

# EXPLORE!

## Tour Notes



### Malta and Gozo Discovery + Classical Sicily (MLAS 2015)



TOUR DURATION  
**15**  
DAYS



**Tour Style:** Classic  
**Tour Pace:** Moderate

**Tour Type:** Small Groups  
**Tour Comfort:** Standard

**tour Code:** MLAS

#### Tour Highlights - Malta and Gozo Discovery + Classical Sicily

- ✓ Gozo - Two full days of varied sightseeing and short walks on Malta's unspoilt sister island
- ✓ Megalithic Temples - Visit the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Ggantija, Hagar Qim and Mnajdra
- ✓ Grand Harbour Cruise and the Three Cities - Tour by boat of the spectacular Grand Harbour in Valletta and visits to the ancient cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa and Cospicua
- ✓ Agrigento - Visit the Valley of the Temples
- ✓ Palermo - Sicily's capital, visit the majestic Norman cathedral at Monreale
- ✓ Food and Wine - Sample some of Sicily's delicious food and wine

#### Tour Essentials

**Accommodation:** 14 nights Standard Hotel

**Included Meals:** 14 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners

**Start Point:** Join tour: Malta International airport

**End Point:** Tour ends: Catania airport

**Transport:** Bus, Boat, Flight, Ferry

**Countries:** Malta, Italy

## Malta & Gozo Discovery + Sicily Discovery

Join us to explore some of the most impressive and best preserved ancient sites in the Mediterranean. On the islands of Malta we discover the temple ruins of Hagar Qim and Mnajdra and the medieval city of Mdina. We explore the capital Valletta and admire impressive fortifications, bastion walls and imposing churches. We also explore the island of Gozo, enjoy wine tasting and visit an olive estate. We then travel to Sicily to visit the Greek theatre at Taormina and the Temple of Zeus. We enjoy spectacular views of Mount Etna, experience the relaxed island lifestyle and sample delicious Italian food and wine.



### Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

### Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

### Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

### Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

## Your tour itinerary

### Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

### Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.



## DAY 1 Join tour Malta International airport, drive and ferry to Gozo

The tour starts at Malta International airport from where we drive to Cirkewwa and catch the ferry across to the island of Gozo. Gozo is fertile and picturesque and has retained much of its traditional character. Only 15 kms in length and 7 kms wide, all parts of the island are easily accessible, and for its size the variety of scenery is incredible.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** None

## DAY 2 On Gozo

We start our exploration in Xlendi, on the south coast, for a short photo stop and walk along the promenade before heading to the island's capital, Victoria; a tiny city named after Queen Victoria in 1887 but locally known as Rabat. After climbing up to the imposing Citadel we'll have a fantastic view of the whole island. Here we'll explore the old prison where the Knights of Saint John would send their rowdier members to cool off therein! The graffitied walls are a fascinating insight into the lives of those who were incarcerated here. Descending to the graceful central square, It Tokk, we have time to wander the cobweb of narrow streets and take some time for lunch. Heading to the town of Xaghra, we reach Ggantija, a megalithic temple complex dating back to 3600 BC and thus named as it was believed only giants could have moved the stones. Some of the colossal stones are over 5 meters long and weigh over 20 tons and the temple still reaches a height of over 7 metres. Predating the Pyramids, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is believed to be the world's oldest free-standing structure. We continue to Calypsos Cave, alleged to be the cave referred to by Homer in The Odyssey. In the afternoon we'll get the chance to stretch our legs on a walk from the area of Calypso's Cave to Ramla Bay where we can enjoy a refreshing dip at the beautiful red sandy beach, if the weather permits, before heading back to the hotel.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 3 On Gozo; visit Dwejra, walk to Xwejni Bay. Ferry to Malta

