

FULL OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Valletta

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO MALTA'S CAPITAL

PERFECT GUIDE FOR:

- CRUISE PASSENGERS
- DAY VISITORS
- EXTENDED STAYS
- CULTURE SEEKERS



Malta
Uncovered.com

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Hi there!

I'm Ed, a traveller-turned-local who's lived in Malta for over a decade, but was born and raised in The Netherlands. With family roots in this small but proud island nation, my goal is to introduce Malta to culture seekers around the world.

I'm the founder and editor of Malta Uncovered (www.maltauncovered.com), a Malta travel and holidays guide for the curious traveller. Through my site, I provide helpful, in-depth information to travellers planning their trip.

With this guide I hope to give you all the info you need to get the most out of whatever amount of time you choose to spend in Valletta. Whether you'd like a set itinerary or to explore certain areas or points of interest yourself, there's something for everyone in this guide.

There's no way any travel guide can do Valletta justice and so my aim isn't to paint a complete picture for you. It's to help prepare you to get the most out of visiting

the city, to point you in the right direction and give you a bearing to help you make the most out of your time there. It will help you to get to know its past, its points of interest, and little nooks that show you a quirkier side of town, etc. After all, the fun of travel comes from exploring and discovering new things as you go along.

Having had a major facelift in preparation for being European Capital of Culture for 2018, there's never been a better time to visit Malta's capital city.

I hope you enjoy your trip!

**DO YOU HAVE
A QUESTION
I HAVEN'T
ANSWERED
IN THIS GUIDE?**

Get in touch with me at



edward@maltauncovered.com

A grey-outlined speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside the bubble, the text reads: "IF YOU LIKE THIS GUIDE, PLEASE RECOMMEND IT TO YOUR FRIENDS!".

**IF YOU LIKE
THIS GUIDE,
PLEASE
RECOMMEND
IT TO YOUR
FRIENDS!**

BEST VIEWED ON ADOBE ACROBAT



DOWNLOAD
ADOBE® READER®

PC/MAC



Available on the
App Store



Get it on
Google play

CONTENTS

1

THE
BASICS

2

OUT AND
ABOUT IN
VALLETTA

3

PRACTICAL
INFORMATION

4

MAJOR
POINTS OF
INTEREST

USING THIS GUIDE

Easily move to different parts of this guide by clicking or tapping on the arrow.



(Requires Adobe Acrobat)

1

THE BASICS

VALLETTA AT A GLANCE >

SETTING THE SCENE - Valletta's rich history

The Knights of Malta >

Interesting facts of how Valletta was built >

Valletta in World War II >

2

OUT AND ABOUT IN VALLETTA

BEFORE YOU SET OFF >

ITINERARIES AND WALKING ROUTES >

DAY 1 (Valletta in one day) >

1. Starting point: Upper Barrakka Gardens >
2. St. John's Co-Cathedral >
3. Grandmaster's Palace >
4. La Sacra Infermeria (Knights Hospitallers) >
5. Fort St. Elmo and National War Museum >
6. Siege Bell War Memorial >
7. Lower Barrakka Gardens >
8. Victoria Gate >

DAY 2 >

1. Fortifications Interpretation Centre >
2. The Manoel Theatre >
3. National Library >
4. Casa Rocca Piccola >
5. MUŻA (National Museum of Art) >
6. Church of Our Lady of Victories >
7. The Saluting Battery >
8. Lascaris War Rooms >

DAY 3 >

- Merchants Street >
- St. Catherine of Italy >
- Auberge d'Italie >
- Castellania Palace >

Food market: *is-Suq tal-Belt* >

Basilica of Saint Dominic >

St. Elmo Breakwater Bridge >

Other points of interest to consider:

