.

▶ This summer KM will continue being the largest charter operator to the islands and is planning an "interesting programme for Maltese and foreign operators".

EasyJet to operate three continental services

Luton

■ EasyJet will be offering several regular services this summer between Malta, Italy and Switzerland, besides the UK.

▶ The British LCC will fly to Milan Malpensa on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays from 28 June until 3 September.

▶ It will also operate a twice weekly frequency to Naples from 28 June to 27 August – on Saturdays and Tuesdays.

▶ Flights to Geneva will be on a twice-weekly basis, on Tuesdays and Sundays, from 29 March until 29 October.

▶ These are in addition to its daily services to London Gatwick, almost daily frequency to Manchester and twice weekly to Newcastle.

▶ All flights are operated using all-economy class, 156-capacity, Airbus A319s.



Dingli and Degiorgio

BD appointed GM of DB

Qawra

■ Bradley Dingli has been appointed general manager of the four star db San Antonio Hotel & Spa in Qawra.

▶ A graduate of the Institute of Tourism Studies and the University of Malta, he's worked in the hotel sector both locally and abroad.

▶ Bradley Dingli succeeds Vincent Degiorgio, who was named director of the two hotels db Hotels and Resorts chain.

▶ Degiorgio was the San Antonio's financial controller for three years, then its general manager for nine.



MIA: aircraft movements up, but parking still a doddle

MIA starts 2016 with 13% growth, following bumper year

Luqa

■ Malta International Airport started 2016 well, welcoming 236,552 passengers in January – a 13.2% increase over the same month last year. This translates to more than 27,000 additional passengers, or the equivalent of 50 fully-loaded B-747s jumbos.

► Over the past five years, January traffic increased cumulatively by 40%, “clearly indicating that Malta’s strategy to stimulate traffic during the shoulder months is working. Further proof of this is the 11% growth registered in the winter period so far, over the months of November, December and January”, reads an MIA press release.

► January’s growth is attributed to a 9% increase in seat capacity, driven by the Italian, Spanish and

Turkish markets. Traffic from the United Kingdom grew by 2.7%, holding on to its top market position, as a result of an increased seat load factor.

► Meanwhile, a hike in aircraft movements to Munich contributed to a 17.2% increase in German passengers, whereas the French market slumped 16.7% due to a reduction in routes served.

► London, Frankfurt and Rome were January’s top destinations, while Istanbul showed the most growth in passenger numbers with an increase of 39.5%. This continues to consolidate the upward trend in traffic from Turkey, which has been steadily increasing over the past few months.

► For statistics buffs, the maximum take-off weight (MTOW) in January rose by 7.2%, while cargo and mail grew by 3.4%.

► January’s results follow on from equally impressive stats for 2015.

► Last year 4.62mn passengers passed through MIA, a 7.7% increase in traffic from 2014’s 4,290,304 (*see Malta International Airport traffic 2015 on*

page 10).

► Last year’s results show the airport is achieving its goal of increasing traffic in the winter months, explains Malta International’s CEO Alan Borg. December alone, he adds, saw a nine-point increase over 2014.

► The number of aircraft movements rose by 6.3% in 2015, while seat capacity went up by 5.8%.

► The top markets for 2015 remained the UK, which saw an increase of 4.7%, Italy, with an increase of 13.3% and Germany, which increased by 3.1 points.

► Substantial hikes were also registered from Turkey (82.7%), Poland (50.1%) and Switzerland (18.7%).

► “Crucially”, the seat load factor also went up to 81.1% from 79.7%,



C&M: tonnage rolling upwards

“meaning planes are being filled closer to capacity”.

► Cargo and mail, meanwhile, was up by 5.6% from 15,547 tonnes in 2014 to 16,414 tonnes in 2015.

► Finally, results for general aviation show that this segment of MIA’s business also grew quite dramatically in 2015.

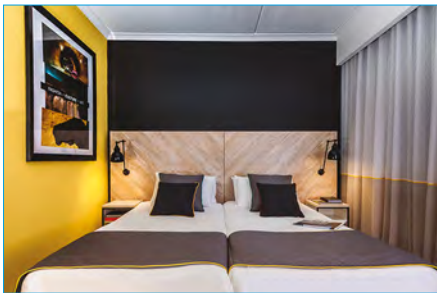
► During the year there were 5,940 aircraft movements, up from 3,920 the year before – an increase of 51.5%. And most of this traffic was between Malta and Libya.

► Looking ahead, meantime, Borg identifies several “strategic routes” that MIA wants to develop: the three Baltic states, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia (excluding Moscow), Slovakia (excluding Bratislava), Switzerland (excluding Zurich) and Ukraine plus Nantes and Nice in France and Dresden and Leipzig in Germany.

► Incentives are available to carriers planning to introduce routes from these countries and cities to Malta.