Dwejra is perhaps Gozo's most spectacular natural landmark. Here, geology, time and sea have worked together to produce some of the most remarkable scenery on the island. We'll see Fungus Rock, notable as the habitat of a rare fungus which was highly prized by the Knights of Saint John for its medicinal properties. We will also see the Azure Window - a rock arch over the sea. You will then have the option to take a boat ride along the coast from the Inland Sea (weather permitting) - a shallow inland lagoon linked to the sea via a 30-metre tunnel. From Dwejra we continue to the Ta Pinu Basilica, renowned for the miraculous cures reported by its supplicants. We drive past neat, well-tended fields with their dry-stone walls and enjoy glorious views on our way to Zebbug; perched on a hilltop above the patchwork of green fields below. As with all these fortified hilltop villages, the far reaching views across the island and beyond are spectacular on a clear day. From Zebbug, we'll take a walk to nearby Xwejni Bay. The coastal scenery along the way is varied - at times we pass limestone outcrops eroded by the wind and sea into unusual shapes, where traditional salt pans dominate the view. This section of the coast is one of the most remote and rugged on the island but our walk is relatively steep downhill. There may be a chance to swim (weather permitting) before we visit to the seaside resort of Malfarsorn, our chosen location for lunch. We head back to Mgarr, via Nadur for a brief photo stop of Comino and the Blue Lagoon, to catch the ferry to Malta where we transfer to our hotel in Sliema near the capital. The capital stretches east from Valletta along scenic bays with busy marinas. A seafront promenade skirts around the coast of this busy town and is great for people watching. Our hotel is in Sliema where many restaurants and bars can be found.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 4 In Valletta; walking tour of Old City

This morning we plan to drive from the hotel for a walking tour around the impressive and heavily fortified Old City. Originally built by the Knights of the Order of Saint John in the 16th Century, Valletta, UNESCO world heritage site, is built on the steep slopes of the Sceberras Peninsula and surrounded by two huge natural harbours which have helped to make it such an important strategic port at the crossroads of the Mediterranean. Fort Saint Elmo guards the entrance to the harbours. Walking down Triq ir Republika - the main thoroughfare in the centre of the city, we visit the elaborately decorated Saint John's Co-Cathedral and the grandiose Grandmaster's Palace with its fine collection of artworks. We'll also admire the classic views across the Grand Harbour from Upper Barrakka Gardens and visit the impressive Archaeological Museum which boasts many finds from the archipelago's rich history. Your afternoon is free for your own personal exploration.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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## DAY 5 Walking tour of the Three Cities and Grand Harbour Cruise

This morning we head to the historic Three Cities of Senglea, Vittoriosa and Cospicua, considered to be 'the cradle of Maltese history' as settlers and rulers from the Phoenicians to the British all made use of the defences here. The Knights of the Order of Saint John settled in Vittoriosa in 1530 and used the city as their headquarters. The Three Cities have retained much of their romantic medieval charm and we'll see the Inquisitor's Palace in Vittoriosa and admire the views from the Gardjola Gardens - a look-out post to guard the harbour entrance - in Senglea. Driving on to Marsaxlokk, we will take some free time for lunch and exploration. This charming town is Malta's largest fishing port with its colourful boats and excellent fish restaurants. After lunch we will transfer to Sliema for a 90 minute Harbour Cruise because the best way to explore the creeks and dockyards is by boat. Only by travelling across the water does one appreciate the sheer magnitude of the ramparts and forts that protect the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 6 Visit Mdina, Mosta Dome and San Anton Botanical Gardens

This morning we'll take a short transfer to Malta's medieval old capital, Mdina, for a tour on foot around this beautifully preserved city. Its warren of winding, narrow alleys (mostly too narrow for cars) and fortified walls contain a number of impressive buildings such as the Palazzo Falzon and Cathedral dedicated to the Conversion of Saint Paul. We'll also take time to see Domus Romana (a Townhouse usually belonging to Roman dignitaries) and Saint Paul's eery catacombs (underground). After our visit to Mdina, we'll drive to Mosta Dome and San Anton Botanical Gardens; the private residence of the President of Malta.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 7 Visit Hagar Qim, Blue Grotto, Tal Hamrija and afternoon olive oil estate visit

