

Malta National Day

Advertising feature

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The 45th anniversary of Malta's independence

Commonwealth and of the United Nations.

In the last four decades, my generation has seen this tiny island transform from a British colony to an independent republic and member state of the European Union.

Exploiting the intrinsic value of its geographical location, strategically positioned between Europe and North Africa, and strengthened by its highly skilled, multi-lingual and flexible workforce, Malta has converted challenges into opportunities. Today Malta has become one of the most attractive investment locations in the region and is fast becoming a centre of excellence in Information Technology and onshore financial services.

Although Maltese is the main language, the island enjoys a competitive edge through its mostly English speaking human resources, its high level of productivity, its quality of life and social environment, its telecommunication infrastructure and its straightforward legislation and regulatory systems.

Tourism, of course, remains an important contributor of the island's economic landscape.

A Mediterranean island with a long and chequered history is promising to create the right conditions for its people to make



Strong relationship: Malta and Australia have built a strong connection anchored on a long-standing sense of common purpose. (Above) His Excellency Mr Michael Bryce AM AE, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC Governor General of Australia, The Hon Lawrence Gonzi Prime Minister of Malta, Mrs Catherine Gonzi.

their choices, achieve their potential, while creating the right busi-

ness environment for enterprises to invest and grow in a clean

environment and modern infrastructure. This state of affairs

could not be achieved were it not for the adoption of the right policies and the support of the other member states of the European Union, which through the injection of EU structural funds has accelerated the upgrading of the general infrastructure of the island.

Indeed, this is very different from Malta's position following the last Great War. As a colony, the island's economy depended heavily on the hosting of a significant military naval base. Malta's economic activity fluctuated with the number of military personnel present on the island at any time.

Australia was then a solution to many who left Malta to build a new and more prosperous life.

Over the years, the relationship between Australia and Malta has gone from strength to strength. We have a political relationship that is excellent and one that is anchored on a long-standing sense of common purpose, shared values and interests. It is a relationship that is cemented by ties of blood and I doubt if there is a family in Malta that does not have a relative living in Australia.

In the words of my Prime Minister Dr Lawrence Gonzi when welcoming Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, Governor General of Australia, on her first State visit overseas and the first formal one

by an Australian Governor General to Malta: "Our loss became your gain and our consolation is that the Maltese in Australia became highly proactive professionals in business, politics and trade. Their extraordinary ability to adapt to different situations makes us proud."

Malta and Australia have fought side by side in both World Wars and true to its mission as 'the Nurse of the Mediterranean' Malta had also given shelter and provided treatment to many Australian soldiers injured during the Gallipoli Campaign.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in his address of welcome to Australia to the President of Malta earlier this year echoed this sentiment: "Australia would not have been the same where it not for the contribution of the Maltese. Our relationship is one of family. Your children are our children and our children are your children. How closer can one get?"

The recent visit to Malta last July by Foreign Minister Stephen Smith on the invitation of his counterpart Dr Tonio Borg confirms this.

Malta is proud of its heritage and looks forward to the future with great enthusiasm, commitment and optimism. May it forever live in freedom.



By The High Commissioner of Malta
His Excellency Mr Francis Tabone

THIS is a multi anniversary year for the island of Malta, which today celebrates the 45th anniversary of its independence.

Enjoying a history of well over 7000 years, Malta became an independent sovereign state on September 21, 1964 when the Duke of Edinburgh, representing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, presented the George Cross island with its constitutional documents. Sir Alec Downer KBE, then High Commissioner of Australia to London, represented Australia at these celebrations.

35 years ago, in 1974, Malta was declared a republic and five years ago, in May 2004, became the smallest member state of the European Union and has since joined the Euro zone.

Malta is a member of the

Where the Knights left their mark

St John's Co-Cathedral

Described as the first complete example of the high Baroque anywhere, this magnificent church was built between 1573 and 1578. Among its many treasures are two works by Italian artist Caravaggio, including his masterpiece *The Beheading of St John*.

The President's Palace

Designed by Maltese architect Gerolamo Cassar, the palace was home to all of the Grand Masters from 1574 until 1798 and now hosts the Maltese president and House of Representatives. The interiors are opulently decorated and feature many noteworthy frescoes and tapestries.

The Manoel Theatre

Grand Master Antonio Manoel de Vilhena oversaw the construction of this majestic, still working, theatre in 1731, to provide 'honest entertainment' for the Maltese public. It played a major role in the country's cultural history and remains a jewel in Valletta's crown.