Top performers

Airline	2014	2015	# difference	% change
Air Malta	1,740,093	1,729,625	-10,468	-0.60
Ryanair	1,096,366	1,225,663	129,297	11.80
Easyjet	328,190	331,484	3,294	1.00
Lufthansa	224,978	215,435	-9,543	-4.20
Wizz Air	86,579	151,218	64,639	74.70
Turkish Airlines	58,745	118,344	59,599	101.50
Emirates	90,912	91,487	575	0.60
Alitalia	95,943	89,265	-6,678	-7.00
British Airways	64,049	80,811	16,762	26.20
Vueling	63,816	79,737	15,921	24.90
Others	440,633	505,573	64,940	14.70
Totals	4,290,304	4,618,642	328,338	7.70



be: four star, think five

Be.Hotel gets new GM and more rooms

St Julian's

■ Aldo Calleja is the new general manager of the be.Hotel, formerly the Bay Street Hotel in St Julian's.

▶ Calleja's first task is overseeing the "multi-million euro expansion of the be.Hotel, which will see three guest floors added to one wing and a new multi-purpose facility to enhance its offering to the conference and incentives market. The extension has to be ready by 1 March" (2016).

▶ "Our ultimate aim remains that of having a four star property with a five star mentality", says Calleja.

▶ Starting out in F&B operations at Corinthia Hotels, Calleja worked his way up in the hotel business and was involved in all aspects of running a hotel.

▶ From Corinthia, he moved to the Xara Palace and then to Park Hotel, where he was general manager.

Emirates reroutes MLA services, adds Tunis

Luqa

■ From 1 March Emirates will have two frequencies a week from Malta to Dubai via Larnaca; operated on Mondays and Wednesdays.

▶ On the other five days of the week EK will be flying direct to Dubai from Malta with a stop-over in Tunis on the return leg.

▶ Emirates does not have 5th freedom rights on the Tunis-Malta sector, meaning it may not pick up passengers on that leg of flight.

▶ The airline's summer schedule kicks-in on 27 March as follows: On Mondays and Wednesdays – MLA-LCA – 15:30/18:35

LCA-DXB – 20:55/01:00+1

DXB-LCA – 07:55/11:10

LCA-MLA – 12:20/14:10

On Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays –

MLA-DX – 16:25/23:50

DXB-TUN – 07:25/10:50

TUN-MLA – 12:30/14:40

Britannia relocates

Qormi

■ Britannia Services has moved its head office from Valletta's Triq il-Merkanti to Qormi.

▶ The company is now located above the Lidl supermarket – at Suite 4, The Landmark, Triq l-Iljun. Their phone number is 21241904.

▶ Meantime, a retail outlet was opened on 26 January at the Savoy Shopping Arcade in Triq San Gwann, Valletta. Its phone number is 21245418.



Xara Palace: raising the standard

Charles and Camilla stay at Xara Palace

Mdina

■ The five star Xara Palace Relais & Chateaux was 'home' to the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall at the end of November.

▶ The royal couple were in Malta on an official visit to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, along with Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh.

▶ All 17 suites at the Xara Palace were reserved for Charles and his entourage during their two-night stay.

Zammit Lewis outlines plans for 2016

Valletta

■ Speaking at an MTA-sponsored business breakfast in early February, tourism minister Edward Zammit Lewis said that apart from the "enhanced" economic benefits accruing to the country as a whole from the results achieved in 2015, "the accommodation sector has been seeing growth both in terms of occupancy rates and gross operating profit per available room".

▶ He also noted the government's reduction of water and electricity tariffs in 2014 "greatly improved the competitiveness of the collective accommodation sector".

▶ Looking at the year ahead, Zammit Lewis said that "to reduce excessive bureaucracy and red-tape faced by tourism operators, measures to simplify the licensing processes and strengthen the enforcement of regulations in the sector will be introduced".

▶ He also noted the need to "continuously improve the quality of the product and raise the quality standards".

▶ Zammit Lewis emphasised that the enhancement of quality along the entire tourism value chain was vital and key to the competitiveness and the sustainability of the sector.

▶ To this end, he mentioned the Foundation for the Development of Tourism Zones – set up more than a year ago – "that will be undertaking rehabilitation and embellishment works in various parts of the islands".

▶ Moreover, from this year the MTA will be managing more beaches including further blue flag zones.

▶ Zammit Lewis also referred to the introduction of the €0.50 per tourist "environment contribution" (aka eco tax) on 1 April, "whereby all revenue will be directed exclusively towards the improvement of the local infrastructure and enhancement of the general quality of the Malta product on offer".

▶ On air links, the minister said that this is a focal point of the government's programme and noted

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Identifying skill gaps

Continued from page 6

that 33 airlines are operating to and from Malta this year.

► “This development is in line with our strategy to consolidate existing tourism source markets, while embarking on a gradual, yet targeted, process of diversification.

► “Meanwhile, to further enhance accessibility to our islands...we will be intensifying our efforts, together with Malta International Airport, to develop new routes. This will support our efforts to augment and diversify further our market sources”, explained Zammit Lewis.

► During his address, the minister noted that Malta has been successful in attracting international conference and incentive groups and, moreover, he emphasised that last year a dedicated entity – Conventions Malta – was created at the MTA to further exploit the islands’ strengths in this niche market.

► Edward Zammit Lewis also noted that Malta’s tourism competitiveness can only be sustained if growth is accompanied by the development of, and investment in, human resources.