A short drive brings us to Hagar Qim and Mnajdra; another incredible Megalithic temple complex and World Heritage Site. For three millennia, from around 3600 - 3200 BC, the Maltese archipelago was home to a unique, temple-building civilisation. The discovery of many fat lady statuettes in the vicinity of Hagar Qim has shown it to have been built to worship the Venus of Malta, the sleeping goddess of fertility. Mnajdra is probably the most atmospheric of all of Malta's temples, occupying an isolated position overlooking the rocky coastline. We walk between the two temple groups along a short well laid path before continuing a short distance along a rough country path to the Tal Hamrija coastal 17th century tower to enjoy breathtaking scenery as the cliffs rise out of the blue Mediterranean Sea. We return to our bus where we drive down to the Blue Grotto where we have the option of taking a boat trip (weather permitting) to see a series of natural caverns which glow with brilliant corals and sea sponges. We'll then spend the afternoon at an olive grove, seeing how the locals live, for our picnic lunch of local fresh produce, an olive oil tasting experience and time to enjoy the free flowing wine.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 8 Drive to airport, fly to Catania, drive to Syracuse

We transfer to the airport this morning for the flight to Catania in Sicily. On arrival we drive to Syracuse where we will join those members of the group just travelling on the Sicily part of the tour. Ancient Syracuse was a colony of Corinth which once rivalled Athens as the most important and beautiful city in the Greek world. Its fascinating history is associated with such famous names as Alcibiades, Aeschylus, Pindar, Demosthenes and Archimedes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**



**Included Meals:** Breakfast

## DAY 9 Morning in Syracuse; afternoon drive to Piazza Armerina

This morning we will visit the Neapolis Archaeological Zone with its famous Greek theatre hewn out of the hillside and the fine Roman amphitheatre where gladiators once fought. We then continue to Ortygia Island before leaving Syracuse and driving to Piazza Armerina, our stop for the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **10** Visit Villa Romana at Casale and Agrigento; drive to Petrosino, near Marsala

This morning we'll drive to the impressive Villa Romana at Casale, a magnificent country mansion containing some beautiful Roman mosaics. We then continue to Agrigento, once one of the most prosperous cities in Sicily. The ancient Acropolis, now the modern city, overlooks the valley where the lower city stood and the southern ridge where the temples still stand. After a visit to the Temple of Zeus, we visit the Valley of the Temples including the Temple of Hercules, the oldest in the complex and the perfectly proportioned Doric columns of the Temple of Concord. From this ancient Acropolis, we continue along the coast to our stop for the night in Petrosino. A small agricultural town, Petrosino is located 13 km south of Marsala.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

**Swimming Pool Available** 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **11** To Palermo, via Mozia, Erice and Segesta

This morning we take a short boat ride out to the tiny island of Mozia, whose role in the events of Sicily's early Phoenician period (before 600 BC) far transcends its diminutive size. Our visit will include Mozia's unique museum and the ruins of a remarkable civilisation, complete with harbour. Moving on from the island, we continue on to Erice, where we will take in the medieval ambience of this ancient hill town. Early afternoon will see us travelling on to Segesta - one of the best-preserved ancient Greek sites that exists anywhere today. A visit to Segesta is a wonder, not only for the structures themselves, the Doric Temple and the amphitheatre on the slopes of Mount Barbaro, but for the stunning natural setting in which they are to be found. No modern day structures mar your appreciation of the site. On leaving magnificent Segesta, we will reach our hotel situated on the outskirts of Palermo.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **12** Visit Monreale, returning to Palermo

This morning, we will visit the Palatine Chapel before departing Palermo and driving into the hills to the majestic Norman Cathedral of Monreale. Founded in 1174 by William the Good, the cathedral is famous for its extensive mosaics and the beautiful cloisters showing both Romanesque and Islamic influences. We will return to Sicily's capital where the afternoon is free for you to enjoy Palermo. The city stands at the foot of Monte Pellegrino with the fertile valley of Concha d'Oro behind. It was one of the richest cities in Europe from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD when Islamic culture, Byzantine magnificence and the vigorous world of medieval Europe were merging into a fascinating civilisation.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **13** Drive to Giardini Naxos, near Taormina

Leaving Palermo we drive along the spectacular coastline to the picturesque fishing village of Cefalu. Here we stop to visit the Norman Cathedral to see the stupendous mosaic of Christ Pantocrator. Next we'll drive via the coastal road to Aquadolci, then into the mountains via Cesaro and Randazzo, with spectacular views of Mount Etna in the distance, to Giardini Naxos, a small beach resort just outside Taormina. Please note we may take the coastal road from Cefalu, depending on weather conditions.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **14** Morning optional trip to Etna; afternoon Taormina

