The Republic of Malta is a country in Southern Europe, located on a 316 sq. km. island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of the Italian island of Sicily. It derives its name from the ancient Greeks calling it “Melite”, which means “honey-sweet”, referring to the island’s honey production. Malta was acquired by Great Britain in 1814 and was in its possession until Malta’s independence in 1964, although Malta remained in the Commonwealth. A decade later, Malta declared itself a republic, making both Independence Day on September 21 and Republic Day on December 13 national holidays. The Maltese government operates under a parliamentary republic and has been led by President Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca and her appointed Prime Minister Joseph Muscat since April 2014.

RELIGION

Roman Catholics constitute the vast majority of people in Malta with more than 90% as of 2011. The Constitution of Malta established Roman Catholicism as the state religion, but freedom of religion is granted to everyone. Nevertheless, Catholicism plays a big role in Maltese culture and society, especially in public discussions concerning attitudes on marriage, divorce, abortion and other matters of morality. Religion also dominates the Maltese landscape, as Malta is said to have more churches than square kilometers of land.

ETHNICITY & DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Malta is almost exclusively Maltese, who are descendants of ancient Carthaginians and Phoenicians with strong elements of Italian and other Mediterranean stock. Included in these ethnic groups are also the Gozitans, a people inhabiting Gozo, Malta’s sister island. Additionally, a small British population exists as well. Malta’s birth rate slightly outnumbers its death rate, and with an additional slightly positive net migration rate, Malta experienced a slightly positive population growth rate of 0.29% in 2016. However, Malta’s fertility rate is below the EU average and population growth stems mainly from immigration, some of it irregular due to its geographic location between Europe and North Africa. This puts increasing pressure on Malta’s pension system.
**CONTEMPORARY MALTA & RELATIONS TO EUROPE**

Since the mid-1980s, Malta has transformed itself into a freight transshipment point, a financial center, and a tourist destination while its key industries moved toward more service-oriented activities. Being the smallest economy in the euro zone, though, Malta produces only about 20% of its food needs, has limited fresh water supplies, and has few domestic energy sources. Therefore, it is heavily dependent on foreign trade, manufacturing, and tourism. Due to its low debt-to-GDP ratio and a financially sound banking sector, Malta weathered the eurozone crisis better than most EU member states. Moreover, it has relatively low unemployment compared to other European countries. In 2014 and 2015, Malta led the eurozone in economic growth, expanding by nearly 3.5% each year. Although the government has implemented new programs, such as free childcare, to encourage increased labor participation, the high cost of borrowing and small labor market remain potential constraints for future growth though.

Malta has been a member of the European Union since May 2004 and of the eurozone since January 2008, making the euro its currency. Furthermore, Malta is a member of the border-free Schengen area. It holds six seats in the European Parliament and holds the revolving presidency of the Council of the EU for the first time in 2017.

**MALTESE IN THE USA**

After World War II, a number of Maltese citizens immigrated to the United States. Moreover, due to a government-funded emigration program in Malta to solve the problem of overpopulation on the tiny island, around 8,000 Maltese came to the United States between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s. Today, Detroit and New York City constitute the locations with the most Maltese living in the US, while San Francisco, Houston and Chicago also report notable Maltese communities.

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**FAMOUS MALTESE**

Famous Maltese people include actress and model Emma Heming-Willis, musician Andy Partridge, model Suzanne Mizzi, and mathematician Percy Alexander MacMahon.

**MALTESE WORDS**

- Hi: 
- Bye: 
- Good morning: 
- Bongu: 
- Yes: 
- No: 
- Please: 
- Jekk joghgbok: 
- Thank you: 
- Grazzi: 
- How are you?: 
- Kif int?: 
- I do not understand: 
- Jien ma nifhimx: 
- I understand: 
- I jifhmu: 
- What is your name?: 
- Dak l-isem tieghek?: 
- My name is: 
- Jien jisimni: 
- Where are you from?: 
- Minn fejn int?: 
- Do you speak English?: 

**USEFUL LINKS**


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The flag is composed of two equal vertical bands of white and red. In the upper hoist-side corner is a representation of the George Cross, edged in red.