► “The role of the Institute for Tourism Studies will continue to prove critical towards achieving these objectives. Here, my vision and direction are clear. I want the institute to grow and develop further, both in terms of academic excellence and in the number of students who choose tourism as their career. I recently announced the setting up of a committee, tasked with identifying existing skills gaps within the industry; gaps which can then be addressed through appropriate training courses delivered by ITS.

► “This initiative will surely bring the institute closer to the current and future needs of the private sector. Meanwhile, ITS accredited courses are also being organised within the training aid framework, allowing workers to re-skill or up-skill their capabilities. All this has been topped up by the allocation of €56mn towards a new state of the art ITS campus at Smart City”, said the minister.

Niki ups its game for shoulder, peak seasons

■ Air Berlin subsidiary Niki (officially NIKI Luftfahrt), will be flying from Vienna to Malta three times a week from 18 March.

► Frequency will be Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with an ETD of 13:55, arriving in Vienna at 16:10

► From 8 May to 30 October Niki will have also have a Sunday rotation.

► Services will be operated with 180-seat, Airbus A320s.



De la Valette: annual service

Catamaran to be dry docked

Ta' Xbiex

■ Virtu Ferries’s flagship catamaran, the 800-passenger capacity *Jean de la Valette*, will be out of service from 5 to 18 April for maintenance.

► In its stead, the smaller *San Gwann* will operate the Malta-Pozzallo route.

► The *San Gwann* can carry 427 passengers and up to 20 cars, as opposed to 230 the *Valette* can.

€10mn Casino Malta opens

St Julian's

■ Estonia’s Olympic Entertainment Group opened the island’s largest gaming house, Casino Malta, in mid-February.

► Casino space, 2,800sqm, has been provided by Olympic’s local partner, the Eden Leisure Group.

► Eden Leisure also own the Inter-Continental Malta, and the casino has “taken over the whole of the footprint previously used by (retail outlet) Eurosport, the conference rooms below the hotel’s reception and some of the cinema screens”.

► The casino cost more than €10mn and has 29 live tables, two electronic roulette tables and 285 slot machines, a sports betting section plus F&B facilities.



Mqabba catacombs: a snug fit

Meet the locals from 1 March

Mosta

■ Meet the locals is a new “community based tourism” programme developed by the Malta Tourism Society and the University of Malta’s tourism department and operated by San Gwann-based E.Travel Solutions.

► The object is to visit a village, see its sites and meet and interact with some of the locals and, generally, “experience a village’s way of life”.

► Three excursions will be available from 1 March – to Kirkop, Safi and Mqabba and are price tagged at €50, €55 and €60 respectively per person. Tours will be held with a minimum 15 persons.

► The price includes transport from Bugibba and St Julian’s, a guide and a three course dinner on the Safi and Mqabba tours; in Kirkop just a snack is provided.

► In Kirkop, the tour includes a visit to a quarry where one will be able to see a mason at work, there will also be a presentation on the production of *gbejniet* (goats’ milk cheeselets) followed by a visit to the local parish church. The tour ends with a snack at the local band club. Kirkop tours will be held on Thursdays from 15:00 and end at around 20:00.

► The longer Safi tours takes in a visit to catacombs, a blacksmith, a chapel, the parish church – where a short concert on the church organ will be held – and watch a re-enactment by the town crier. A three course dinner will then be served at the local band club, after a honey tasting. These tours will be held on Tuesdays and are slightly longer, ending at 22:00.

► The Mqabba excursion, meantime, is as lengthy as the Safi tour

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Data bank

Comments on tables

- All raw data in *Data bank*, and elsewhere in *Island Travel Trader*, are sourced from the Central Bank of Malta (CBM), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA), the Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA), Malta International Airport (MIA), the Malta Stock Exchange (MSE), the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), the Ministry for Finance and the National Statistics Office (NSO) - unless otherwise credited.
- NSO data may differ for some months due to rounding, see *Tourist profile by gender*.
- All statistics are based on tourist arrivals; that is, they exclude cruise passengers that overnight in Malta, see *Aggregate tourist arrivals*.