This morning there is the opportunity to visit the lunar landscape and lava fields of Etna one of the most active volcanoes in Europe. Taormina, Sicily's most famous resort, is situated 213 m up on the slopes of Monte Tauro and overlooked by Castel Mola. This afternoon we'll visit the Greek Theatre for possibly the most famous view in Sicily - the snow capped Mount Etna acting as a backdrop to the remarkably preserved columned stage.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**  
**Single Room Available**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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This morning we drive to Catania Airport where the tour ends.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

## Accommodation and Meals

### Food & Drink

Included meals: 14 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 0 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

## Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

### Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

#### Malta

**Lunch £:** 16.00

**Dinner £:** 27.00

#### Italy

**Lunch £:** 8 - 10

**Dinner £:** 15.00 - 20.00

### Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

#### Malta

**Bottle of Beer £:** 1.50

**Water £:** 1.60

#### Italy

**Bottle of Beer £:** 2.00

**Water £:** 1.00

### Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

### Optional Excursions

Blue Grotto - Boat trip 8 Euros

Xwejni - Boat Trip 3.50 Euros

Palermo - Puppet theatre 15 Euros.

Giardini Naxos - Mount Etna Lava flows 52 Euros

(Please note that anyone suffering from asthma or heart conditions of any kind will not be permitted to partake in the Mount Etna excursion due to the effects of altitude/sulphur fumes).

### Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

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## Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow £40.00.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

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## Foreign Exchange

### Malta

**ATM Availability:** ATM's are widely available in Gozo, Malta and Sicily

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Large shops and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques:** Are not recommended due to the high rate of commission and limited opening times of banks. Changing them can be very time consuming.

**Local Currency:** Euro.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** Since there is relatively little opportunity to change money on this trip, it is advisable to arrive with a supply of Euros to avoid inconvenience.

**Where to Exchange:** Money can be exchanged in the hotels in Gozo and Malta, Catania Airport, Agrigento, Palermo and Taormina in Sicily.

### Italy

**ATM Availability:** Major towns.

**Credit Card Acceptance:** Larger hotels and restaurants.

**Travellers Cheques:** Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

**Local Currency:** Euro.

**Recommended Currency for Exchange:** GBP.

**Where to Exchange:** We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

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## Joining your Tour

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

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### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at [www.explore.co.uk](http://www.explore.co.uk), in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

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### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Important Information

### Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit [www.explore.co.uk/insurance](http://www.explore.co.uk/insurance). Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website [www.fca.gov.uk](http://www.fca.gov.uk) or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

### Visa Information

Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

### Vaccinations & Protection

#### Malta

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Special Note: Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

#### Italy

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

## Preparing for your Tour

### Climate

#### Malta

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months.

#### Italy

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

### Clothing

Women should avoid bare arms and shoulders in churches (scarf or stole recommended). Dress for hot conditions although light rainwear and warm fleece/jacket for nights when temperatures can drop (especially in March and Oct/Nov). Anyone intending to visit Mount Etna should bring warm clothing as snow is a common occurrence (even in June). Wind and waterproof garments are strongly recommended for those wishing to visit the volcano.

### Equipment

Sunhat and sunscreen are recommended. You should bring a 2 litre water bottle, torch, as well as insect repellent and a swimming costume.

### Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes and sandals.

### Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg



## General Information

### Country details

#### Malta

**Population:** 417,608

**Size of Country:** 316 sq km

**Major Language:** Maltese and English

**Religion:** Roman Catholic

**Time Difference to GMT:** +1

#### Italy

**Population:** 60,681,514

**Size of Country:** 301,338 Sq KM

**Major Language:** Italian

**Religion:** Roman Catholic

**Time Difference to GMT:** +1

### Electric Supply & Plugs

#### Malta

3 Pin Flat

#### Italy

2 Pin Round

## Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award-winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

### Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

### Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

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## Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website [www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk](http://www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk)

- [Tourism Concern](#)

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group [www.tourismconcern.org.uk](http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk)

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>
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## Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety>

## Booking Your Holiday

### Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

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### Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

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### 100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

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### Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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