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BEING A GOOD GUEST ON A TINY ISLAND

Getting friendly in Malta

Despite the horror stories — and we all have them — it is possible to stay with friends abroad and to remain friends after the visit.

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SANDRA MARTIN

From Saturday's Globe and Mail
March 14, 2009 at 12:00 AM EDT

Good friends moved to Malta recently as refugees from supposedly idyllic southern France, where they had been reminded once too often that bureaucracy is a French word. Malta seemed an ideal address — still Mediterranean, undeniably beautiful, richly historic, with recognizably English laws and an amicable tax scheme for expatriates — but they longed to share their discovery and, more important, have their prescience applauded by others. Come and visit, they entreated.

Malta promised a respite from the depths of a Canadian winter and a global recession, so we arranged a week's stay. But then we began to worry about Benjamin Franklin's adage about fish and guests. With fish, the solution is easy: When it begins to smell, throw it out. Odoriferous guests — especially old friends — are harder to dislodge, as my husband and I have learned to our cost over the years. We still remember his ancient school friend who had a penchant for smoking cigarillos at breakfast and flicked ash into the butter dish, and my relative who arrived with a steamer trunk, no departure date and a cluster of moths circling her wallet every time she was shamed into paying her share of a restaurant meal.

That's why we pride ourselves on being good guests and moving on before our best-before date expires.

Even if you are with your nearest and dearest, after three days you're probably into

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- Yes unfortunately Religion in Malta is like a woman...
- Sandra Martin writes: That's why we pride ourselves...
- I was there in 71 and hung out at Angel's Bar on Straight...
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