Tourist arrivals 2015

Country	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
Austria	1,305		1,962	3,332	4,032	2,653	2,753	3,911	3,646	3,377	1,590	533	29,094	1.62
Belgium	1,167		1,915	3,843	4,255	4,062	4,436	4,483	3,464	3,076	2,543	1,060	34,304	1.91
France	5,074	4,983	6,908	11,944	18,606	12,983	13,561	20,331	10,412	13,862	5,582	3,768	128,014	7.15
Germany	7,456	7,120	10,037	14,920	12,222	12,409	10,151	15,892	14,368	18,529	12,239	6,667	142,010	7.93
Ireland	1,782		1,902	3,189	3,480	4,995	3,479	4,034	3,767	3,595	2,412	1,154	33,789	1.89
Italy	13,695	13,547	19,492	23,755	25,814	28,712	32,998	51,171	28,984	21,537	15,585	13,730	289,019	16.13
Libya			474	766	290	962	680	764	440	501	285	154	5,316	0.30
Netherlands	1,427		1,665	3,212	6,627	4,522	5,821	7,300	4,472	5,191	2,032	1,537	43,806	2.45
Nordic region*	2,464	2,918	3,567	9,400	13,738	12,733	18,223	14,153	12,114	17,182	7,630	3,327	117,449	6.56
Russia			543	982	1,776	2,872	4,077	3,762	1,913	1,988	1,829	399	20,142	1.12
Spain			1,423	4,862	4,124	4,557	6,486	9,391	5,536	3,386	2,625	2,983	45,373	2.53
Switzerland	1,422		1,774	3,134	3,517	2,689	5,796	3,820	3,746	5,555	1,679	1,294	34,425	1.92
UK	21,306	24,161	31,950	44,619	49,666	56,456	55,790	65,680	59,997	60,453	34,617	21,393	526,089	29.37
US	1,203		1,371	1,616	2,109	2,739	2,871	2,507	3,204	4,922	1,564	1,243	25,350	1.42
Others	15,979	21,787	16,788	22,348	26,948	30,420	39,505	39,286	36,485	33,538	20,830	13,328	317,242	17.71
Totals	74,280	74,516	101,771	151,922	177,204	183,764	206,627	246,485	192,550	196,692	113,042	72,569	1,791,422	100.00
2014	69,525	65,299	97,800	148,188	166,497	177,446	197,389	235,094	185,438	177,961	102,940	66,232	1,689,809	
Difference	4,755	9,217	3,971	3,734	10,707	6,318	9,238	11,391	7,112	18,731	10,102	6,337	101,613	5.67

* Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden

Aggregate tourist arrivals 2015

Arrivals	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
Tourists	74,280	74,516	101,771	151,922	177,204	183,764	206,627	246,485	192,550	196,692	113,042	72,568	1,791,421	99.12
Cruise pax overnighting	0	0	0	1,642	692	3,852	915	1,799	1,639	3,245	2,063	0	15,847	0.88
Totals	74,280	74,516	101,771	153,564	177,896	187,616	207,542	248,284	194,189	199,937	115,105	72,568	1,807,268	100.00

Mode of travel 2015

Mode	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
Air	73,326	72,143	98,435	146,422	170,003	176,127	201,895	240,775	186,871	193,063	110,414	68,277	1,737,751	97.00
Sea*	954	2,373	3,334	5,502	7,200	7,638	4,731	5,710	5,679	3,629	2,628	4,291	53,669	3.00
Totals	74,280	74,516	101,769	151,924	177,203	183,765	206,626	246,485	192,550	196,692	113,042	72,568	1,791,420	100.00

* Data on arrivals by sea is provisional

Data bank

Seasonal arrivals pattern

Season	2014	2015
Winter Arrivals	303,996	334,407
% (Jan, Feb, Nov, Dec)	17.99	18.67
Shoulder Arrivals	767,892	811,353
% (Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Oct)	45.44	45.29
Summer Arrivals	617,920	645,662
% (Jul, Aug, Sep)	36.57	36.04
Totals	1,689,808	1,791,422
	100.00	100.00

Arrivals by gender 2015

	Official tourist arrivals	Females	% females	Males	% males	Calculated tourist arrivals
Jan	74,280	32,867	44.25	41,414	55.75	74,281
Feb	74,516	34,778	46.67	39,738	53.33	74,516
Mar	101,769	48,287	47.45	53,482	52.55	101,769
Apr	151,924	71,855	47.30	80,069	52.70	151,924
May	177,203	87,557	49.41	89,646	50.59	177,203
Jun	183,765	90,645	49.33	93,120	50.67	183,765
Jul	206,626	101,856	49.29	104,770	50.71	206,626
Aug	246,485	120,519	48.90	125,966	51.10	246,485
Sep	192,550	94,262	48.95	98,288	51.05	192,550
Oct	196,692	97,300	49.47	99,392	50.53	196,692
Nov	113,042	54,542	48.25	58,500	51.75	113,042
Dec	72,568	32,912	45.35	39,656	54.65	72,568
Totals	1,791,420	867,380		924,041		1,791,421

Socio-demographic profile of tourists 2015

By age	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
0-24	7,527	11,858	16,196	31,057	24,113	28,140	64,443	82,169	32,041	25,208	12,923	9,360	345,037	19.26
25-44	24,995	22,170	28,218	49,761	57,511	66,738	69,826	94,119	67,175	61,823	35,946	25,354	603,636	33.70
45-64	27,910	27,030	36,115	47,536	63,737	62,991	57,797	60,407	66,041	74,950	41,511	24,353	590,380	32.96
65+	13,848	13,457	21,240	23,569	31,842	25,895	14,559	9,790	27,292	34,711	22,662	13,501	252,368	14.09
Totals	74,280	74,515	101,769	151,924	177,203	183,765	206,626	246,485	192,550	196,692	113,042	72,568	1,791,421	100.00

Purpose of visit	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
Business	8,437	8,282	11,757	11,805	11,160	13,446	9,173	5,682	11,867	16,487	13,025	6,818	127,939	7.14
Holiday	63,093	57,603	75,736	125,704	153,104	158,198	176,807	220,776	169,108	166,813	91,188	60,728	1,518,858	84.78
Other	2,751	8,630	14,277	14,416	12,939	12,122	20,647	20,027	11,574	13,393	8,829	5,022	144,627	8.07
Totals	74,281	74,515	101,770	151,925	177,203	183,766	206,627	246,485	192,549	196,693	113,042	72,568	1,791,424	100.00