The Armoury

Situated in the President's Palace since 1604, the Armoury's extensive collection of weaponry and armour reflects the Order of St John's military past. The pieces on show were crafted all over Europe and range from the ceremonial armour of the nobility to the more prosaic equipment of

ordinary soldiers.

Valletta's fortification walls

To protect themselves against further Ottoman attacks after the siege of 1565, the Knights of St John encased Valletta with the massive, sturdy defensive walls. These days the well-preserved fortifications serve a more ornamental purpose and can be best enjoyed on a boat cruise.



Majestic: The Manoel Theatre was constructed in 1731, and remains a jewel in cultural history. Image from Visitmalta.com

Valletta, the city of Knights

Malta's capital Valletta boasts splendid Baroque architecture — the proud legacy of the Knights of St John.

SURROUNDED on three sides by the Mediterranean, the city of Valletta is one of Europe's finest historic attractions. There visitors enjoy sumptuous palaces, theatres, gardens and churches that recall the heyday of the Knights of St John.

The Knights were founded in Jerusalem in the 11th century as a multi-national Christian medical order, providing assistance to pilgrims.

During the Crusades, the Order expanded and took on a military role. They later moved to Rhodes but in 1521 were besieged by the Ottomans and forced to flee.

The Kingdom of Spain granted the Knights the Maltese archipelago in 1530. There they withstood another Ottoman siege in 1565, thanks to the leadership of their

Grand Master Jean de la Valette, and remained until 1798 when Napoleon invaded.

Valletta was built shortly after the siege and named in honour of la Valette. Initially it was constructed as a fortified town to deter the Ottomans.

Unlike most other sites it was designed from scratch by architect Francesco Laparelli, who created an early example of a gridiron street plan. In time the city grew more lavish, with stunning Baroque design embodied in the homes and places of worship of the Knights.

Remarkably, Valletta has hardly been altered since the Order left and is now one of the world's best-conserved cities.

UNESCO recognised it as such in 1980, granting World Heritage Status. For centuries tourists have marvelled at the city. When Disraeli visited in 1830, he wrote: "Valletta equals in its noble architecture, if it does not excel, any capital in Europe."

Cultural riches: The interior of St John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. Image from Visitmalta.com



A rapidly expanding environment gives Malta the business edge

MALTA'S business legislation and tax systems are considered among the most favourable in Europe.

All of this comes together in a demonstrable commitment to progress that is today powering every aspect of the island's thriving economy.

Malta's strategic location at the centre of the Mediterranean, straddling the busiest shipping lanes in the region and connecting Southern Europe and North Africa via regular sea and air links, has

always been one of the key advantages. As an EU member state within the Eurozone, Malta offers instant access to both the EU's massive internal market of over 500 million people and the growing markets of the North African and Middle Eastern countries bordering the Southern coasts of the Mediterranean basin.

The Maltese government's rigorous restructuring process over the past decade has given birth to a streamlined, results-oriented public sector and a productivity-focused private sector, raising Malta to the top ranks of international agencies' most competitive locations list.

Malta has taken a series of decisive steps to enhance its competitiveness while business costs remain among the lowest in Europe and the island boasts a multilingual, innovative and highly qualified workforce. In addition, the island has developed an extremely favourable tax

regime, making the operating environment on the island one of the most advantageous in the world.

Malta offers a strong infrastructure and is capable of supporting considerable international economic activity. The island's accessibility, comparatively low operational costs, advanced telecommunication systems and well-trained professionals serve to further enhance the Malta's attraction as an international business centre.

- Consistently pro-business government policies
- Easy access to decision makers
- Exceptionally high productivity levels
- Excellent telecommunications
- Competitive corporation tax
- Sophisticated international financial centre
- State-of-the-art transhipment and distribution facilities
- Multilingual, highly skilled workforce
- Dedicated, competitively priced human resources
- Growing accessible markets
- Social and economic stability
- Attractive package of incentives
- Safe, pleasant lifestyle

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PROPERTIES

Maria, Gordon and all the team at Maria Selleck Properties Manuka would like to congratulate Malta and all Maltese people on the occasion of Malta's National Day.

Maria Selleck Properties was established in January 2009 by one of Canberra's leading and most reputable real estate agents.

With Maria Selleck Properties, you'll experience an outstanding team dedicated to the highest standards of service and integrity. This, together with our innovative marketing, and strong negotiation skills, means that we consistently obtain inspired results for our clients.

It is these qualities that make the difference.



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