- *The Malta Postal Museum* >

- *National Museum of Archaeology* >

- *Malta 5D* >

BALCONY SPOTTING >

FOUNTAINS >

CHURCHES AND RELIGION >

- *Church of Our Lady of Liesse* >

- *Basilica of Our Lady of Mount Carmel* >

- *St. Augustine Church* >

- *Parish Church of St. Paul's Shipwreck* >

EVENINGS IN VALLETTA >

Bars and cafés for evening drinks >

Valletta Waterfront >

Frequent events >

Annual events >

DAY TRIPS OUTSIDE OF VALLETTA >

The Three Cities >

Sliema >

Beaches >

Gozo and Comino >

Sicily >

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

WHEN TO GO >

WHEN NOT TO GO >

HOW TO GET THERE >

By air | By car | By public transport

By boat | By tour bus

Getting to Valletta from the cruise port >

GETTING AROUND >

WHERE TO STAY >

Hotels and other accommodation >

Boutique accommodation >

High-end hotels >

Budget accommodation >

FOOD AND DRINK >

Tips for eating out in Malta >

Quick snacks and sandwiches >

Lunch options >

Dinner – Top 10 restaurants in Valletta >

WHERE DO I GET THE BEST...?

Best places for Maltese food >

Five best coffee shops in town >

Best places for ice cream >

4

MAJOR POINTS OF INTEREST IN VALLETTA >

CATEGORY A – Must-see!

1. Fort St. Elmo >
2. Fortifications Interpretation Centre >
3. Grandmaster's Palace and Palace Armoury >
4. The Manoel Theatre >
5. National War Museum >
6. St. John's Co-Cathedral & Museum >

CATEGORY B – Great

7. Casa Rocca Piccola >
8. Church of Our Lady of Victories >
9. Lascaris War Rooms >
10. The Malta Experience / La Sacra Infermeria >
11. The Malta Postal Museum >
12. The Saluting Battery >
13. St. James Cavalier and St. John's Cavalier >

CATEGORY C – Worth it, time permitting

14. Malta 5D >
15. National Museum of Archaeology >
16. The Royal Opera House >

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

You can easily move to different parts of this guide by clicking or tapping on the arrow. >

Adobe Acrobat Reader is required.



DAY 2

Your second day in Valletta



Your second day in Valletta will take you past a number of places, with a mix of historical and architectural points of interest.

Let's start our day from **City Gate (a)**. Facing the main road of Republic Street, with the Parliament building on your right-hand side, head left up the shallow steps.

You'll see a few buildings on your right with green traditional balconies and as you reach the top you can get a good view out over Triton fountain – which sits in front of Valletta – and of the neighbouring town of Floriana.



Inside Hastings Gardens.

As you continue walking straight ahead, one of Valletta's gardens is located to your left – **Hastings Garden (b)**, named after a British governor of Malta, Lord Hastings.

Follow the outside perimeter of the gardens and you'll find **St. John's Cavalier (c)**, one of the original fortifications of Valletta to your right. As you walk around the back of the building, keep going straight down Triq Zekka, taking the third turn on your left into Triq San Mark heading towards the seaside. At the bottom of this street to your left, you will find the Fortifications Interpretation Centre.

DAY 2 WALKING ROUTE



1. Fortifications Interpretation Centre
 2. The Manoel Theatre
 3. National Library
 4. Casa Rocca Piccola
 5. MUŻA
 6. Church of Our Lady of Victories
 7. The Saluting Battery
 8. Lascaris War Rooms
- a. City Gate
b. Hastings Garden
c. St. John's Cavalier
d. Carmelite Church dome
e. Café Jubilee
f. Castille Place square
g. Upper Barrakka Gardens

1) Fortifications Interpretation Centre

LOCATION: *Bottom of Triq San Mark*

TIME NEEDED: *30–60'*

Explore the ingenious plans and designs behind the city of Valletta and its fortifications, from the towering high bastions to the strategically placed forts and its surrounding harbour area and fortifications.

The Fortress Builders exhibition is a bit of a hybrid between a museum and an information point, with a lot of knowledge on display, through audiovisual presentations and interactive, multilingual touch-driven displays to help you explore and learn.