Type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
FIT	41,355	39,553	49,243	85,176	96,266	100,770	121,597	143,393	112,042	108,287	65,203	44,806	1,007,691	56.25
Package	32,925	34,963	52,526	66,749	80,937	82,995	85,029	103,092	80,508	88,405	47,839	27,763	783,731	43.75
Totals	74,280	74,516	101,769	151,925	177,203	183,765	206,626	246,485	192,550	196,692	113,042	72,569	1,791,422	100.00

Expenditure	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
FIT	18,082	14,722	21,056	33,931	41,241	46,874	67,310	83,533	57,931	53,511	27,124	16,985	482,300
of which													
Accommodation	7,643	6,843	10,005	15,916	20,909	24,661	33,821	44,676	29,535	26,390	12,867	8,302	241,568
Air/sea fares	10,439	7,880	11,051	18,015	20,332	22,212	33,489	38,858	28,396	27,121	14,257	8,683	240,733
Package	19,271	17,762	29,054	40,552	52,485	56,810	69,629	88,603	61,388	63,658	27,898	14,632	541,742
Other	23,615	20,500	28,006	44,656	55,461	61,538	83,285	104,091	76,599	64,932	35,100	22,119	619,902
Totals (€000s)	60,968	52,984	78,116	119,139	149,187	165,222	220,224	276,228	195,918	182,101	90,122	53,736	1,643,944

Data bank

Socio-demographic profile of tourists 2015 (continued)

<i>Length of stay (nights)</i>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals	% Share
1-3	15,642	16,491	21,085	29,762	32,611	31,447	19,097	15,045	23,821	28,224	24,352	18,164	275,741	15.39
4-6	20,849	20,228	29,049	47,103	47,933	44,884	41,023	45,131	41,639	46,199	28,201	18,893	431,132	24.07
7+	37,789	37,797	51,635	75,059	96,660	107,434	146,506	186,310	127,089	122,270	60,490	35,511	1,084,549	60.54
Average LoS	8.10	7.10	7.10	6.70	6.90	7.40	9.00	9.60	8.40	7.60	7.40	8.40	7.81	100.00
<i>Visit frequency</i>	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec		
First visit	47,079	48,144	70,194	106,363	127,351	128,722	150,653	183,559	133,816	134,813	71,406	43,952		
Repeat visit	27,202	26,372	31,575	45,562	49,852	55,043	55,973	62,926	58,734	61,879	41,636	28,616		
of which														
once a year	16,755	17,883	22,392	30,223	36,895	42,314	43,158	48,651	44,994	45,269	27,603	16,112		
more than														
once a year	10,446	8,488	9,183	15,338	12,957	12,729	12,815	14,274	13,740	16,610	14,033	12,505		

Malta International Airport traffic 2015

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
International pax													
Arrivals	104,941	106,882	141,405	201,908	225,271	232,752	282,628	282,289	249,467	226,759	133,820	122,026	2,310,148
Departures	103,935	102,014	133,929	191,284	216,648	226,546	265,479	302,929	253,429	237,798	149,678	124,825	2,308,494
Totals	208,876	208,896	275,334	393,192	441,919	459,298	548,107	585,218	502,896	464,557	283,498	246,851	4,618,642
International aircraft movements													
Arrivals	915	844	1,038	1,527	1,680	1,707	1,942	2,014	1,774	1,679	1,043	979	17,142
Departures	916	843	1,038	1,527	1,681	1,707	1,942	2,009	1,772	1,680	1,041	982	17,138
Totals	1,831	1,687	2,076	3,054	3,361	3,414	3,884	4,023	3,546	3,359	2,084	1,961	34,280
Cargo (tonnes)													
Import	611	660	643	661	642	752	794	666	775	838	847	855	8,744
Export	406	394	502	519	494	561	464	401	537	580	494	827	6,179
Totals	1,017	1,054	1,145	1,180	1,136	1,313	1,258	1,067	1,312	1,418	1,341	1,682	14,923

Passenger movements for December - Top 10 countries

2015	Country	Total	% Change	2014
1	UK	73,155	0.75	1
2	Italy	58,638	15.62	2
3	Germany	31,316	2.26	3
4	France	10,427	-8.83	4
5	Turkey	8,926	37.19	5
6	Spain	7,185	109.84	12
7	Netherlands	6,702	32.00	8
8	Belgium	5,885	20.10	9
9	UAE	5,564	7.78	7
10	Poland	4,745	106.93	16

Top 10 airports

2015	Airport	Total	% Change	2014
1	London - Gatwick	22,461	-0.83	1
2	Frankfurt	14,586	-1.92	2
3	Rome - Fiumicino	13,982	-5.39	3
4	London - Heathrow	12,184	-11.25	4
5	Munich - Franz Josef Strauss	9,623	5.02	6
6	Rome - Ciampino	9,145	na	na
7	Istanbul - Ataturk	8,926	37.19	9
8	Catania - Fontanarossa	8,426	-13.80	5
9	Manchester	8,104	5.12	8
10	Bergamo - Orio Al Serio	7,564	-2.43	7

Data bank

Cruise ship traffic 2015

Ship calls	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	
Cruise ship calls	9	108	102	88	307	

Pax traffic	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% share
Landed pax	71	26,635	34,360	9,306	70,372	11.73
Transit pax	20,582	178,589	163,624	166,989	529,784	88.27
Totals	20,653	205,224	197,984	176,295	600,156	100.00

Nationality	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% share
Australia	189	6,716	6,192	1,833	14,930	2.49
Canada	310	3,357	5,002	3,711	12,380	2.06
France	2,783	24,447	24,285	21,381	72,896	12.15
Germany	3,697	49,746	38,292	32,550	124,285	20.71
Italy	5,091	33,526	32,109	40,809	111,535	18.58
Japan	187	1,390	684	1,201	3,462	0.58
Malta	1	2,119	5,414	940	8,474	1.41
Spain	743	9,133	9,926	8,437	28,239	4.71
UK	1,502	19,488	25,656	12,493	59,139	9.85
US	561	13,590	13,927	12,100	40,178	6.69
Others	5,589	41,712	36,497	40,840	124,638	20.77
Totals	20,653	205,224	197,984	176,295	600,156	100.00

Pax by gender	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% share
Females	10,661	107,794	102,977	93,578	315,010	52.49
Males	9,992	97,430	95,007	82,717	285,146	47.51
Totals	20,653	205,224	197,984	176,295	600,156	100.00

Pax by age	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% share
0-19	2,838	23,154	28,856	20,675	75,523	12.58
20-39	2,722	26,736	31,049	26,792	87,299	14.55
40-59	5,742	64,829	69,891	56,313	196,775	32.79
60-79	8,639	82,225	62,992	66,763	220,619	36.76
80+	712	8,280	5,196	5,752	19,940	3.32
Totals	20,653	205,224	197,984	176,295	600,156	100.00

Notes: Landed pax arrive in Malta on a cruise ship and leave the island by other means. Transit pax arrive and leave Malta on the same cruise ship.

Photo credits. P1 - Reuben Piscopo/Dol. P2 Col1- Muhammad Mahdi Karim. Col2 - Czech Airlines. P3 - Le Méridien. P4 - (top) Air Malta. (bottom) - db San Antonio Hotel & Spa. P5 - MIA. P6 Col1 - (top) be.Hotel. (bottom) - Emirates. Col2 - Xara Palace. P7 Col2 - Virtu Ferries. Col3 - Andrew Galea. P13 - Maritim Antonine Hotel. (bottom) - Clover Holiday Complex. P14 - HalalTrip.

Where to you'll find Malta stands January to June 2016

Date	Fair/show	Location
Austria		
14-17 January	Ferien-Messe Wien	Vienna
Belgium		
4-8 February	Vakantiesalon	Brussels
Czech Republic		
18-21 February	Holiday World	Prague
7-10 April	For Senior	Prague
5-7 May	Sport Expo	Prague
23-25 May	Wine Prague	Prague
Denmark		
26-28 February	Ferie for Alle	Herning
Finland		
21-24 January	Matka	Helsinki
France		
5-7 February	FestiVitas	Mulhouse
4-6 March	Mahana	Lyon
March*	Meedex	Paris
Germany		
16-24 January	CMT	Stuttgart
10-14 February	f.re.e	Munich
17-21 February	Reisen Hamburg	Hamburg
9-13 March	ITB	Berlin
16-20 March	Urlaub Freizeit Reisen	Friedrichshafen
19-21 April	IMEX	Frankfurt
Hungary		
30-31 January	Weddings Fair and Exhibition	Budapest
3-6 March	Utazás/Travel	Budapest
Ireland		
9-10 January	The Wedding Journal Show†	Dublin
22-24 January	Holiday World Show	Dublin
Italy		
18-20 March	BMT	Naples
South Korea		
9-12 June	Korea World Travel Fair†	Seoul
Netherlands		
12-17 January	Vakantiebeurs	Utrecht
20-21 February	Fiets en Wandelbeurs	Utrecht
Russia		
28 January	Antor MICE Workshop	Moscow
March*	Education and Career	Moscow
23-26 March	MITT	Moscow
1-3 April	Leisure without borders	St Petersburg

Data bank

Where to you'll find Malta stands January to June 2016 (continued)

Date	Fair/show	Location
Russia		
15-17 May	MITF	Moscow
Slovakia		
28-31 January	ITF Slovakia Tour	Bratislava
Spain		
20-24 January	FITUR	Madrid
Switzerland		
14-17 January	Ferienmesse	Bern
28-31 January	FESPO	Zurich
UK		
15-17 January	Holiday World Show	Belfast
21-24 January	Destinations	Manchester
4-7 February	Destinations	London
11-14 February	The Telegraph Outdoor Adventure & Travel Show	London
26-28 February	The National Wedding Show	London
4-6 March	The National Wedding Show	Birmingham
14-16 June	The Meetings Show	London
Ukraine		
30 March-1 April	UITT	Kiev
US		
8-10 January	The New York Times Travel Show	New York
14-17 March	Seatrade Cruise Global	Fort Lauderdale