The facade of the Fortifications Interpretation Centre

// MORE INFO >

When you exit the Fortifications Interpretations Centre, head back up Triq San Mark, then take the third turn to your left onto Triq Zekka. You'll see the side view of the **Carmelite Church dome (d)**, which dominates Valletta's skyline from the North.



Head down towards the church and the right turn before you reach the church itself, turning into Old Theatre Street. On your left hand side you'll find your next stop: The Manoel Theatre.



2) The Manoel Theatre

*The beautiful
auditorium of the
Manoel Theatre*

LOCATION: 115, Old Theatre Street

TIME NEEDED: 45-60'

Although seeing what is believed to be the third-oldest active theatre in Europe (built in 1731) come to life during a sell-out performance is a great experience, performances aren't scheduled very frequently here.

The next best thing is getting a 30-minute audio-guided tour through the building and its museum, at a modest €5 fee. The theatre's interior is something to behold and its survival throughout the centuries remarkable.

// MORE INFO >

If you're in the mood for a coffee and a snack, or for having an early lunch, there's a nice place around the corner from the Manoel Theatre.

When you exit the theatre, walk up the road, take a right onto Old Bakery Street, and then take your first street to the left. **Café Jubilee (e)** is on your left-hand side and offers a variety of snacks and meals, with good coffee to boot (and free Wi-Fi).

*Republic Square,
seen from the side
of the National
Library.*



From either the Manoel Theatre or Café Jubilee, head up the road until you get to Republic Street and go to Misrah ir-Repubblika (Republic Square) to the National Library, which is your next stop.

3) National Library

LOCATION: *36, Old Treasury Street*

TIME NEEDED: *30'*

The National Library was one of the last buildings erected in Valletta by the Knights. With an already extensive library of books built up over the centuries (mostly books donated to the Order by deceased Knights) it was built in 1776.

The building's neoclassical design and the tall, book lined stacks are worth admiring and taking in, as are some of the authentic old documents on display. You'll also find temporary exhibitions there from time to time.

The library is open from Mon - Sat and its opening hours are normally 8:15-17:00h (Mon - Fri) / 8:15-13:00h (Sat) and 8:15-13:15h (Mon - Sat) in summer (16th Jun - 30th Sep).

Back in Republic Street; head down in the direction of Fort St. Elmo. Around 200 metres away from the Presidential Palace your next stop awaits!



Entrance to the National Library

4) Casa Rocca Piccola

LOCATION: 74, Republic Street

TIME NEEDED: 30–60'

Casa Rocca Piccola is the family home of the de Piro family and offers you a glimpse of how the aristocracy lived, with age-old furniture and loads of little treasures and decorated rooms. It's actually still the home of the ninth Marquis de Piro, who opened up part of the house to the public as a museum.

A highly knowledgeable and friendly tour guide takes you through the home, starting on the hour from the courtyard, which also offers access to the home's WW II shelter that lies 30m underground.

// MORE INFO >



TIME CHECK: 12.30

Time for lunch!

You'll probably be more than a little peckish at this point. Have a look at some of **my recommendations for lunch >**



Entrance of Casa Rocca Piccola.

Moving on to a few smaller sites and heading in the direction of the Upper Barrakka, the next point of interest I've lined up for you is a small unassuming church, which you'll find at the southern end of Merchants Street.

5) MUŻA (National Museum of Art)

LOCATION: *Merchants Street*

TIME NEEDED: *30-60'*

MUŻA is the National Museum of Art, newly opened in 2018 at Auberge d'Italie at the start of Merchants Street. It opens daily from 9:00h till 17:00h.

The museum boasts a selection of over 20,000 works of art, ranging from paintings to sculptures, silverware and historical maps.

You can find the largest collection of paintings by Baroque artist Mattia Preti, an Italian Knight of the Order of Malta, here. Preti was also heavily involved in the interior decoration of the St. John's Co-Cathedral.

The building that houses the museum is a late 16th-century auberge that's just as beautiful as some of the art on display. Don't forget to take a quick peek in the inner courtyard!