* Dates to be confirmed † Attendance to be confirmed

Outbound travel by Malta residents

Destination	2014	2015	Difference	% change
Austria	5,156	7,219	2,063	40.01
Belgium	9,752	10,792	1,041	10.67
France	21,853	20,946	-907	-4.15
Germany	21,929	23,866	1,937	8.83
Ireland	3,274	5,517	2,243	68.51
Italy	122,678	137,060	14,382	11.72
Libya	3,918	1,007	-2,911	-74.30
Netherlands	10,380	13,756	3,376	32.53
Nordic region*	8,000	9,963	1,963	24.54
Russia	2,084	2,410	325	15.61
Spain	17,895	19,408	1,512	8.45
Switzerland	5,004	7,438	2,434	48.64
UK	91,822	89,266	-2,555	-2.78
US	4,248	4,458	210	4.94
Others	62,709	74,928	12,219	19.49
Totals	390,701	428,033	37,332	9.56

Nights spent at destination by Malta residents

Destination	2014	2015	Difference	% change
Austria	37,465	50,980	13,515	36.07
Belgium	52,805	53,052	247	0.47
France	142,091	139,164	-2,927	-2.06
Germany	163,492	165,424	1,932	1.18
Ireland	35,404	41,713	6,309	17.82
Italy	662,722	734,664	71,943	10.86
Libya	50,346	16,452	-33,894	-67.32
Netherlands	83,690	94,434	10,744	12.84
Nordic region*	85,909	107,393	21,484	25.01
Russia	32,685	35,166	2,481	7.59
Spain	135,684	134,984	-700	-0.52
Switzerland	34,246	54,751	20,505	59.87
UK	734,171	676,750	-57,421	-7.82
US	89,065	81,014	-8,050	-9.04
Others	841,574	881,222	39,647	4.71
Totals	3,181,351	3,267,162	85,812	2.70

* Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden

Departures and socio-demographic profile of Malta residents 2015

Departures	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	
Malta residents	78,955	95,927	142,228	110,924	428,034	
Mode of travel	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
Air	74,082	89,678	132,907	106,259	402,926	94.13
Sea*	4,873	6,249	9,321	4,665	25,108	5.87
Totals	78,955	95,927	142,228	110,924	428,034	100.00
Gender	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
Females	33,020	40,254	65,527	47,343	186,144	43.49
Males	45,934	55,673	76,701	63,581	241,889	56.51
Totals	78,954	95,927	142,228	110,924	428,033	100.00
Age	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
0-24	15,642	16,737	29,858	18,107	80,344	18.77
25-44	35,626	44,284	57,282	51,297	188,489	44.04
45-64	23,262	26,368	41,623	32,599	123,852	28.94
65+	4,424	8,538	13,464	8,920	35,346	8.26
Totals	78,954	95,927	142,227	110,923	428,031	100.00

Data bank

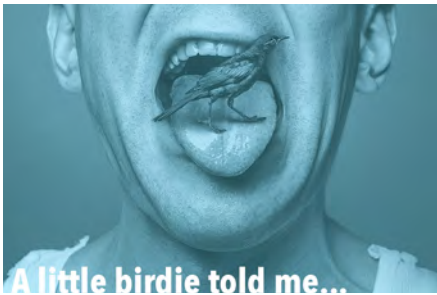
Departures and socio-demographic profile of Malta residents 2015 (continued)

Purpose of visit	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
Business	17,898	18,511	14,688	17,186	68,283	15.95
Holiday	36,967	46,851	92,424	55,542	231,784	54.15
VFR	18,499	21,873	22,940	31,472	94,784	22.14
Other	5,590	8,692	12,176	6,724	33,182	7.75
Totals	78,954	95,927	142,228	110,924	428,033	100.00
Type	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
FIT	67,725	83,018	97,908	96,554	345,205	80.65
Package	11,230	12,909	44,320	14,370	82,829	19.35
Totals	78,955	95,927	142,228	110,924	428,034	100.00

Departures and socio-demographic profile of Malta residents 2015

Length of trip (nights)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	% Share
1-3	24,675	29,830	28,459	31,787	114,751	26.81
4-6	25,498	31,455	36,362	33,275	126,590	29.57
7+	28,782	34,642	77,407	45,862	186,693	43.62
Average LoS	7.00	7.70	7.90	7.70	7.58	100.00
Expenditure	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals	
Per capita (€)	1,000	933	1,095	960		
Total (€ - 000s)	71,073	89,502	155,672	106,452	422,699	

* Data on departures by sea is provisional



A little birdie told me...

■ “The Maritim Antonine Hotel & Spa is currently undergoing a refurbishment, which will consist of two additional floors and other upgrades.” And that’s it!

► That’s the only reference on the hotel’s local web site ([//maritim.com/mt/the-project](http://maritim.com/mt/the-project)) to what is normally a major event in a property’s ‘life’.

► When *Island Travel Trader* called for details in January, we were told the four star Mellieha hotel would reopen “sometime” in March.

► We were also told a ‘Mr Borg’ would call the following day and provide details; we’re still waiting for the call.

► Meanwhile, in mid-February we checked Maritim’s corporate web site (www.maritim.com/en/hotels/malta/antonine-hotel-spa-malta/hotel-overview) and there’s no mention of a refurbishment, only that the property “has closed its doors for winter break”. And “we look forward to welcoming you again at the start of the new season

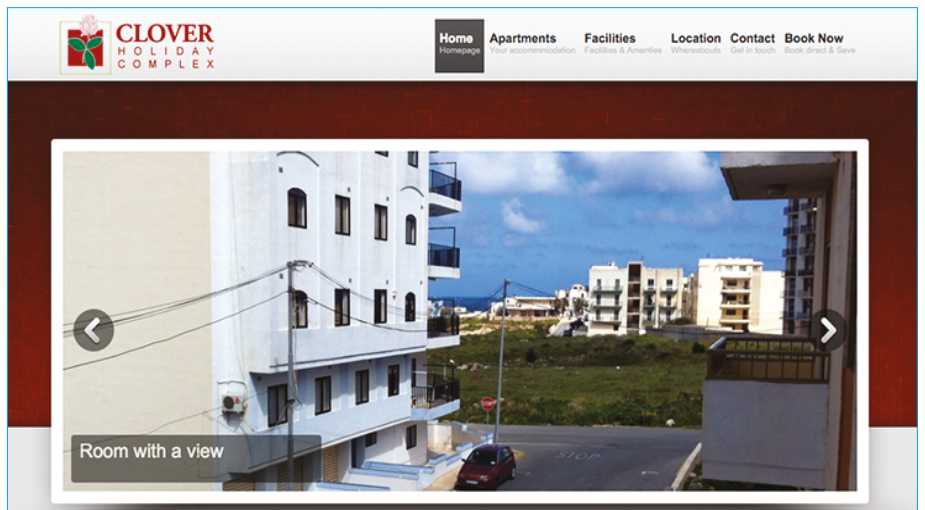


We’ve deduced the Maritim Antonine is adding 29 rooms

on 1st April 2016”.

► I like under the radar, but this is positively invisible. The hotel is not doing itself any favours by being so obtuse.

► Meantime, here’s an artist’s impression (*above*) of what the property will eventually look like, when it reopens from its “winter break” on April Fool’s Day. ■



Really?

Commissionable tours

Continued from page 7

and also includes a visit to excruciatingly narrow catacombs. It also includes a walk to a former hospital built during the time of the Order of St John, a visit to the parish church, the old chapel dedicated to St Basil, a visit to a local baker and finally dinner at one of the two village band clubs. The Mqabba tours will be held on Fridays from 15:00 to 22:00.

- ▶ All excursions include audience participation: stone masonry, cheese making and *liedna* making – Maltese decorative streamers.
- ▶ Although E.Travel Solutions is packaging and marketing the excursions, it is offering commissions to all hotels and agents who sell them.

IPL publish 17th edition of Malta Hotels Directory



■ The 2016 edition of the *Malta Hotels Directory*, published by Island Publications – who also publish *Island Travel Trader* – is now available.

▶ This is the 17th edition of the directory, it was first published in 1999.

- ▶ The directory is produced by Island Publications on behalf of the MTA, and is the official accommodation listing for the islands.
- ▶ The 78-page directory lists all licensed hotels, tourist villages, guest houses and hostels on the islands, it

also includes a calendar of events.

- ▶ The *Malta Hotels Directory 2016* may be downloaded from the MTA's site or Island Publication's Travelmalta web page.

HalalTrip unveils Muslim friendly tour packages

Singapore

■ Singapore-based online Muslim travel platform, HalalTrip, has unveiled the industry's "most comprehensive tour packages to over 65 global destinations".

- ▶ HalalTrip has created a bespoke portfolio of Muslim-friendly tour packages that includes excursions and activities to cities across the world including Europe (except Malta), North America, the Middle East, Africa and South East Asia.
- ▶ The tour packages, available on its website as well as through its mobile app (for iOS and Android devices), are tailored specifically for Muslim consumers – a sector predicted to grow to €180bn in the next four years.
- ▶ Consumers can choose a tour package to suit their needs from options such as type of holiday, which region of the world to duration.
- ▶ Each package is also rated on



Muslim travel: billion euro business on the rise

how Muslim-friendly it is by HalalTrip's sister firm, CrescentRating.

- ▶ Fazal Bahardeen, CEO of HalalTrip, says: "It is widely recognised that the Muslim travel market is becoming increasingly important and lucrative to the travel sector and the launch of these exclusive worldwide tour packages is a reflection on this.

- ▶ "Muslim consumers are looking to explore new destinations and experience different cultures across the world which is why we have launched these tailored packages that cater for every occasion together with satisfying needs such as Halal food and prayer facilities.
- ▶ "Whether it is experiencing Great White sharks in South Africa, taking in some culture and history in Spain, honeymooning in Maldives or shopping in Dubai, we have something for every need".
- ▶ The packages not only include tours to the world's most popular destinations such as Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Cape Town, Maldives, and London but also cities such as Tbilisi, Dubrovnik and Kunming.
- ▶ HalalTrip plans to add more destinations in the coming months.
- ▶ CrescentRating has rated each tour package from bronze to gold against a range of criteria that

includes the availability of Halal food and prayer facilities.

- ▶ The Muslim travel market is now widely recognised as a key growth tourism sector, projected to be worth €180bn by 2020.

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