6) Church of Our Lady of Victories

LOCATION: *Triq in-Nofsinhar*

TIME NEEDED: *15-30'*

The foundation stone of Valletta was laid on the site of this small 16th century church, which was the first building to be erected in Valletta. It still stands proudly today, having benefited from recent restoration works. Although small in size, there's some gorgeous art to admire, primarily the ceiling paintings that depict scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary.

// MORE INFO >

Once you exit the church and turn to your right, you'll be entering **Castille Place square (f)**, with a few of Valletta's most prominent historical buildings located at its edges.



The church of Our Lady of Victories.



TIME CHECK: 15.15-15.30

The next point of interest is the only time-sensitive part of this itinerary and worth timing well!

Head towards and into the **Upper Barrakka Gardens (g)**. If you're early (in comparison to the time check mentioned earlier), it's an opportunity to have a quick coffee at the kiosk.

At the centre of the Upper Barrakka Gardens, between the fountain and the harbour-facing arches, you'll find two sets of steps leading down to your next stop.



The kiosk and café at the Upper Barrakka Gardens.

7) The Saluting Battery

LOCATION: *Upper Barrakka Gardens*

TIME NEEDED: *30–45'*

Built and used as a defensive platform by the Knights, the Saluting Battery functioned both as an artillery platform to defend against attacks taking place within the Grand Harbour, as well as to greet dignitaries and friendly ships entering the harbour.



Entrance to the Saluting Battery, from within the Upper Barrakka Gardens.

At noon and 4pm sharp, through a short re-enactment, one of the restored guns is fired and it's quite a spectacle to admire. You can view the action from underneath the arches of the Upper Barrakka or you can choose to pay a small fee and get access to the battery and its facilities for a guided tour (including a multilingual audio guide).

// MORE INFO >

The last stop for the day will take us to a once top-secret location, which formed the heart of Malta's WW II defence and lies completely underground. Intrigued? Let's go! As you exit the Upper Barrakka Gardens, take the street

to your right and take the first street to your right again. Keep walking down (don't turn into Triq il-Batterija) until on your right you enter a tunnel, within which you'll find signage to the entrance of the Lascaris War Rooms.

IMPORTANT

The last tour at Lascaris War Rooms starts at 16:15, so don't linger after the gunfire – it's a 5–10 minute walk from Upper Barrakka Gardens.

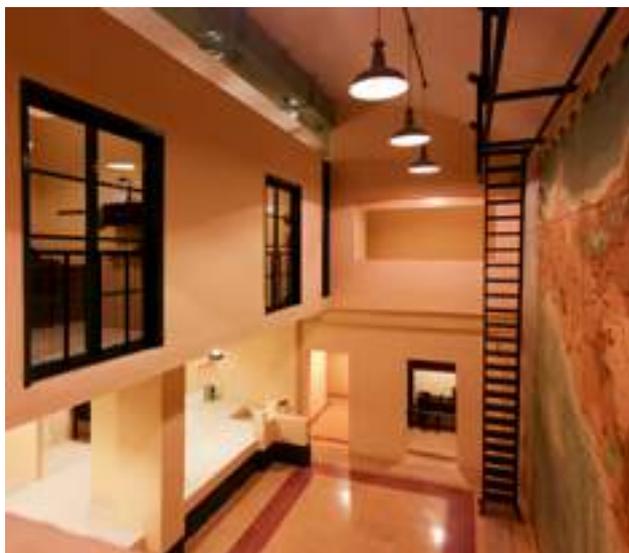
8) Lascaris War Rooms

LOCATION:

Xatt Lascaris

TIME NEEDED: 30–60'

This underground complex of rooms is believed to be one of Malta's best-kept secrets from WW II, forming the heart of the British war defence HQ, from where missions were coordinated and enemy forces monitored. A tour of the complex takes you back to the wartime days of WW II and despite the simple waxwork figures; you are left with quite a vivid impression.



One of the underground spaces at Lascaris War Rooms.

// MORE INFO >

That concludes the Day 2 walking route.